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Review of Police Crime and Incident Reports

**Dyfed-Powys Police
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.

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 Dyfed-Powys Police

Does the force record crimes accurately and consistently?

HMIC looked at 120 incidents logged by Dyfed-Powys Police. Six had been wrongly closed without a crime being raised, which indicates that crimes recorded by Dyfed-Powys Police are generally recorded accurately and in accordance with the NCRS.

In cases where the force had classified crimes and incidents correctly, they subsequently recorded them accurately. A strong force performance culture exists across the force. Recent evidence shows an improving picture in relation to NCRS/VCOP compliance, although this is inconsistent across the force area. A more detailed corporate approach to reviewing crime incidents classified as non crime would deliver improved levels of compliance.

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

HMIC found evidence of very good levels of investigation and victim care once the crime or incident had been correctly identified. Frontline sergeants review all crimes and incidents to ensure investigations are allocated to staff and finally closed correctly; this has resulted in very high levels of supervision, detections and victim satisfaction.

However, the inconsistent approach to identifying vulnerable and repeat callers potentially reduced the overall level of victim care. The new tri-service communications centre and the introduction of an improved system for recording ASB could substantially improve the service and reduce the risk to victims of crime and ASB.

How does the force ensure that standards are met?

The Chief Constable chaired regular force performance meetings which support Dyfed-Powys' strong commitment to high performance, with managers and frontline staff held to account for the quality of crime and incident records. The force's current policy states that an officer must attend all reported crimes and incidents; this has resulted in good care for victims and high numbers of detections. Staff did not, however, always record enough detail when first receiving a report of a crime or incident. The force and police authority should develop their initial recording process to raise standards in this area and help identify repeat and vulnerable callers.

Conclusions

Chief officer leadership in the area of crime and incident data recording was good and ensured high levels of victim care and detections in cases where a crime is recorded. There are adequate plans, policies and strategies in place. The force has high standards when recording crimes and incidents in a consistent and accurate manner to correctly reflect the sequence of events as described by victims. Staff responsibilities and skills are well established to help secure incident and crime data quality. There are basic audit and quality assurance processes, relating to crime and incident data, in use to identify issues and take action.

Frontline sergeants supervised their staff well. HMIC is confident that Dyfed-Powys Police and Dyfed-Powys Police Authority has the leadership, capability and expertise to deliver the changes required and to maintain their overall current high levels of performance.

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