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

**Greater Manchester 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](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 Greater Manchester Police**

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

HMIC looked at 239 incidents logged by Greater Manchester Police. Twenty-three incidents had been wrongly closed without a crime being raised, indicating that crimes in Greater Manchester Police are generally being recorded accurately and in accordance with the NCRS. This is an improvement on the findings of a review undertaken in April 2011, which showed some cause for concern in relation to the conversion of incidents to crimes. The results in April were such that a follow up review was deemed necessary.

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

HMIC found that the force had further defined its expectations in relation to incident and crime data and had revised its policies and procedures for crime recording since April 2011. However, there remains a need to clarify some aspects of the crime recording policy in order to ensure staff have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.

A number of staff at different levels demonstrated a commitment to improving data quality. The establishment of formalised meetings to coordinate activity, improvements to how investigations are conducted, and the strengthening of victim support processes are all making a difference. However, the force acknowledged that the quality and management of incident logs still needs to be improved.

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

There was a positive response to the findings of HMIC's April review. Chief officer leadership to achieve good quality crime data has been strengthened, but (while acknowledging that the force rightly focused its efforts first on recording crime) more attention needs to be paid to incident data. The relationships between crime and incident management are key to further improvement.

Accountability mechanisms both within force and with the police authority showed improvement. The authority had been actively engaged in the follow-up action taken by the force to address the issues revealed in the April inspection.

HMIC found that the NCRS now featured in a number of key meetings, and the force had plans in place to identify where improvements needed to be made. There needs to be, however, an increased focus on auditing the recording and subsequent closure of incidents.

## **Conclusions**

Arrangements at a senior level to secure the quality of incident and crime data, which had been assessed as limited in the April review, had been strengthened, and there were adequate plans, policies and strategies in place. HMIC found the force had variable standards in how it recorded crimes and incidents in a consistent and accurate manner (to correctly reflect the sequence of events as described by victims).

In April, HMIC had found that staff had insufficient skills and awareness of their responsibilities in helping to secure quality incident and crime data; these were now developing. Audit and quality assurance processes to identify issues and take action in respect of crime data were sound. However, arrangements for incident data were superficial and need to be strengthened.

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