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Review of Police Crime and Incident Reports

**Humberside 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 Humberside Police

Does the force record crimes accurately and consistently?

HMIC looked at 120 incidents logged by Humberside Police. Thirteen of the incidents had been wrongly closed without a crime being raised, which gives some cause for concern. These related particularly to robbery and violence offences. However, the force had identified why these particular crimes were being incorrectly recorded, and HMIC is confident that they are taking the necessary steps to tackle it.

Staff in the command centres and customer service crime centre ensured that crimes and incidents were logged consistently across the force, and that the standards for this set by the force were applied. Incidents of ASB were correctly recorded as crimes where appropriate. However, the force's IT systems were not integrated, which meant staff had to enter data twice. This increased the likelihood of errors being made when transferring data from one system to another.

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

The force had a detailed Standard Operating Procedure for crime recording, which staff followed. The key purpose of this Procedure was to provide users, supervisors and managers with a comprehensive document that sets out their responsibilities. It states that all information and records created by the force must conform to the following data quality principles: Accurate; Adequate; Relevant; Timely; Consistent; and Complete.

The force worked hard to meet the needs of victims, but needs to continue to ensure staff adopt a professional approach to the investigation and management of crime on all occasions. The use of investigation plans also needs to be developed, with appropriate oversight from supervisors.

How does the force ensure that standards are met?

Chief officers have given an unequivocal message to staff about the need to police with integrity. Responsibilities for incident and crime data quality were clearly defined and understood by staff, and those responsible for recording incidents and crimes had an appropriate knowledge of the HOCR and the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR). The support from the Force Crime and Incident Registrar was exemplary.

A dedicated central audit and review team was in place, supported by appropriate staff across the force. The schedule of audits carried out was based on risk, and could be altered if required to deal with specific problem areas.

Conclusions

Arrangements at a senior level to secure the quality of incident and crime data were strong, and there were helpful plans, policies and strategies in place to support them. The force had high standards when recording crimes and incidents in a consistent and accurate manner (so they correctly reflect the sequence of events as described by victims).

Staff's skills and awareness of their responsibilities in this area were well established, and the audit and quality assurance processes in use to identify any issues and take action to address them were strong.

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