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

**Kent 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 Kent Police**

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

HMIC looked at 120 incident records created by Kent Police as a result of calls for assistance from the public. This is a small sample compared to the 3,059 calls that the force typically receives each day, but it provides an indicator of how accurately crime is being recorded. Four of these calls for assistance had been closed without a crime being properly recorded; this sampling provides an initial indication that Kent Police almost always records crimes accurately as required by the crime recording standards.

HMIC also looked at how often a record that has initially been recorded as a crime is subsequently reviewed and de-classified – or 'no crimed'. The force has a higher rate of 'no crimes' than other forces. This means that Kent Police may be under-recording crime when compared to other forces.

We found good standards of recorded information within the Force Control Room, which is where the majority of initial calls for police assistance are received.

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

Kent Police has a victim-focused approach to crime recording. It is good at identifying repeat and vulnerable victims (such as those who are disabled or elderly) so they can be given extra support if needed. The force is also introducing a new automated system to further improve identification of vulnerable victims. Staff understand the importance of the need to update victims on the progress of their cases, and there are clear standards in place around how and when this should happen. These are supported by the force IT recording system, which highlights to supervisors when victim updates are due.

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

Kent Police places a strong emphasis on recording quality data. It adopts a risk-based quality assurance approach, which means that the areas demonstrating the most accurate recording practices are subject to less scrutiny than those where recording is of a lower standard. This focuses staff on the quality of the reports they complete.

HMIC found that regular internal checks take place within the Force Control Room. Steps are taken to address any issues that are identified.

## **Conclusions**

HMIC sampling indicates that Kent Police almost always records crimes accurately as required by the NCRS. However, the approach to crime recording taken by Kent Police is inconsistent with the approach adopted by other forces in the area of 'no crimes'. HMIC will undertake a more in-depth review of Kent's approach at the police authority and force's invitation in order to resolve this outstanding issue.

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