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in the **public interest**

Review of Police Crime and Incident Reports

**Norfolk 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.

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 Norfolk Constabulary

Does the force record crimes accurately and consistently?

HMIC looked at 120 incident records created by Norfolk Constabulary as a result of calls for assistance from the public. This is a small sample compared to the 657 calls that the Constabulary typically receives each day, but it provides an indicator of how accurately crime is being recorded. Only one had been closed without a crime being properly recorded. This provides an indication that Norfolk Constabulary almost always records crimes accurately as required by the NCRS.

This is an improvement on the findings of a review completed by HMIC in September 2011, which showed some cause for concern as to the accuracy of crime recording. The Constabulary immediately put in place interim measures to ensure that incidents were properly and thoroughly checked, and asked HMIC for a further review. The Constabulary will put in place arrangements to replace these interim measures in early 2012.

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

Norfolk 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 also refers all victims to Victim Support. Staff are strongly committed to updating victims of crime on the progress of their cases; these updates are recorded and reviewed by local supervisors.

Staff have a good understanding of the Constabulary's guidance for investigations and apply this appropriately.

How does the force ensure that standards are met?

Norfolk Constabulary, from the top team and across the whole organisation, is clearly committed to ensuring that crime recording is accurate and of the highest quality. The way in which the senior officers and the police authority monitor data quality is good, especially in child and adult abuse investigations.

Conclusions

HMIC's sampling indicates that, as a result of recent improvements, Norfolk Constabulary nearly always record crimes accurately as required by the NCRS. The Constabulary now has one of the highest levels of accuracy in the country. Chief officers demonstrate strong leadership and reinforce the importance of accurate crime and incident recording throughout the organisation.

Staff understand their responsibilities to ensure that crimes and incidents are recorded accurately. There are also sound quality assurance arrangements in place, which means that if any issues do arise they are identified and action taken if required.

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