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Review of Police Crime and Incident Reports

**Nottinghamshire Police
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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 Nottinghamshire Police

Does the force record crimes accurately and consistently?

HMIC looked at 120 incident records created by Nottinghamshire Police, as a result of calls for assistance from the public. This is a small sample compared to the 1,580 calls that the force typically receives each day, but it provides an indicator of how accurately crime is being recorded. Five had been closed without a crime being properly recorded; this sampling provides an initial indication that Nottinghamshire Police almost always records crimes accurately as required by the NCRS.

We found that incident and crime recording systems and processes are generally good. Nottinghamshire Police has reviewed how it classifies reported incidents of domestic burglary, to ensure these crimes are recorded as accurately as others. The force has also taken action to ensure that they correctly record incidents and crimes that were not reported by telephone (for example, those that are emailed or reported in person at police stations).

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

Nottinghamshire Police 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 force also uses its crime recording system to maintain a full record of calls from vulnerable ASB victims. This is good practice and provides an overview of the problems the caller is experiencing, which can be helpful when prioritising calls for assistance from the public and helping the victim in the longer term.

The force automatically refers all callers to Victim Support. Updates to victims on the progress of their cases were recorded on the system and reviewed by local supervisors. Staff had good understanding of the force guidance for investigations, and they act on this.

How does the force ensure that standards are met?

Nottinghamshire Police, from the top team and across the whole organisation, is clearly committed to ensuring that crime recording is accurate and of the highest quality. All officers and staff understand the importance of securing high quality data. However, some staff responsible for making decisions about which crimes should be recorded have not received the appropriate training.

The force carries out regular quality assurance audits. The findings from these are managed at a senior level and any issues are identified and rectified. HMIC identified a need to improve quality assurance processes by supervisors at a local level and within the control room to reinforce the importance of good data quality and to ensure that high standards are maintained.

Conclusions

HMIC sampling indicates that Nottinghamshire Police almost always records crimes accurately as required by the NCRS, and the force has carried out further work to ensure this is always the case. Chief officers demonstrate strong leadership and reinforce the importance of accurate crime and incident recording throughout the organisation. Staff understand their responsibilities to maintain quality data, and structured quality assurance arrangements ensure that any issues which do arise are identified and action taken if required.