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

**Staffordshire 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 Staffordshire Police**

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

HMIC looked at 120 incidents logged by Staffordshire Police. Nine of these had been wrongly closed without a crime being recorded which indicates that crimes in Staffordshire are generally recorded accurately and in accordance with the NCRS.

Incidents were reasonably well recorded, with accurate and detailed information to assist decisions about how they should be classified. The conversion of incidents to crimes was good and the quality of incident and crime recording entries strong.

The active intervention of the Deputy Chief Constable and police authority means that the force's incident and crime reporting is improving still further. At the time of inspection, the force was restructuring, and this was seen as an opportunity to rationalise and improve aspects of crime and incident data quality which were of concern.

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

The force restructure and implementation of new policies and procedures looks set to improve data quality in Staffordshire. We found minimum standards in place around attendance, investigation and victim care in cases of ASB, hate crime and domestic violence. However, investigations were not always well recorded on the force's IT system, with little evidence of regular victim updates, active supervision or the use of investigation plans. Less than half of the ASB incident records that we looked at showed that an attempt had been made to identify whether the caller was a repeat or vulnerable victim (so they could get extra support if needed).

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

HMIC found that crime and incident data quality in Staffordshire was improving and the Deputy Chief Constable was overseeing arrangements to make sure this was achieved. The force, with the police authority, have investigated and understand areas in which they are able to improve data quality; these were included on the force and police authority's risk registers and addressed during regular audits and formal meetings.

Staffordshire Police's crime audit schedule was flexible and risk based, concentrating on converting incidents to crimes, recording and detection, 'no crime' classification, and correct application of the HOCR. Audit findings were addressed and used to influence change. A new structure for auditing crime has been put into place, along with an independent crime audit process, and audit teams carried out checks to ensure the quality of the work carried out by call-taking staff.

## **Conclusions**

The review indicates that crime and incident data quality in Staffordshire is improving. HMIC found clear and purposeful leadership in this area, with mechanisms of accountability within both the force and the authority. This was supported by a strong and effective regime of auditing, proportionate to the risks the organisation faces.

Helpful plans, policies and strategies for securing good quality data were in place. The force had high standards when recording crimes and incidents in a consistent and accurate manner which correctly reflects the sequence of events as described by victims.

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