

Crime data integrity

Inspection of Lancashire Constabulary

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Introduction

In its 2013/14 inspection programme¹, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) committed to carry out an inspection into the way the 43 police forces in England and Wales record crime data. All 43 forces will be inspected by mid August 2014, with a full thematic report published in autumn 2014. The central question of this inspection programme is:

“To what extent can police-recorded crime information be trusted?”

Accurate crime recording underlines the police service's commitment to public accountability, ensures that local policing bodies² can match resources to the risks identified in communities and enables the police to provide a proper service to victims of crime.

Recent HMIC inspections have revealed weaknesses in police crime recording, particularly the under-recording of crimes. In our interim report of 1 May 2014 we said that “we are seriously concerned at the picture which is emerging”.³

We strongly recommend our findings in this report are read alongside the interim report, *Crime recording: A matter of fact - An interim report of the inspection of crime data integrity in police forces in England and Wales*, available at <http://www.justiceinspectrates.gov.uk/hmic/>

The interim report sets out the full context of this inspection programme including the rules and standards governing crime data integrity: the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS)⁴ and Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR)⁵.

¹ The 2013/14 inspection programme was approved by the Home Secretary under section 54 of the Police Act 1996.

² Police and crime commissioners for police areas outside London: the Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime for the Metropolitan Police Service; and the City of London Corporation for the City of London Police.

³ *Crime recording: A matter of fact – An interim report of the inspection of crime data integrity in police forces in England and Wales*, paragraph 1.20.

⁴ NCRS is a standard of crime-recording introduced in 2002 and published as part of the Home Office Counting Rules; it has the twin objectives of ensuring the police focus more on victims of crime and ensuring consistency in crime-recording in all police forces.

⁵ HOCR are rules in accordance with which crime data – required to be submitted to the Home Secretary under sections 44 and 45 of the Police Act 1996 – must be collected. They set down how the police service in England and Wales must record crime, how crimes must be classified according to crime type and categories, whether and when to record crime, how many crimes to record in respect of a single incident and the regime for the re-classification of crimes as no-crimes.

Methodology

Each force inspection involves:

- An examination of crime records for the period 1 November 2012 to 31 October 2013;
- A dip-sample of out-of-court disposals (cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND), cannabis warnings, community resolutions) and no-crime decisions for rape, robbery and violence;
- Visits to forces where inspectors assess local crime recording arrangements under three headings: leadership and governance; systems and processes; and people and skills; and
- A peer review of audit findings by an NCRS expert from outside HMIC.

The audit examined for compliance a small sample of crime records from each force. Taken together, these samples are sufficient to provide a reliable national estimate, but are too small to produce a force estimate of compliance. Force compliance rates typically result in a margin of error of around +/- 10 percent and therefore a range of 20 percent. This range of uncertainty means that few, if any, conclusions can be drawn from individual force compliance rates or comparisons of rates between forces based on the data alone. (Samples large enough to make more reliable force judgements, while desirable, were not affordable.) Our conclusions and recommendations are, therefore, based upon the evidence drawn from our inspection of the force's crime-recording arrangements.

Scope and structure of report

This report is divided into the following sections:

1. Part A: A summary of our findings, and recommendations;
2. Part B: Our findings in numbers;
3. Part C: Additional detailed inspection findings.

This report, undertaken at a force level, allows a qualitative assessment of the force's crime recording arrangements and to make recommendations for improvement.

Part A: Summary of inspection findings, and recommendations

Leadership and governance

There has been a significant cultural shift led by the Chief Constable, moving away from chasing performance targets to quality and victim focused outcomes which have positively impacted upon victim focus and crime recording standards.

Chief officers consistently promote the importance of crime data integrity and there is a nominated assistant chief constable (ACC) who is force lead for such matters. The force has recently revised its governance structure for monitoring performance that includes an enhanced focus on crime data integrity. The force does not have a crime recording policy but defaults to the NCRS and HOCR as its policy, which is accessible to all staff on the force intranet.

Officers and staff can raise concerns over unethical practices of any kind through a confidential reporting line into the professional standards department (PSD) and personnel were well aware of this facility.

Despite effective messaging by chief officers, we found some localised examples of pressure to under-record crime of a particular category that had shown a rise in reporting. Similarly, a review of recent incident logs identified the practice of specialist officers not recording offences in a timely manner but continuing to investigate the offence.

Recommendation: With immediate effect, chief officers should reinforce the position of ethical, accurate and timely crime reporting practices to eradicate any remaining perception that performance pressures impact on crime recording standards.

A demand reduction unit (DRU) has been established within the contact management centre (CMC). Within the unit, NCRS advisors proactively monitor crime incident logs, which is resulting in the prompt identification and eradication of errors thus bringing some real benefit to improve crime recording standards.

The role of the force crime and incident registrar⁶ (FCIR) is to ensure that the force complies with the NCRS and HOCR. Additionally, the FCIR has responsibility for overseeing force compliance with the National Standard for

⁶ The person in a police force who is responsible for ensuring compliance with crime-recording rules. The HOCR provide that he is ultimately responsible for all decisions to record a crime or to make a no-crime decision, as the final arbiter. The force crime registrar's responsibilities include training staff in the crime-recording process and carrying out audits to check that the force is complying with all applicable rules.

Incident Recording (NSIR)⁷. The FCIR is held in high regard by colleagues and well known at appropriate levels within the organisation.

A revised approach to audit compliance is being introduced, moving away from the more generic audit methodology. There is a shift towards the examination of crime recording practices from initial reporting to record closure thereby prioritising the focus on those crimes likely to represent the most threat, vulnerability and harm to victims. Whilst this coincides with a reduction in audit team personnel, a refreshed governance structure will provide tighter control on audit outcomes and subsequent force wide development of good practice through a newly formed force improvement board.

Recommendation: Within three months, and with the advent of the new performance regime and governance structures, the force should assess the capacity and capability of the audit function. This should ensure quality and timeliness of the products is achieved in view of the reduced staffing levels imposed as a result of the budgetary pressures.

Systems and processes

Accuracy of crime recording

We examined 208 incident records⁸ and found that 155 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 155 crimes that should have been recorded, 142 were. Of the 142, eight were wrongly classified and eight were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. This is a good result and demonstrates effectiveness in the approach adopted by the force to secure the integrity of crime data.

⁷ The national standard for incident recording (NSIR) is designed to ensure that all incidents, whether crime or non-crime, are recorded by police in a consistent and accurate manner. This allows resulting data to be used at a local and national level for management and performance information purposes.

⁸ An incident in this context is a report of events received by the police; recorded on the electronic incident systems, that requires police attention. Whether or not an incident report becomes a crime record is determined on the balance of probability that a notifiable offence has occurred as set out in the Home Office Counting Rules. If an incident does not turn out to be a crime, it must still be logged in an auditable form on the force's incident-recording system or some other accessible or auditable means.

We examined 50 reports that were recorded separately on other force systems. We found that of those 50 reports, 23 crimes should have been recorded and 15 crimes were. Measures have since been put in place to manage this system more effectively.

Calls for service are received in the contact management centre (CMC) and dealt with by customer contact advisors (call handlers). Supervisors within the CMC currently monitor three calls received from the public per call handler on a monthly basis. This provides a general check on the quality of the service provided and information obtained to ensure accurate incident recording and that a victim-centred approach is being adopted. These checks do not assess compliance with NCRS and are not subject of any meaningful scrutiny. Similarly, feedback from customer satisfaction surveys is not analysed in any structured way to help develop a better understanding of issues highlighted and improve practices.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should ensure that the themes used by the CMC to quality assure the work of call-handlers include compliance with NCRS and that results from the process are incorporated into the revised force performance management arrangements.

Out-of-court disposals

Out-of-court disposals include cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND),⁹ cannabis warnings¹⁰ and community resolutions.¹¹ The HOCR (section H) states that national guidance must be followed¹².

⁹ A form of immediate financial punishment used by police to deal with low-level offending such as being drunk and disorderly, retail theft, and minor criminal damage.

¹⁰ A cannabis warning is a non-statutory disposal for cases of possession of cannabis for personal use. It constitutes a warning to the offender and confiscation of the cannabis.

¹¹ Resolution of a minor offence or anti-social behaviour incident through informal agreement between the parties involved, for example involving the offender making good the loss or damage caused.

¹² National guidance for the use of out-of-court disposals is detailed in a number of documents:

- *Home Office Circular 016/2008: Simple Cautioning – Adult Offenders*. Available from http://www.xact.org.uk/information/downloads/Pace/HOC_16-2008.pdf
- *Simple Cautions For Adult Offenders*, 14 November 2013. Available from www.justice.gov.uk
- *Code of Practice for Adult Conditional Cautions*, 8 April 2000. Available from www.justice.gov.uk
- *Home Office Police Operational Guidance for penalty Notices for Disorder*, March 2005. Available from www.justice.gov.uk
- *ACPO Guidance on Cannabis Possession for Personal Use*, 28 January 2009. Available from www.acpo.police.uk

Cautions – Out of the 22 cautions we dip-sampled, we found that in all cases the offender’s previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In 21 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 12 cases where there was a victim to consult, 4 cases showed that the victims’ views had been considered.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – We dip-sampled 20 PND and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 17 cases. In none of the cases did we find evidence that the offender had been made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the penalty notice. Out of the 11 cases where there was a victim to consult, we found that none had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

Cannabis warnings – We dip-sampled 25 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in 24 cases. In none of the 25 cases did we find evidence that that the offender had been made aware of the nature and implications of accepting the warning.

Community resolutions – We dip-sampled 20 community resolutions and found that in 17 cases, the offender either had no previous offending history or that the offender’s past history still justified the use of the community resolution. Out of the 20 resolutions where there was a victim, 19 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. Of the 20 cases sampled, 18 showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate¹³. There were two examples where the suspect had not been located and interviewed, yet showed a community resolution as the outcome.

Recommendation: With immediate effect, the force must revise the current approach for managing out-of-court disposals and community resolutions to improve the current standards of compliance, consistency of supervision and submission of documentation.

Recommendation: With immediate effect, the force should revise its approach to cautions, cannabis warning and penalty notices for disorder to ensure that there is a clear and auditable explanation to the offender of the implications of receiving the warning and that, for victim-based crimes, that there is an clear and auditable record that views of the victim are considered prior to their issue.

¹³ National guidance for community resolution directs that at the point the community resolution is administered an officer will need to confirm the offender admits the offence and explain the process to the offender – including how the offender will make good the harm caused. The implications of receiving a community resolution need to be explained to the offender – it does not form part of a criminal record but may be disclosed as part of an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check. The community resolution is to be recorded appropriately, in accordance with the NCRS and HOCR.

No-crimes

No-crime refers to an incident that was initially recorded as a crime but has subsequently been found not to be a crime on the basis of additional verifiable information. We examined 142 no-crime records and found 136 records to be compliant with HOCR and NCRS. This suggests that the processes applied by the force to ensure no-crime decisions were correct are robust.

The decision to no-crime offences other than rape is made by the FCIR or staff working in the central audit team. We found some confusion among staff within the public protection units regarding what constitutes additional verifiable information¹⁴ (AVI) to justify a no-crime decision with some cases being filed undetected as opposed to being considered for a no-crime classification.

Recommendation: With immediate effect, PPU personnel should be provided with additional HOCR guidance to raise awareness of the requirements for AVI and the process for seeking advice on the submission of case papers.

Victim-centred approach

HMIC found that a victim-focused approach to crime recording is a priority for the force. Messages had been effectively marketed by senior managers at a local level and were clearly embedded throughout the organisation with staff being very clear on their roles and responsibilities.

Chief officers continue to actively promote this approach through leadership road shows, effective staff engagement and positive use of internal communications.

Rape offences

There is a current rape and serious sexual offence policy, standards for rape investigation and an associated rape protocol but no clear reference to the need for ethical crime recording that is compliant with NCRS and the HOCR. Despite this range of documentation it is not explicit at what point a report of rape should be recorded as a crime. There are specific roles and responsibilities clearly documented within the policy but it is not clear who should record the offence and when.

Nevertheless, reports of rape are recorded in a timely manner with added scrutiny from PPU supervision and DRU review. The FCIR is the only person in the force able to authorise a no-crime for rape. We examined 50 rape no-crime records and found that 49 complied with NCRS and the HOCR.

¹⁴ HOCR Section C (c) No crimes Additional Verifiable Information – Where following the report of an incident which has subsequently been recorded as a crime, additional verifiable information is available which determines that no notifiable crime has been committed.

The force guidance specifies how to deal with rapes that are reported to Lancashire Constabulary but committed in another force area. We found examples where officers had promptly taken responsibility and had ensured that a crime was recorded and that the victim received the appropriate care. Operational officers were clear on their roles and responsibilities.

IT systems

There is an interface between the force computer systems for incidents and that for the crime recording function. Both systems are well managed and the subject of regular audits and an evolving quality assurance processes. There is a separate system for protecting vulnerable persons with senior officer oversight to identify crime-related issues. There is no weeding conducted of these systems.

People and skills

A significant investment in training for DRU and call-handling staff has been made with a four-week induction course incorporating two days devoted to NCRS. The course was managed and facilitated by the FCIR supported by the ACC lead. The contact management centre (CMC) continues to drive improvements including the development of NCRS training products with good use being made of the departmental training days. With the new force operating model, frontline sergeants have responsibility for initial supervision of crime records and out-of-court disposals but have not received any structured training or guidance.

Recommendation: Within three months, and making full use the latest training products, the force should utilise development days for operational sergeants involved in the crime recording decision making process to further strengthen their knowledge and compliance with NCRS and HOCR.

Structured inputs on NCRS are received by newly recruited police officers as part of their initial training and for trainee detectives within the professionalising investigations programme (PIP). The force has not delivered any co-ordinated force-wide training on NCRS or out-of-court disposals.

We found that there is a clear understanding amongst staff of the importance of accurate crime data. Chief officer messages have been communicated effectively, leaving staff in no doubt that high standards and ethical crime recording is a priority for the force. We found little evidence that performance pressures whether implicit or implied, affected the decision to record crime. The emphasis for the force is on 'getting it right first time' with the expectation that crime will be correctly recorded, adhering to NCRS and HOCR.

Force crime and incident registrar

The FCIR is experienced and knowledgeable in the management of crime data and the application of the NCRS, HOCR and NSIR.

The FCIR has unrestricted access to, and has formal meetings with, the assistant chief constable (ACC) who is the force lead for crime data quality. All crime recording issues are appropriately referred to the FCIR who is the final arbiter in any disputes arising in the crime recording process.

Recommendations

Immediately

1. Chief officers should reinforce the position of ethical, accurate and timely crime reporting practices to eradicate any remaining perception that performance pressures impact on crime recording standards.
2. The force must revise the current approach for managing out-of-court disposals and community resolutions to improve the current standards of compliance, consistency of supervision and submission of documentation.
3. The force should revise its approach to cautions, cannabis warning and penalty notices for disorder to ensure that there is a clear and auditable explanation to the offender of the implications of receiving the warning and that, for victim-based crimes, there is a clear and auditable record that views of the victim are considered prior to their issue.
4. PPU personnel should be provided with additional HOCR guidance to raise awareness of the requirements for AVI and the process for seeking advice on the submission of case papers.

Within three months

5. With the advent of the new performance regime and governance structures, the force should assess the capacity and capability of the audit function. This should ensure quality and timeliness of the products is achieved in view of the reduced staffing levels imposed as a result of the budgetary pressures.
6. The force should ensure that the themes used by the CMC to quality assure the work of call handlers include compliance with NCRS and that results from the process are incorporated into the revised force performance management arrangements.
7. Making full use the latest training products, the force should utilise development days for operational sergeants involved in the crime recording decision making process to further strengthen their knowledge and compliance with NCRS and HOCR.

Part B: Audit findings in numbers

Our examination of records will be used as part of a statistically robust national audit to allow HMIC to report a figure for national crime recording accuracy across the 43 Home Office forces within our final report to be published in autumn 2014. The audit undertaken at a force level is not of a sufficient size to be statistically robust and is therefore used alongside our fieldwork interviews to form qualitative judgements only.

Crimes reported as part of an incident record		
Incidents reviewed	Crimes indentified	Crimes recorded
HMIC reviewed the following number of incident records in Lancashire. These include reported incidents of burglary, violence, robbery, criminal damage and sexual offences.	From these incidents HMIC identified the following number of crimes	From these identified crimes Lancashire Constabulary recorded the following number of crimes
208	155	142
Crime reports held on other systems		
Referrals	Crimes indentified	Crimes recorded
HMIC reviewed the following number of referrals reported directly to Lancashire Constabulary and held on other IT systems that contained reports of crime.	From these referrals HMIC identified the following number of crimes that Lancashire Constabulary should have recorded	From these identified crimes Lancashire Constabulary recorded the following number of crimes
50	23	15
No-crimes		
HMIC reviewed the following number of recorded crimes of rape, violence and robbery, which Lancashire Constabulary had subsequently recorded as no-crime.	From these HMIC assessed the following number of no-crime decisions as being correct.	
142	136	

Part C: Additional detailed inspection findings

Our detailed findings are set out against three headings: leadership and governance, systems and processes, and people and skills.

Leadership and governance

1. **The force has arrangements at a senior level to ensure there is confidence in recorded crime figures and all aspects of the HOCR.**
 - 1.1. **How is Lancashire Constabulary ensuring that leadership responsibilities and expectations for crime data integrity are clearly defined and unambiguously communicated to staff?**

The force, led by the Chief Constable has seen a move away from a numerically driven performance culture to one where quality and victim focus is the priority. Strong and visible leadership is provided by the chief officer team with a designated ACC lead for crime recording issues. The chief officer team has conducted a number of force-wide road shows and further inputs to divisional management teams focusing on leadership, values, honesty and integrity which has provided the opportunity to further reinforce their commitment and to promote accurate, ethical crime recording practices.

The Chief Constable is held to account by the office of the police & crime commissioner (OPCC) through strategic scrutiny meetings that take place on a quarterly basis. Areas subject of examination include HMIC crime rate comparisons, restorative justice outcomes and out-of-court disposals.

A good understanding of the need for accurate crime recording was found amongst staff with chief officer messages permeating throughout the organisation. Positive use is made of internal communications, which includes an online forum that affords chief officers the opportunity to highlight and reinforce the importance of crime data integrity and victim focus. Internally, quality of service is recognised by prominent displays throughout the police estate that recognise positive work by staff. This further highlights the victim centred and ethical approach to crime recording being adopted.

The force does not have a policy or procedure for the reporting, management and investigation of crime but defers to the NCRS, which is accessible to staff on the force intranet.

1.2. How does Lancashire Constabulary ensure it they has a proportionate approach to managing the strategic and organisational risk of recording crime data?

The force has moved away from a statistically based performance management regime to a more qualitative, victim focused approach. The force has analysed and assessed risk in relation to inaccurate crime recording as part of a comprehensive organisational review resulting from its austerity challenge. With the recent establishment of a centralised demand reduction unit (DRU) within the CMC as part of the new operating structures, the force has revised and prioritised its approach to audit. This has moved away from a monthly standard process to a more timely review and quality assurance of recording practices that encompasses interactions from the point of call to the closing of crime records. The reduced audit capability prioritises activity focusing primarily on threat, vulnerability and harm.

The force intends to conduct early checks of non-crime incidents logs to ensure that the correct categories have been applied. This additional activity will be introduced once the DRU is operating at full capacity but is considered important particularly in cases of antisocial behaviour that often include crime complaints.

Examination of incident logs during the audit showed high levels of crime recording compliance with crimes accurately identified, categorised and recorded in a timely manner. However, crime records showed a lack of investigative detail within the running log of actions and whilst the final resulting of investigations was of an adequate standard, the detail and continuity on the case management log needs to be documented more clearly to justify compliance with NCRS. As a consequence, it was found that the auditing of the records can become time consuming with auditors having to access and research other documents and databases to establish the full details.

The force has a good understanding of reporting routes for incidents and crime including reports received directly by public protection units and through the multi agency safeguarding hub (MASH).

1.3. How does Lancashire Constabulary use HOCR, NCRS, and NSIR to ensure there is confidence that crime is recorded accurately?

There is a real emphasis on compliance for recording incidents and crimes in accordance with HOCR, NCRS and NSIR. The force have recognised that a number of incident logs are not opened on the IT system (STORM)¹⁵ with an appropriate crime code and plan to introduce a more rigorous compliance regime following the recruitment of additional personnel within the CMC. The force uses the crime information system (Sleuth) to record non-crimes.

There is an effective process to review reported crime and the subsequent classification and decision making process through the DRU. The unit has embedded well and is delivering successful results, providing real time advice and expertise to front line colleagues on the range of NCRS issues. During the fieldwork we still found examples of unnecessary delay in the recording of certain crime categories, most notably rape, robbery and violence and particularly in cases where specialist officers had become involved.

There is good daily supervision of safeguarding cases that are recorded on the protecting vulnerable persons database by PPU sergeants. This includes clear direction and timely engagement with supervisors in the multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) where crimes are identified.

Responding to the changes in approach to audit has coincided with a refreshed governance structure that provides tighter control at the early stages of crime recording, quality assurance review, audit activity and scrutiny of outcomes. A crime recording governance board, chaired by the ACC lead, has been established with appropriate membership of senior force representatives and which reports to the local policing board. To further raise standards a continuous improvement board has been formed and led by the same ACC to co-ordinate areas for development and promulgate good practice.

¹⁵ An event (not necessarily listed as an incident on the force incident management computer system (STORM)) is recorded to allow some form of monitoring or investigation, which in the first instance has not been recorded as a crime. A non-crime can eventually lead to the recording of a crime when the criterion has been met.

Systems and processes

2 Does the force have systems and processes in place to ensure that: crime is correctly recorded in accordance with HOCR and NCRS; standards of out-of-court disposals are maintained; and no-crime decisions are correct?

2.1. How does Lancashire Constabulary effectively manage and supervise incidents, other reporting routes and crime records in order to ensure that crimes are correctly recorded?

We examined 208 incident records¹⁶ and found that 155 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 155 crimes that should have been recorded, 142 were. Of the 142, eight were wrongly classified and eight were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR. This is a good result and demonstrates effectiveness in the approach adopted by the force to secure the integrity of crime data.

We examined 50 reports that were recorded separately on the force non-crime system. We found that of those 50 reports, 23 should have been recorded as crimes. The force had recorded 15 out of the 23, with reports of assault, harassment, damage and public order not being correctly recorded.

DRU personnel routinely conduct reviews to ensure record quality. We found a culture where there is generally no hesitation to record reports of crime. Supervisors within the CMU monitor three calls from the public per call handler per month. At present the emphasis is on quality of service and delivery of a victim centred approach with the reviews not considering compliance with NCRS. Within the new quality assurance process the FCIR will take responsibility for monitoring this activity and will contact members of the public in cases where they have been dissatisfied with the service provided.

Currently an external company conducts victim satisfaction surveys on behalf of the force but at present, the results of these activities do not come under any meaningful scrutiny.

With the revised governance arrangements the opportunity exists to incorporate both the CMU reviews and satisfaction data into the revised performance framework with scrutiny at the crime recording governance board.

¹⁶ An incident is a report of events received by the police that require police attention. Whether or not an incident report becomes a crime record is determined on the balance of probability that a notifiable offence has occurred as set out in the Home Office Counting Rules. If an incident does not turn out to be a crime, it must still be logged on the force's incident-recording system.

2.2. How does Lancashire Constabulary ensure that out-of-court disposals suit the needs of victims, offenders and the criminal justice system?

There is no consistent or coherent approach to the monitoring or management of out-of-court disposals which leads to differing standards of reporting, supervision and access to records across the force. Due to this approach there is little evidence of the views of victims being sought before decisions are taken although in all categories they were being informed of the final result. A number of cases examined found that it was an unsuitable method of disposal due to the offender's offending history and lack of admission.

In cases of community resolutions (CR), numerous examples were found where it could not be established if the offender had admitted the offence; showed any remorse for committing the crime or had willingly entered into the process. There were two examples where the offender had not been traced or interviewed yet the offence was shown as detected as a community resolution. At the time of inspection there were no force forms in existence to guide or direct officers and achieve an acceptable standard of submission.

The force has recognised this issue and increased monitoring and quality assurance of community resolutions. The task has become the responsibility of the DRU who now examine cases within 24 hours of finalisation. If the CR is not of an acceptable standard or there is insufficient detail it is returned to the officer for this additional information to be added.

Some quality assurance of PND submissions is conducted by the criminal justice department. However, the responsibility for the submission and examination of standards remains with divisions and there is no real identifiable ownership or structured approach adopted other than from front-line supervisors.

Similarly cannabis warnings are managed at a divisional level but there is no obvious senior officer oversight from a local or force perspective to check compliance. Details of warnings are entered in officers' official notebooks and consequently there is little or no examination to see if standards for their issue have been met. The only other auditable record is the limited details entered on the crime record and the retained property reference.

The drive to improve this position has resulted in increased oversight with the introduction of an out-of-court disposals group chaired by the ACC lead for crime data integrity. The group meet on a quarterly basis and meetings are attended by senior divisional and departmental representatives. To compliment this approach, a multi-agency out-of-court scrutiny panel has been formed with representatives from Crown Prosecution Service, youth offending teams, Probation Service and Her Majesty's Court Service. This is a positive development in terms of increasing accountability and transparency, with the

added benefit of independent advice and feedback to the constabulary on the appropriateness of this type of disposal.

Cautions – Out of the 22 cautions we dip-sampled, we found that in all cases the offender’s previous history made them suitable to receive a caution. In 21 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 12 cases where there was a victim to consult 4 cases showed that the victims’ views had been considered. There is a template that makes the offender aware of the implications of admitting responsibility for the offence. There is very limited reference made to the use of the gravity matrix for the purposes of decision making.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – We dip sampled 20 PNDs and found that the offender was suitable to receive a penalty notice in 17 cases. In none of the cases did we find evidence that the offender had been made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the penalty notice. Out of the 11 cases where there was a victim to consult, we found that none had their views considered when the police decided to issue a penalty notice.

Cannabis warnings – We dip sampled 25 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in 24 cases. In none of the 25 cases did we find evidence that that the offender had been made aware of the nature and implications of accepting the warning. The fact there is no force form or booklet exacerbates the position.

Community resolutions – We dip sampled 20 community resolutions and found that in 17 cases the offender either had no previous offending history or that the offender’s past history still justified the use of the community resolution. Out of the 20 resolutions where there was a victim, 19 cases showed that the wishes and personal circumstances of the victim had been properly considered. Of the 20 cases sampled, 18 showed that the agreed outcome was meaningful and appropriate¹⁷. There were two examples where the suspect had not been located and interviewed yet showed a community resolution as the outcome.

¹⁷ National guidance for community resolution directs that at the point the community resolution is administered an officer will need to: confirm the offender admits the offence and explain the process to the offender – including how the offender will make good the harm caused. The implications of receiving a community resolution need to be explained to the offender – it does not form part of a criminal record but may be disclosed as part of an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service check. The community resolution is to be recorded appropriately, in accordance with the NCRS and HOCR.

2.3. Are no-crime decisions for high-risk crime categories correct and is there is robust oversight and quality control in Lancashire Constabulary?

No-crime¹⁸ decision making is tightly controlled and this is reflected in the strong audit results. We examined 142 no-crime records and found 136 records to be compliant with HOCR and NCRS. This suggests that the processes applied by the force to ensure no-crime decisions were correct are robust.

The central audit team, led by the FCIR takes responsibility for all no crime decisions which ensures that a consistent approach is adopted and crimes are only re-classified when appropriate. In the cases of rape complaints, the FCIR is the dedicated decision maker and is supported by the detective superintendent, head of rape investigation when required.

Some confusion was found within the PPU environment regarding investigations that required AVI to be considered for a no-crime decision. This resulted in some cases being filed as undetected as opposed to being referred for potential reclassification and being accurately recorded as a no-crime.

2.4. How does Lancashire Constabulary promote a victim-centred approach to crime recording and associated outcomes?

Chief officers promote a victim centred approach to crime recording, crime outcomes and no-crimes, which is reinforced through the numerous leadership presentations conducted by the Chief Constable and his command team. Internal communications are similarly well co-ordinated including an on-line forum called 'The Buzz' that allows for information exchange and is utilised to promote victim focus and the requirement for accurate and ethical crime recording. Within the control room, we found operators are almost always polite, helpful and professional.

At a local level this message has been communicated effectively as we found it abundantly clear that staff recognise the priority of meeting the needs of victims through the 'getting it right first time' commitment. It is clearly embedded within the organisation with staff referring to a "sea change" in leadership direction with an emphasis on providing a victim centred response to recording crime and subsequent decision making.

The force routinely carries out surveys of people who report incidents or crimes via an external company. The data gathered is reported upon monthly and specific areas of dissatisfaction are communicated directly to sergeants. This information does not feature within current governance arrangements but the force plan to incorporate results into the revised performance regime.

¹⁸ A recorded crime can be removed from the recorded number of crimes by re-classifying it as a no-crime when it has subsequently been established not to have been a crime on the basis of additional verifiable information.

2.5. How does Lancashire Police ensure systems for receiving, recording and managing reported crimes of rape are robust?

The force has a current policy and protocol for rape and serious sexual assaults that is accessible via the intranet and provides guidance on how rape crimes should be supervised and reviewed. Despite this range of documentation there is no clarity or direction on when the offence should be recorded and by whom. Specific roles and responsibilities are clearly documented within the policy but it is not explicit in terms of who should record the offence and at what point. The policy is extremely clear in terms of victim focus stating “the underlying principle the constabulary will adhere to is that the victim is to be believed in all cases”.

We found that all officers and staff had a good understanding of the rape policy and no-crime process with appropriate knowledge of roles, responsibilities and their duty to record a crime at the time of first report. However, despite the message to crime at the earliest opportunity and staff said that there were still some examples where reports had not been crimed in a timely way whilst an investigation was ongoing.

The FCIR conducts rigorous audits of rape, examining the investigation from the point of initial call to recording and disposal. We found that reports of rape are recorded accurately and no-crime reclassifications of crimes alleging rape were of a high standard. Of the 50 rape no-crime records we examined, 49 complied with NCRS and the HOCR. All rape no-crimes requests are submitted to the FCIR who is the only person with authority to consider such submissions.

There is specific reference in the rape policy to the response to reports of rape made locally but committed outside the force area. This was similarly well understood by staff with the emphasis being on victim care and evidence capture. Staff were aware of the need to create a crime record and examples were found where officers had responded to these reports in a swift and professional manner, providing victim support and compliance with recording procedures prior to the transfer of the crime investigation.

2.6. How does Lancashire Constabulary IT systems allow for efficient and effective management of crime recording?

The force has a good understanding of the IT systems it uses that may contain reports of crime; these are the incident management system STORM and the crime management system Sleuth. There is a functional interface from the incident management system to crime system only.

There is a specific section on Sleuth to manage safeguarding enquiries that may contain reports of crime and this is subject of regular audit. Both IT systems are well managed through audit processes but no weeding of either system was evident.

There are no stand-alone databases in operation. At present, the FCIR in consultation with the head of the contact management centre determines the audit schedule based on threat, harm and vulnerability to victims.

Owing to the reduced audit capability, more proactive checking of non-crime incidents is not possible; however plans are in place to incorporate this activity into the DRU function once it reaches its full establishment.

People and skills

3 Does the force have staff whose conduct and skills ensure accurate crime recording?

3.1. What arrangements does Lancashire Constabulary have in place to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to ensure accurate crime recording?

The force has conducted a significant restructure in response to its austerity challenge that resulted in the formation of the centralised contact management centre and the DRU. The previous divisional structures included a role of geographic coordinators who managed NCRS issues at a local level but these posts are in the process of being disbanded with a similar function now operating within the new centralised force arrangements.

NCRS advisors are located within the contact management centre and work on a 24/7 shift rota to provide immediate and timely advice to both customer contact advisors within the CMC and to front line officers. This ensures that incidents are crimed in accordance with NCRS and offers a quality assurance role in advising staff on all aspects of incident and log compliance whilst also helping to develop a culture of continuous learning for all staff.

The DRU function also consists of a telephone investigation unit with investigators working directly alongside call takers within the CMC, further adding value to the quality assurance process.

There has been a significant investment in training for DRU and call handling staff with all receiving a 4-week induction course that included two days devoted to NCRS. The course was managed and facilitated by the FCIR with the ACC lead for data quality supporting the events. The CMC is driving improvements in data quality including the development of NCRS training products with good use being made of departmental training days.

A consequence of these revised working practices is that operational sergeants now take responsibility to conduct an initial review of crime records. However, this change has not been accompanied by any recent training to support this responsibility with improved knowledge of NCRS and HOCR. Taking account of the currency of the training products produced by the CMC, the force would benefit in utilising divisional training days for operational sergeants involved in

the preliminary decision making process for crime recording to further strengthen their knowledge and raise standards of compliance.

Training in NCRS and HOCR is routinely provided for new recruits entering the initial police learning development programme (IPLDP) and trainee detectives on the Initial crime investigators development programme (ICIDP). This is delivered by the FCIR. General guidance of NCRS and HOCR is available to all staff and accessible on the force intranet but no structured training is provided or planned.

3.2. How do the behaviours of Lancashire Constabulary staff reflect a culture of integrity for crime recording practice and decision-making?

Consistent messages from the chief officer team highlights implicitly that non-adherence to HOCR is genuinely unacceptable and senior managers have taken responsibility to reinforce this message at a divisional and departmental level. There was a refreshing and positive attitude towards the standards the force expects in terms of behaviour and standards of crime recording with the focus wholeheartedly on the victim.

We found that in the vast majority of cases there was no pressure, explicit or implied to under record or mis-record crime. However, examples were identified a local level of a small number of inaccurate crime categories being applied where a sudden rise in offences had occurred. This is a practice that should stop.

3.3. How is the accuracy of crime recording in Lancashire Constabulary actively overseen and governed by the force crime registrar (FCR)?

The force has an experienced, effective and well-regarded FCIR. The role is within the CMC but outside of operational command. All disputes are referred to the FCIR as the lead for crime and incident data and she is considered the final arbiter in the interpretation of the NCRS and HOCR.

Despite the reduction in audit capability the FCIR is active in the oversight of crime recording systems and processes within the force and has specific responsibility for ensuring that NCRS and HOCR are consistently applied.

The FCIR shows objectivity and impartiality in managing the current audit activity and the high compliance rate for rape no-crimes is a good example of her effectiveness. A clear evaluation and well-documented rationale was evident for the rape no-crimes authorised by the FCIR.

The FCIR has the full support of the chief officer team and immediate access to the chief officer lead if required. Formal quarterly meetings have been introduced to discuss the range of crime recording issues.