

For Information	
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Report to:	Joint Audit and Scrutiny Panel (JASP)
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Crime Data Integrity Inspection 2018

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To provide the Joint Audit and Scrutiny Panel (JASP) with an overview of the findings of the recent HMICFRS Crime Data Integrity Inspection and the work to be undertaken by the force to address the areas of concern.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Panel notes the contents of the report.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To enable the Panel to fulfil its scrutiny obligations with regard to Nottinghamshire Police and its response to the HMICFRS Inspection.
- 3.2 To provide the Panel with greater scrutiny opportunities to reach more informed decisions.

4. Summary of Key Points

Crime Data Integrity Inspection

On Monday 30th April 2018, Nottinghamshire Police was subject to a Crime Data Integrity (CDI) Inspection.

This inspection formed the basis of an unannounced programme of CDI inspections undertaken by HMICFRS on a 12-month rolling period.

The primary aim of the inspection was to measure the rate of compliance of police-recorded crime against the national standards (HOCR) for all 43 Home Office police forces in England and Wales. Alongside the calculation of the forces' all crime (excluding fraud) compliance rate, the audit also calculated the force compliance rate for violence against the person and sexual offences.

Findings

Detailed below is an overview of the main findings of the inspection.

Overall judgment

 Requires improvement

The force has made concerted efforts to improve crime-recording accuracy since HMICFRS's 2014 crime data integrity inspection report. Importantly, HMICFRS found an approach among officers and staff that places the victim at the forefront of their crime-recording decisions.

The force has:

- improved the supervision of out-of-court disposals;
- developed and provided crime-recording training for officers, supervisors and staff involved in making crime-recording decisions;
- high levels of recording accuracy for reported sexual offences;
- good crime-recording arrangements in respect of modern slavery crimes;
- fully implemented the recommendations set out in our 2014 report; and
- made good progress against a national action plan developed to improve crime recording by police forces.

Despite these advances Nottinghamshire Police is still failing some victims of crime. Based on the findings of the HMICFRS's examination of crime reports for the period 1 August 2017 to 31 January 2018, it is estimated that the force failed to record over 13,800 reported crimes each year. This represents a recording rate of 87.3 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 1.80 percent). The 12.7 percent of reported crimes that go unrecorded include crimes such as violence offences and domestic abuse. Incorrect recording decisions are often the consequence of officers and staff not understanding the crime-recording rules. HMICFRS found that some officers and staff have an insufficient understanding of the crime-recording requirements for common assault, harassment, malicious communications and public order offences. This was particularly apparent among those officers and staff who have not recently received any crime-recording training. These errors were further compounded by limited supervision of crime-recording decisions.

Overview

The force has improved its crime-recording processes since the HMICFRS Inspection in 2014. HMICFRS found the force has:

- introduced a telephone investigation team (CRIM) responsible for screening crimes that do not need officer attendance, then recording and investigating them;
- provided crime-recording training for officers and staff who deal with vulnerable victims;

- a centralised approval process in place for out-of-court disposals to ensure that national guidance is complied with;
- improved the quality of its crime-recording data;
- fully implemented the recommendations set out in our 2014 report; and
- made good progress against a national action plan developed to improve crime recording by police forces.

The force crime registrar (FCR), responsible for overseeing crime-recording arrangements, has completed a national College of Policing course and is fully accredited for the role. The force has invested in a new NCRS (national crime recording standard) compliance team which will support the FCR and increase crime-recording timeliness and compliance.

Despite these advances, HMICFRS found that response and neighbourhood teams had not recently received crime-recording training, resulting in frontline officers:

- failing to identify and record violent crimes, including those arising from domestic abuse incidents such as common assault, harassment and malicious communications, and other crimes such as public order offences; and
- not having a sufficient understanding of the standard of additional verifiable information (AVI) that is required to cancel a crime once it has been recorded.

HMICFRS also found the force must:

- increase the number of crimes it records within 24 hours of being reported; and
- improve its collection of diversity information from victims of crime and how it uses this to comply with its equality duty.

How effective is the force at recording reported crime?

Overall crime-recording rate

Over 13,800 reports of crime a year are not recorded

87.3% of reported crimes were recorded

HMICFRS examined reports of crime which the force received, and for which an auditable record was created. The force informed HMICFRS that 95.8 percent of crime that is recorded (excluding fraud) comes through an auditable route. This does not mean that 95.8 percent of crimes reported to Nottinghamshire Police come through these routes but that 95.8 percent of crime is recorded this way.

HMICFRS found that the force recorded 87.3 percent of these crimes (with a confidence interval of +/- 1.80 percent). They estimate that this means the force is not recording in excess of 13,800 reports of crime each year.

Of the 1,352 reports of crime that HMICFRS audited, they assessed 346 to be crimes related to domestic abuse. Of these, the force had recorded 268. The 78 offences not recorded included 59 violent crimes, one sexual crime and 18 other crimes. Many of these were reported directly to the force but were not recorded. HMICFRS found no clear evidence or rationale as to why they were not recorded as crimes.

In these cases, while the majority of the incident records made it clear that officers had considered safeguarding requirements, HMICFRS found other incidents where this was not the case. However, they did find that despite the crimes not being recorded an investigation proportionate to the circumstances was undertaken in most of these cases.

The force's current domestic abuse policy and procedure sets out the circumstances when it is mandatory to complete a risk assessment for domestic abuse cases. HMICFRS found that there is confusion among officers about whether and when to complete a risk assessment. In many of the cases where crime reports had not been recorded a risk assessment had not been completed when it should have been. They also found that supervision of force crime-recording decisions requires improvement. In particular, they found:

- some occasions where officers had completed inaccurate and incomplete risk assessments; and
- prior to closing the incident logs, control room managers were not always applying adequate scrutiny to officer updates submitted in crime-related incidents, to satisfy themselves that crime-recording decisions are correct.

HMICFRS advised the force must improve crime recording in domestic abuse incidents, in order to give the force a greater understanding of domestic abuse crime in its communities. It will also mean that victims can have greater confidence in the response of the force when reporting these crimes.

Violence against the person

Over 5,400 reports of violent crime a year are not recorded

82.7% of reported violent crimes were recorded

HMICFRS found that 82.7 percent of violent crimes reported to the force are recorded (with a confidence interval of +/- 3.02 percent). This is lower than the overall crime-recording rate detailed above. By HMICRS's estimate, this means the force fails to record over 5,400 violent crimes that are reported to it each year.

In most cases, where violent crimes were not recorded, HMICFRS found that:

- some call handlers do not always record on the incident log full details of the conversation they had with the person reporting a crime;
- dispatchers do not always pass all available information to attending officers thereby making accurate crime-recording decisions difficult;
- the updates and results from attending officers are not always recorded within incident logs with sufficient accuracy and detail;

- some frontline officers and staff are still unsure of the basic crime-recording rules relating to common assault, harassment, malicious communications and public order offences;
- following a deployment to an incident, officers do not always record a comprehensive explanation for why a crime should not be recorded; and
- there is limited supervision to correct these decisions at the earliest opportunity.

Sexual Offences

Over 190 reports of sex offences a year are not recorded

94.4% of reported sex offences were recorded

The force records 94.4 percent of sexual offence crimes (including rape) that are reported to it (with a confidence interval of +/- 2.58 percent). HMICFRS estimate the force is not recording over 190 reported sexual offence crimes each year.

This recording rate illustrates the improved scrutiny given to reports of sexual offences since HMICFRS's 2014 report.

HMICFRS found that most unrecorded sexual offences occur when additional offences are disclosed during the investigation of already recorded crimes. This means that investigations and safeguarding requirements of the unrecorded crimes are taking place. However, recording such crimes has added importance for identifying perpetrators and challenging their behaviour. HMICFRS also found that in some cases frontline officers were not sure of the basic crime-recording principles and recording rules, including in relation to youth produced sexual imagery.

Rape

87 out of 94 audited rape reports were accurately recorded

HMICFRS found that 87 of the 94 reports of rape they examined had been correctly recorded. These include reports that originated on the force incident system, reports received directly by specialist officers from third-party professionals, and from a review of N100 records.

HMICFRS found that one of the missed crimes of rape was misclassified as incitement of a child and one attempted rape was misclassified as sexual assault. Two cases had N100s recorded instead. Of the remaining missed rape crimes, two were part of multiple reports of sexual crimes and one should have been recorded in addition to a modern slavery crime.

In three of these cases, there was no evidence of any safeguarding arrangements on the incident records. In two of these cases an investigation was not possible because the victims declined to support an investigation.

HMICFRS advised the force's use of the Home Office classification N100 could be improved. Introduced in April 2015, the N100 is a record created to explain why reported incidents of rape or attempted rape, whether from victims, witnesses or third parties, have not been immediately recorded as a confirmed crime. This can include instances where additional information confirms the rape did not occur, or where the rape occurred in another force area and was therefore transferred to the relevant force to record and investigate.

HMICFRS found 19 reports for which the force should have applied an N100 classification. It was applied on eight of these occasions.

Separately, they also reviewed 20 sample records where an N100 classification had been used and found that 16 N100s were correctly recorded. In addition, they found two N100s which were correctly turned into rapes and two N100s which should have been turned into rapes but were not.

How efficiently do the systems and processes in the force support accurate crime-recording?

Crime reports held on other systems

26 out of 32 vulnerable victim crimes were recorded

To be confident that vulnerable victims always receive the support they need, it is important that crimes reported directly to public protection teams are always recorded. HMICFRS were pleased to find the force works hard to ensure this is the case. They examined 25 vulnerable adults and 25 vulnerable child victim records. Overall, they found the force correctly recorded 26 out of 32 crimes identified.

In the adult sample, 16 crimes should have been recorded. 14 were correctly recorded, including one rape. The missing crimes were one theft and one crime involving indecent pictures of children.

In the child sample, 16 crimes should have been recorded. 12 were correctly recorded, including two rapes. The four missed crimes were all common assaults.

HMICFRS found that victims had received support through the force safeguarding arrangements in all of these cases. However, the four crimes missed from the child sample were not investigated because the crimes were not identified or recorded.

Modern slavery

Offences relating to modern slavery are an important and recent addition to the crimes that forces must record and investigate. HMICFRS, therefore, reviewed the recording of reports of modern slavery offences.

Overall, HMICFRS found that officers and staff demonstrate a good understanding of recording modern slavery crimes. They examined 19 modern slavery crime records and identified that 18 of these were correctly recorded. In addition, four rapes linked to these reports were correctly recorded. However, four other crimes linked to these reports were not recorded; these included one rape and three assaults. HMICFRS also identified one modern slavery crime which had been incorrectly recorded as a kidnap/false imprisonment and another that was over-recorded (duplicated).

HMICFRS also examined 21 modern slavery source records and found that eight modern slavery crimes and one rape crime were correctly recorded. However, one crime of assault was not recorded.

HMICFRS acknowledged the force has a dedicated modern slavery team which is responsible for scrutinising all reports of modern slavery that come into the force. It has an effective process for dealing with reports of modern slavery that it receives via the National Referral Mechanism (NRM).

Timeliness

Where the information obtained at the first point of contact satisfies the national crime recording standard the expectation is that identified crimes will be recorded without delay and in any case recorded within 24 hours.

HMICFRS found that, of the reports of crime that had been recorded by the force, only 373 out of 486 reports of violent crime, 162 out of 237 sexual offences and 342 out of 399 other offences had been recorded within 24 hours of the receipt of the report.

HMICFRS noted that the force has already taken action to address this through the new NCRS compliance team. This should ensure that in the future crimes will be recorded without delay and within 24 hours of the receipt of the report.

Cancelled crimes

Where additional verifiable information (AVI) is obtained to show that a recorded crime did not occur, the record can be cancelled. The force operates a system whereby only the FCR and the designated decision makers (DDMs) in his team can cancel recorded crimes. HMICFRS found these arrangements to be effective.

HMICFRS reviewed a sample of cancelled recorded crimes of rape, other sexual offences, violence and robbery. They found the FCR had authorised correctly the cancellation of all 16 offences of rape and the DDMs had authorised correctly the cancellation of 11 out of 13 sexual offences, 12 out of 13 violence offences and all 11 robbery offences.

Where a crime has been cancelled or transferred to another force for investigation, a victim should always know the status of his or her reported crime. In the case of a decision to cancel a recorded crime, the very least the victim should expect is an explanation of the reason for this decision. HMICFRS found that of the 39 victims who should have been told of the transfer/cancellation, 36 were told of the decision.

Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime provides clear guidance to police forces regarding the service that should be provided to the victims of crime. HMICFRS concluded that the force is aware of its responsibilities under this code.

All victims of crime whose reports are recorded by Nottinghamshire Police are automatically referred to Victim Support within two days, unless they opt out of the service. The exceptions to this are victims of domestic violence or sexual offences; in these cases they are required to give their consent to a referral to Victim Support or other relevant organisation. Victims will then be contacted to discuss what support is available to them. Therefore, the recording of reported crime is important to ensure victims are not denied access to these services.

Equality

HMICFRS found that the force must improve collection of information regarding crimes affecting identifiable groups within communities. Protected characteristics, such as gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, religion and age do not necessarily increase the vulnerability of an individual to the risk of crime. However, it is important that the force records information regarding the characteristics of victims of crime to identify any patterns which may exist between different community groups and their vulnerability to (or their relative likelihood to report) different types of crime.

HMICFRS found the force routinely records information on the age, gender and ethnicity of victims in most cases, but information on the disability, religion, and sexual orientation of victims is not routinely recorded, unless it is a feature of the crime itself.

Officer and staff survey

HMICFRS conducted a survey of officers and staff in Nottinghamshire Police of their experience of crime-recording. Some 316 respondents completed the survey. HMICFRS were pleased to find that the vast majority of respondents understood the crime-recording process and believed that the chief officer team clearly communicates the need for ethical crime recording. Just over half the respondents understood the changes made by the force since the HMICFRS 2014 inspection, and improvement in the force's approach to crime-recording.

How well does the force demonstrate the leadership and culture necessary to meet the national standards for crime-recording?

Overall, HMICFRS found good leadership from senior officers regarding crime-recording expectations, and an approach among most officers and staff that places the victim at the forefront of their crime-recording decisions.

They also found the force has a comprehensive CDI audit plan and that the FCR believes there will be sufficient capacity in the new NCRS compliance team to improve crime recording across the force.

They found the FCR has access to and feels fully supported by the chief officer responsible for CDI, who in turn provides governance and oversight of CDI through an information management board. At these meetings issues relating to CDI, including the results of crime audits, are shared with senior staff, they in turn follow-up any further actions as required. CDI related messages are also shared with officers and staff by the force corporate communications department. This means that lessons learned are shared across the force and identified risks to the quality of CDI are mitigated.

HMICFRS found that the force recognises that there is a lack of accountability for crime-recording decisions at a local level and is addressing this in conjunction with a force-wide data quality campaign. In addition, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner has recently commissioned a leadership programme aimed at sergeants and above. This will include information as to their responsibilities in regard to crime recording.

HMICFRS also found the force had implemented all of the local recommendations made in its 2014 report and had also made good progress against a national action plan developed to improve crime recording and which all forces have been asked to implement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, HMICFRS reported Nottinghamshire Police has made progress in its crime-recording processes since 2014 and continues to work on further improvements, particularly in recording accurate details for victims of violent crime, including domestic abuse.

Next Steps

HMICFRS have identified the following recommendations/areas for improvement outlined below. ACC Cooper (Local Policing) will have strategic oversight of delivery of these recommendations through the Force's Crime and Data Quality Board. This Board will be held monthly, with the first one scheduled for 28th September. A comprehensive action plan will record progress against each of the actions and a record of this information will be entered onto 4Action to ensure the force's corporate memory is maintained.

Recommendations

The force should immediately:

- take steps to identify and address gaps in its systems and processes for identifying and recording all reports of violent crimes (in particular those that are domestic abuse related);
- ensure that adequate supervision is applied to **all** crime-recording decisions made by officers and staff; and
- ensure that **all** identified crimes are recorded without delay and in any case within 24 hours.

Within three months the force should provide crime-recording training for frontline officers to include:

- the crime-recording rules for common assault, harassment, malicious communications and public order offences; and
- the standard of AVI that is required to cancel a recorded crime.

Areas for improvement

The force should immediately:

- improve the understanding and use by its officers and staff of the N100 classification, for those reports of rape which are not immediately recorded as a crime; and
- improve how it collects diversity information from victims of crime and how it uses this to comply with its equality duty.

5. Financial Implications and Budget Provision

- 5.1 If financial implications arise from recommendations raised from This inspection, these implications are considered accordingly. Where an action cannot be delivered within budget provision, approval will be sought through the appropriate means.

6. Human Resources Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct HR implications as a result of this report. HR implications resulting from specific actions will be managed on a case by case basis.

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct Equality implications as a result of this report. Equality implications resulting from specific actions will be managed on a case by case basis.

8. Risk Management

- 8.1 Some current actions involve the completion of formal reviews of specific business areas. It is possible that some or all of these reviews will identify and evaluate significant risks, which will then be incorporated into the Force's risk management process.

9. Policy Implications and links to the Police and Crime Plan Priorities

9.1 Any policy implications will be subject to current policy development process.

10. Changes in Legislation or other Legal Considerations

10.1 There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.

11. Details of outcome of consultation

11.1 Following receipt of a final audit or inspection report a member of the Governance and Planning team consults with the appropriate Lead Officer and other stakeholders to plan appropriate actions in response to each relevant recommendation, or to agree a suitable closing comment where no action is deemed necessary.

11.2 All planned actions are added to the action planning system, 4Action, for management and review until completion.

12. Appendices

N/A