



RESPONSE BY THE PCC TO HMIC INSPECTIONS OF CLEVELAND POLICE

INSPECTION DETAILS

Title of Inspection
Crime Data Integrity

Date Inspection Published
28 August 2014

Type of Inspection: Cleveland Specific National
 Follow Up Thematic
 Partner Inspection

Is Cleveland Police quoted in the Report? Yes No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In its 2013/14 inspection programme, HMIC committed to carry out an inspection into the way the 43 police forces in England and Wales record crime data. All 43 forces were inspected by mid-August 2014, with a full thematic report published in autumn 2014. The central question of the inspection programme was “To what extent can police-recorded crime information be trusted?” Each force inspection involved:

- 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 findings for Cleveland police were as follows:

Crimes reported as part of an incident record

- Incidents reviewed: HMIC reviewed the following number of incident records in Cleveland Police – 88 (*These include reported incidents of burglary, violence, robbery, criminal damage and sexual offences.*)
- Crimes identified: From these incidents HMIC identified the following number of crimes - 85
- Crimes recorded: From these identified crimes Cleveland Police recorded the following number of crimes – 67

Crimes referred from other agencies directly

- Referrals: HMIC reviewed the following number of referrals reported directly to Cleveland Police specialist departments from other agencies which contained reports of crime - 50
- Crimes identified: From these referrals to specialist departments HMIC identified the following number of crimes that Cleveland Police should have recorded - 15
- Crimes recorded - From these identified crimes Cleveland Police recorded the following number of crimes - 6

No-crimes

- HMIC reviewed the following number of recorded crimes of rape, violence and robbery which Cleveland Police had subsequently recorded as no-crime - 84
- From these HMIC assessed the following number of no-crime decisions as being correct – 46

Recommendations

The following recommendations (with their level of urgency indication) were made by HMIC as a result of the findings:

Immediately

1. Chief officers should ensure all police officers and police staff have unimpeded access to, and reliable knowledge of, an adequate system for the confidential reporting and effective handling of concerns around crime recording.
2. The force should ensure the prompt recording of crimes in compliance with the NCRS and HOCR. Particular attention must be paid to the correct recording of sexual offences and the work of the protecting vulnerable people unit.
3. The force should review and amend the policy and procedure on reports of crime which have occurred in another force area, to ensure that officers have clear guidance on how to deal with these incidents and the management of any evidence and documents.
4. The force should take steps to ensure that the oversight of the decision to use out-of-court disposals is sufficiently robust so that they are only used in appropriate circumstances; in particular, that they are not used when the offending history of the offender should preclude their use, and that the views of victims are taken into account. This should be supported by the introduction of an effective mechanism for the monitoring of the use of out-of-court disposals to ensure the decisions being taken to use the disposals are appropriate.
5. The force should review the current structure for the approval of no-crime decisions including the provision of specific guidance and support on the use of additional verifiable information, ensuring these decisions are made by individuals who are independent of local performance accountability and supported by effective and proportionate oversight by the FCR.
6. The force must improve the process for dealing with reports of crime received through the system of public protection mailboxes so as to improve the accuracy and timeliness of crime recording and victim service in compliance with the HOCR and NCRS.

Within three months

7. The force should establish and, as soon as practicable thereafter, begin operation of an adequate system for the auditing by the force crime registrar (FCR), of all referrals by other organisations (public sector, voluntary sector and private sector) to the force of incidents and reports of crime, with special attention being directed to those involving vulnerable victims.
8. The force should conduct an NCRS and HOCR training needs analysis, and immediately thereafter introduce a tiered, co-ordinated training programme on NCRS and HOCR, prioritising personnel in roles which impact on quality, timeliness and victim focus and particularly for those staff within the force control room and public protection commands.

Within six months

9. The force should assess the appropriateness and value of extending the process of scanning reports of crime and cannabis warnings to include PND.

FORCE RESPONSE TO FINDINGS

Cleveland Police has launched a review of its crime data following the latest HMIC report on crime data integrity, which highlighted a number of areas of improvement, as well as good practice.

The inspection was carried out on crimes recorded between November 2012 and 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. It also included an assessment of local crime recording arrangements under three headings: leadership and governance, systems and processes, and people and skills.

Out of 88 incident records examined by the HMIC, 85 crimes should have been recorded. Of these 67 were actually recorded as a crime. The 18 have now been recorded as crimes and are being reviewed. The main finding was that the Force needed to put more detail in explaining the rationale for decisions.

In relation to out-of-court disposals, the HMIC found Cleveland Police to be compliant with national standards.

HMIC also reviewed 84 no-crime records for the offences of rape, robbery and violence, and of those 47 records were compliant. Of the 37 that were not compliant, 12 were for rape, 11 were for robbery and 14 were for violence. All 37 have now been recorded as crimes and are being reviewed.

Cleveland Police policy in relation to rape and serious sexual offences is that an offence is recorded as soon as it is reported to the Force, and then it is thoroughly investigated. At the conclusion of the investigation, a decision may be made to change the crime recording status to no-crime. This means that victims will have been provided with support in line with the Victims' Code of Practice.

Assistant Chief Constable Simon Nickless said:

“Victims are absolutely at the heart of everything we do and we are fully committed to working in partnership with other agencies to support people who have been through a traumatic or distressing experience. We’ve taken immediate action to review all the decisions made on no-crimes, and also improve our decision-making process, with a higher level of scrutiny applied to ensure that decisions are accurate and compliant. Since November 2013, we have had a dedicated decision maker in place specifically to assess no-crime decisions in respect of rape, and this has improved our compliance rates. We have developed a scrutiny panel to review rape no-crime decisions, which is made up of representatives from the Police and Crime Commissioner’s Office, the Local Criminal Justice Board and third sector agencies working in sexual violence. Monthly audits of around 320 incidents are undertaken by the Force Crime Registrar and Crime Liaison Officers, who independently check compliance with the National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS) and the National Standard of Incident Recording (NSIR). This work also includes a review of all no-crimes for indictable offences, which includes rape and sexual offences to ensure we get it right. The results are presented back to a monthly performance group chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable. In addition, I am reviewing current procedures and identifying ways in which to improve standards. The report also acknowledges good practice in the Force in relation to our call handling staff employed by our partner Steria and officers in the contact centre. They are trained in the identification of risk and vulnerability and live audits of incidents are routinely conducted by supervisors. The Force has invested much effort in out-of-court disposals and dip sampling indicates compliance with national standards. The report found that Cleveland Police promote the victim as its primary focus for the reporting and recording of crime and this is reflected in its policies and procedures. The use in Cleveland of a victim call-back process was also highlighted. Our priority now is to focus on the areas which need improvement to ensure better recording and compliance, in order to deliver the best quality of service for victims of crime.”

PCC RESPONSE TO FINDINGS

Comment by the Police & Crime Commissioner, Barry Coppinger:

“The HMIC report raises some serious concerns over the recording procedures at the Force, and I am supportive of the action being taken to address this. One of my main priorities is to ensure a better deal for victims and witnesses, and I have asked for regular updates from the Deputy Chief Constable. It’s important that victims feel confident to come forward and report crime that they are supported through the process and that crimes are ethically and appropriately recorded. I shall continue to monitor the situation closely.”