



## RESPONSE BY THE PCC TO HMICFRS INSPECTIONS OF CLEVELAND POLICE

### INSPECTION DETAILS

Title of Inspection - Crime investigations - An inspection into how effectively the police investigate crime

Date Inspection Published - 27 March 2025

Type of Inspection:

- ☐ Cleveland Specific  
☐ Follow Up  
☐ Partner Inspection

- ☒ National  
☐ Thematic

Is Cleveland Police quoted in the Report? ☐ Yes ☒ No

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

#### **Introduction**

The effective investigation of crime is fundamental to the legitimacy of policing and to public confidence. It is integral to the concept of policing by consent. The service provided to victims directly affects the level of public trust and confidence in policing and the wider criminal justice system. It also influences how safe people feel and it prevents future offending.

When a crime is reported, the public have a right to expect that the police will record and investigate it effectively. They also have a right to expect that the service they receive includes regular updates, and that it is consistent with the rights contained in the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

There has been a long-term decline in successful prosecutions, meaning that too few criminal investigations are leading to justice for victims. There is a general perception among the public that the police are not doing a good job of tackling the crimes that affect local communities.

Therefore, as part of its 2022–25 programme of inspections, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire Rescue Services (HMICFRS) has inspected how effectively the police investigate crime.

During the inspection, HMICFRS saw numerous examples of initiatives forces have introduced to improve the standard of crime investigations and achieve better outcomes for victims. 24 case studies have been included in the report to highlight some of these initiatives. The report can be accessed by clicking on this link: [An inspection into how effectively the police investigate crime - His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services](#)

#### **Summary of Findings**

##### **How effectively forces understand crime-related demand and match resources to it**

In this chapter, HMICFRS report on how well forces understand crime-related demand and how effectively they match their investigative resources to it. HMICFRS also examines how well forces understand the factors that affect their investigative resources, such as recruitment, retention, investigative workloads, and officer and staff well-being.

## **Understanding demand**

- To investigate volume crime more effectively, forces need more officers and staff
- Since 2015, recorded crime rates per 1,000 population have increased
- The number of police officers and staff per 1,000 population has decreased since 2010
- The increase in digital evidence adds significant complexity to crime investigations
- Most forces have a good understanding of their crime patterns
- Analysis of future crime rates is inconsistent
- Forces don't have an in-depth understanding of their crime-related demand
- Most forces use analysis of crime levels to determine the number of investigators
- There is no consistent model to help forces decide how many investigators they need
- Without an in-depth analysis of all crime-related demand, forces can't accurately determine how many investigators they need, or the impact of these decisions on the service they provide to victims

### **Recommendation 1**

By 31 March 2026, the National Police Chiefs' Council, working with the College of Policing, should produce a model to help forces better assess and understand their crime-related demand. This should include an assessment of future demand.

When producing this model, they should consider the complexity involved in investigations. As soon as practicable after the model has been introduced, chief constables should use it to help them determine the number of investigators their forces need to meet their crime-related demand.

### **Recommendation 2**

By 31 March 2026, the College of Policing, working with the National Police Chiefs' Council and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, should evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of different models used for recording, assessing, allocating and investigating volume crime.

The evaluation should consider:

- the effect on bringing offenders to justice; and
- the service forces provide to victims.

It should make the evaluation available to chief constables to support and inform future change programmes in forces to improve the service they provide to victims.

## **Recruiting and retaining investigators**

- Forces find it hard to recruit investigators
- Across forces, there is no consistent approach to recruiting detectives
- Not all forces use direct entry to detective routes
- Officers often find it hard to move into investigative roles
- Many forces find it hard to retain investigators

## **Workload and well-being**

- Most forces identify investigators with high workloads
- Investigators and their supervisors are frequently overwhelmed by the size of their workloads
- A manageable workload and good supervision can lead to more effective investigations
- All forces have well-being policies and processes
- Workload and the working environment are closely linked to well-being

## **How effectively police deal with reports of crime**

In this chapter, HMICFRS consider whether officers and staff involved in receiving reports of crime, and those deployed in the subsequent responses, have an investigative mindset. HMICFRS also report on what officers and staff understand by the term 'reasonable lines of enquiry' and how well they:

- deal with initial reports of crime;
- assess threat, harm and risk;
- give advice about securing and preserving evidence; and
- allocate resources to reports of crime.

HMICFRS also examines whether forces give officers and staff enough time and support to manage crime scenes and identify reasonable lines of enquiry.

### **Investigative mindset**

- Officers and staff should have an investigative mindset from the moment the force receives a report of a crime
- Some call handlers see themselves as investigators
- Many response and neighbourhood officers don't think their primary role is to investigate crimes
- The police need to build a stronger investigative mindset and culture

### **Reasonable lines of enquiry**

- Officers and staff are generally confident in their understanding of what is a reasonable line of enquiry
- Officers and staff need a clearer explanation of what is reasonable

### **Dealing with initial telephone or online reports of crime**

- Performance in responding to crimes reported online, and by phone, varies across forces
- In some forces, online reports of crime can take longer to deal with

#### Recommendation 3

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure their force has an effective and efficient end-to-end process to deal with online reports of crime.

The process should remove all unnecessary delays in recording, assessing and allocating crime reports, and make sure the force consistently complies with its requirements under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

### **Assessing threat, harm, risk and the seriousness of the offence**

- In some forces, delays and ineffective processes mean there is still room for improvement when assessing risk

### **Giving the public advice about securing and preserving evidence**

- Call handlers sometimes miss opportunities to give advice about securing and preserving evidence

### **Responding to reports of crime**

- Demand often outstrips the supply and availability of officers and staff
- Too frequently, officers and staff are under pressure to leave crime scenes
- High demand in response policing negatively affects the quality of investigations

### **How effectively forces investigate reports of crime**

In this chapter, HMICFRS report on how effectively forces allocate and investigate crimes. This includes:

- how well investigators use investigation plans;
- the timeliness of investigations;
- how investigators deal with suspects and crime scenes; and
- the technology available to support crime investigations.

HMICFRS also examines how well supervisors oversee crime investigations.

### **Allocating crime reports for an investigation**

- Most forces have a crime allocation policy, but some policies are more effective than others
- Forces don't always allocate crimes to the most appropriate investigators
- Some forces have systemic delays in their processes to allocate crimes for an investigation

#### Recommendation 4

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure the end-to-end process for receiving, assessing and allocating reports of crime in their force minimises delays in the investigation process and the length of time before investigators contact victims.

#### Recommendation 5

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should design and operate a policy that results in their force allocating to investigators crimes that are commensurate with each investigator's level of training, accreditation and experience.

### **Investigation plans**

- Investigation plans can help, but only when forces use them effectively
- Some forces don't use investigation plans effectively
- Some forces measure the quantity of investigation plans, rather than assessing their quality

#### Recommendation 6

By 30 September 2025, chief constables should make sure their force has a clear policy relating to investigation plans. They should make sure their force communicates this policy to officers and staff.

As a minimum, this policy should cover:

- when to start an investigation plan;
- who is responsible for writing the investigation plan;
- what to consider including in an investigation plan;
- how supervisors should review and approve investigation plans; and
- how the force will monitor investigation plans to check their quality, and to make sure investigators and supervisors have followed them.

### **Timeliness of investigations**

- There are too many delays in completing investigations
- Investigations are sometimes delayed by forces diverting officers and staff from their normal duties
- A lack of digital investigators and support can contribute to delays in investigations
- Some forces have reduced delays in obtaining medical and forensic evidence
- High officer workloads lead to delays in some investigations
- The number of inexperienced police officers has increased rapidly
- The inexperience of investigators and supervisors contributes to delays
- When investigators complete files, legal requirements can cause delays
- Investigators believe that CPS processes cause too many delays to investigations
- Improving file standards would reduce delays relating to CPS advice

### **Identifying and dealing with suspects**

- Some forces don't identify and deal with suspects effectively
- Some forces deal with suspects effectively
- Non-attendance by defendants at court delays the victims receiving justice

### **Identifying and dealing with crime scenes and evidence**

- Some forces give guidance to officers and staff to help them understand the importance of securing and preserving evidence
- Inexperienced officers and staff don't always secure and preserve evidence at crime scenes
- Some forces support inexperienced investigators to help them manage crime scenes
- Crime scene investigators support officers and staff to secure and preserve evidence
- Digital technology helps CSIs give advice to investigators and the public
- In some forces, there aren't enough CSIs
- Some forces haven't achieved accreditation for their forensic science activities

### **Using technology in crime investigations**

- Forces are increasing their use of IT, but lack of knowledge and incompatible systems are hindering further progress

### **The Police National Database**

- The Police National Database (PND) is an invaluable tool for investigators
- Forces use the PND inconsistently
- Officers and staff need training and a licence to use the PND
- Forces are using the PND facial searching technology more, but not enough

#### Recommendation 7

By 30 June 2025, chief constables should include in their investigation policies a direction stating that when an image exists, investigators should search it against the Police National Database and any other relevant databases before their force closes an investigation.

- Awareness of PND facial searching needs to improve

#### Recommendation 8

By 31 December 2025, the Home Office and the National Police Chiefs' Council lead for the Police National Database should help forces improve officer and staff awareness of the Police National Database's capabilities, in particular facial searching.

### **Supervising crime investigations**

- Supervisors are generally effective at giving advice and direction to call handlers
- In some forces, supervisors have limited oversight of calls to report crimes

- In too many investigations, supervision isn't effective
- Inexperienced supervisors often lack confidence and the ability to direct investigations
- High workloads mean that many supervisors can't provide effective supervision
- Early supervision of investigations is important, particularly for inexperienced investigators
- In some forces, the mandated first review is too late into the investigation

#### **Recommendation 9**

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure the first supervisory review of a crime investigation takes place early enough for the supervisor to be able to:

- review any actions taken, including those to assess and manage risk;
  - make sure the investigator has put in place the appropriate support for victims, and is complying with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime;
  - set or approve an investigation plan;
  - review the investigator's caseload; and
  - set a date for a further review.
- Some forces are taking steps to improve the skills of their investigators and supervisors
  - Supervisors should play an important role in making sure investigators follow all reasonable lines of enquiry
  - Failing to follow reasonable lines of enquiry can have extreme consequences
  - Some forces are more effective than others in making sure they follow all reasonable lines of enquiry
  - In the other forces, there was room for improvement
  - Forces are taking steps to improve in this area
  - Measuring quantity is easier than assessing quality
  - Some forces have processes to improve the quality of their investigations and supervisory reviews
  - Examples of effective supervision were found in some forces
  - Evidence review officers have an important supervisory role in crime investigations
  - Investigators and their supervisors value the Evidence Review Officer (ERO) role

### **How effectively police support victims through investigations from start to finish**

In this chapter, HMICFRS report on how effectively the police support victims through investigations from start to finish, including investigations that don't result in a prosecution. HMICFRS examine how well forces identify victims, including those who are repeat and vulnerable, and how well they then deal with victims.

#### **Identifying victims**

- Call handlers are generally good at identifying victims
- In most forces, responders and investigators are confident that they can identify victims

#### **Repeat and vulnerable victims**

- Force IT systems can usually identify repeat or vulnerable victims
- Many forces have plans to deal with repeat and vulnerable victims
- Forces sometimes fail to recognise repeat victims and vulnerability

#### **Dealing with and supporting victims**

- Victims don't always receive the best service
- Victims lack confidence in the criminal justice system
- Support for victims is often available at the initial point of contact
- Responders and investigators can't always give victims as much support as they want to
- Support is usually available for victims during an investigation
- Too many victims disengage from the criminal justice process because of delays

#### **The Victims' Code**

- Forces should prioritise improving compliance with the Victims' Code
- Scrutiny of compliance with the Victims' Code usually involves ticking boxes rather than measuring quality

### **How effectively forces train officers and staff to deal with and investigate crime**

In this chapter, HMICFRS examine the training and learning and development opportunities for investigators and other officers and staff who play any part in an investigation. This includes call handlers, responders, investigators and supervisors. Training includes any course, plus any advice or guidance given to officers and staff, together with any other support, such as the provision of mentors and advisors.

With such an inexperienced workforce, it is vital that officers and staff receive effective training to equip them to investigate crime. It is equally important for supervisors to know how to supervise crime investigations.

### **Understanding and developing investigative skills**

- Most forces have a good understanding of the investigative skills and capabilities officers and staff need
- The College of Policing sets the curriculum for investigative training and produces guidance for investigators

### **Investigative training for call handlers**

- Not all forces give the relevant College of Policing training to call handlers

### **Investigative training for responders and investigators**

- Police officers and staff who respond to reports of crime should receive basic investigative training
- Investigative training given to responders is inconsistent
- Some forces supplement the student officer curriculum with additional investigative training
- Forces provide ongoing investigative training and support in a variety of ways
- Many investigators think their training isn't good enough
- Records about investigative training and accreditation vary across forces

### **Investigative training for supervisors**

- Investigative training for supervisors needs to improve

#### **Recommendation 10**

By 31 March 2026, chief constables should:

- make sure any member of staff who has a role in supporting the investigation process completes the College of Policing 'Introduction to investigation' learning programme;
  - satisfy themselves that the content of their force's ongoing investigative training for responders is designed to develop their investigative skills and performance, and to improve outcomes for victims, and that their force gives responders protected time to complete this training;
  - make sure their force focuses sufficiently on case file preparation when providing professionalising investigations programme level 1 training, while taking into account local procedures and case management systems;
  - make sure their force gives officers and staff continuing professional development opportunities about preparing case files;
  - make sure their force keeps accurate records of professionalising investigations programme level 2 accredited officers and staff, and that those officers and staff complete annual continuing professional development to maintain their accreditation, which forces should also accurately record; and
  - review the investigative training their force gives to supervisors, making sure it equips them to oversee and direct crime investigations effectively.
- Some forces have taken steps to improve the way supervisors oversee investigations
  - The College of Policing is designing additional investigative training for supervisors

### **How effectively forces understand their outcomes for reported crime**

In this chapter, HMICFRS report on the crime outcomes framework, the decrease in positive outcomes over the past ten years, and what forces are doing to analyse, understand and increase the proportion of crime investigations that result in a positive outcome. HMICFRS also examines the effect that high workloads have on outcomes, and the increasing use of out-of-court resolutions.

### **The crime outcomes framework**

- The current crime outcomes framework helps forces understand the way they finalise investigations

### **Positive outcomes**

- Since 2015, positive outcomes have steadily decreased
- Positive outcomes for the Police Service of Northern Ireland are higher than for forces in England and Wales

### **Understanding and improving positive outcome rates**

- Forces are taking positive steps to understand their outcome rates
- Some forces don't fully understand the factors that affect outcome rates
- Forces are taking steps to improve their outcome rates
- Many forces have improved their governance of outcome rates
- Some forces are effective when finalising crimes and applying outcomes
- Other forces are poor at finalising crimes

### **Out-of-court resolutions**

- Forces are improving their focus on out-of-court resolutions
- Some officers and staff don't like using OOCRs

### **How effectively forces prioritise their investigations**

In this chapter, HMICFRS report on the way chief officers promote the importance of carrying out high-quality investigations, and how their message sometimes gets confused. HMICFRS also examine whether forces automatically screen out certain types of crimes.

### **Chief officer priorities**

- Chief officers promote the importance of high-quality crime investigations
- Performance management focuses too much on things that are easiest to measure, rather than on the quality of investigations
- In some forces, chief officers' priorities aren't always clear
- Forces no longer automatically deprioritise certain less serious crime types
- There is a view that forces indirectly screen out some crime types
- The proportion of crimes that forces finalise within 24 hours has decreased

#### **Recommendation 11**

By 30 September 2025, chief constables should establish and implement a process to monitor the proportion of recorded crime that their force allocates for investigation. This should include a process to make sure a decision not to allocate a crime for investigation is appropriate.

### **Retail crime**

- Retailers don't believe the police take shoplifting seriously
- The police are improving their response to shoplifting, but they need to do much more

## **FORCE RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS**

All new reports into the Force follow a specific process which involves informing the Governance of Audit and Inspection (GAIN) Board, chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable, of the report's publication and identifying an Executive Lead to monitor/drive progress of the actions going forward.

A plenary session with the Exec lead and relevant stakeholders is held to discuss the actions and agree how they will be progressed. The outcome from this session is reported back to the GAIN Board for acceptance and approval; progress is then monitored through governance meetings until such a time as the action is considered complete.

The process for closing actions is depicted by HMICFRS, as they award each action a level; the Force complies with the appropriate course of action, linked to this level, to formally close the actions.

The report included 8 recommendations for forces. These are recommendations 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10 and 11 of those detailed above.

An Executive Lead and Delivery Lead will be identified in the April GAIN meeting and a plenary session will be planned to discuss and delegate the individual recommendations. All actions will be progressed over the coming months with the support of the Executive lead.

The Force continues to actively work to satisfy all recommendations and AFIs which are discussed regularly in the relevant Force Governance meetings.

## **PCC RESPONSE TO INSPECTION**

Comment by the PCC:

The PCC:

- recognises that effective investigation of crime is fundamental to the legitimacy of policing;
- understands that the service provided to victims directly affects the level of public trust and confidence in policing and the wider criminal justice system; and
- supports the HMICFRS's recommendations for improvement.

Two of the PCC's policing priorities, as detailed in the Police and Crime Plan 2024-29, are to build trust and confidence in policing and the criminal justice system and deliver more visible and effective policing. The plan also highlights the importance of compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice (VCOP).

In terms of driving efficiency and effectiveness, the PCC acknowledges the importance of the public being able to contact the police easily and receive a proportionate response, with crimes being properly investigated, justice delivered and offenders brought to justice. As a high demand area, the PCC recognises that it is essential that Cleveland Police makes the most of its resources to deliver a service that provides positive outcomes and follows all reasonable lines of enquiry to seek justice. The PCC has set out a commitment to work with partners to explore how they can support with low-level or non-policing demand, to allow police to focus on responding to, investigating and preventing crime.

The Force is open and transparent with the OPCC in terms of performance in these areas. To maintain oversight, appropriate staff members from the OPCC are invited to attend the Force's IMPACT Board where senior police officers are held to account for performance. This can link with the PCC's scrutiny programme, where any areas of concern are brought to the OPCC's attention.

The Force has in place a comprehensive programme of scrutiny, with a number of scrutiny panels currently in operation involving key stakeholders or members of the public. For example, the Rape Scrutiny Panel involves key stakeholders reviewing investigations to improve the quality of service to victims and the quality of the Force's approach to these crimes.

The PCC wants the voice and views of the public to inform policing within Cleveland. In the context of building trust and transparency, the PCC encourages a collaborative approach between the Force and the public where feedback and recommendations have been made.

To fulfil his statutory duty and scrutinise the Force effectively, it is crucial that the PCC is seen to be providing 'critical friend' challenge to the Force in seeking assurance that the work of the scrutiny panels, currently in operation, makes a difference to local people's lives.

With this in mind, the PCC is working to establish a Confidence in Policing (CiP) Scrutiny Panel. The purpose of CiP Scrutiny Panel will be to provide independent, objective scrutiny of the Force's scrutiny panels, reporting back to the Chief Constable on findings, actions, and recommendations within the context of the current legislation, statutory guidance, and other associated frameworks.

Where feedback from the scrutiny panels has been seen to have a low impact and effect, the purpose of the CiP Scrutiny Panel will be to put forward SMART recommendations (i.e., specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely) to the Force to ensure community-led improvements in local policing and meaningful outcomes for the public.



As the report has identified that nationally the lack of funding for trained investigators has impacted on outcomes, and given Cleveland has one of the highest crime rates in the country, the PCC is lobbying for fairer funding and has written to the Home Secretary calling for the Government to revise the way Cleveland Police is funded.

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☐ Response forwarded to Home Office

☐ Response published on PCC website