

Crime data integrity

An inspection of British Transport Police

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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 (Home Office) police forces in England and Wales record crime data. All forces were inspected by mid September 2014 and a full thematic report published in November 2014².

The central question of this inspection programme was:

“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 bodies can match resources to the risks identified in communities and enables the police to provide a proper service to victims of crime.

The crime data integrity inspection for the British Transport Police

As well as a full audit and inspection of the 43 Home Office police forces in England and Wales, we carried out inspections of the British Transport Police (BTP) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland. These extra inspections were carried out after the main 43 force inspections had been completed but before the thematic audit had been published. Both followed the same methodology in terms of auditing and inspection fieldwork. However, the data from the audit did not form part of the national crime recording calculations reported in the thematic report and this report should be treated as a standalone audit and inspection of crime recording for BTP.

Our national report, published on 18 November 2014, reported on how well police in England and Wales record crime. In it we found that, on average, 1 in 5 crimes were not recorded by the police, although some forces performed much better than this. This inspection in BTP, although using data and crime records from a different time period, showed that BTP performed strongly in comparison. We recommend our findings in this report are read alongside our national report.

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

² Crime-recording: making the victim count. Published 18 November 2014, www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmic/publication/crime-recording-making-the-victim-count/ (Glossary of terms included.)

Methodology

The BTP inspection involved:

- An audit of crime records for the six months January – June 2014;
- A dip sample of out-of-court disposals (cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder (PND), cannabis warnings).
- A dip sample of no-crime decisions for rape, robbery, theft and violent crimes;
- Visits to the force where inspectors assessed local crime recording arrangements under three headings: leadership and governance; systems and processes; and people and skills.

Scope and structure of report

This report is divided into the following sections:

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

This report makes a statistically valid estimate of the accuracy of crime recording and a qualitative assessment of the services' crime recording arrangements. It makes recommendations for improvement where appropriate.

Part A: Summary of inspection findings, and recommendations

Leadership and governance

The deputy chief constable (DCC) is the named chief officer lead for crime data integrity (CDI). The DCC's role is highlighted within the force crime recording policy, with accountability for compliance directed through area commanders and ACC (Crime). The DCC also has some responsibility for holding others to account for operational performance issues. However, his governance approach through chairmanship of both the Service Excellence Board (SEB) and the Integrity and Compliance Board (ICB) reduces the likelihood of any conflict, and he is able to support a holistic approach at force level.

The chief constable had recently embarked on a schedule of 'face to face' visits and group events; his intention is to speak personally to every member of staff in the coming months. The agenda for these meetings includes re-inforcing messages around integrity generally. Some staff had already met with the chief constable but, in the main staff were not aware of any clear messages from chief officers regarding the need for accurate and ethical crime recording. Many stated that any messages they did get usually came from either the FCR³ or through the internet pages he publishes. It is important that staff clearly understand the wishes of chief officers when it comes to accurate crime recording.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should deliver a clear message from its chief officers that leaves no doubt that accurate and ethical crime recording will not be sacrificed in the pursuit of operational performance targets.

The BTP *'Employee Conduct and Standards of Behaviour Policy'* highlights the force's commitment to maintaining an open and honest culture with high standards of accountability and ethical behaviour. Employees are encouraged to raise any concerns and a confidential reporting line (CARS/SafeCall) exists for them to do so.

The force crime recording policy is clear regarding the need for integrity in crime data, both as part of a duty of care to victims and to ensure accurate and timely intelligence. Its stated purpose is to ensure compliance with NCRS and it encourages a victim oriented approach to crime recording.

³ The person in a police force who is responsible for ensuring compliance with crime-recording rules. The HOCA 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.

The force's strategic plan for 2013-2019 includes an objective of reducing crime overall by 20%. Previous targets in relation to detections have been removed. From interviews it was clear that the removal of targets for detections has reduced pressures which might previously have encouraged unethical behaviour.

The force is aware of the various routes by which crime is reported. The vast majority is reported either through the emergency or non emergency telephone systems. The force is also aware of its key crime categories and the risks associated with under recording. To ensure that data is accurate and of sufficient quality an audit regime has been established which is aligned to the identified risk areas. There is no policy which requires a proportionate approach to the level of detail included in crime records; this is determined by the seriousness of the crime. However, there are minimum standards for investigation which influence what is recorded.

The force's audit plan includes regular and detailed audits of; specific crime types, outcomes and no-crimes. The results of auditing are used to inform discussion at both the SEB and the ICB and there is evidence from meeting minutes that this happens. However, the means by which findings and recommendations contribute to organisational learning, through an improvement plan, is less clear.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should develop action plans from audit findings that clearly identify action owners and timescales so that progress can be properly monitored and relevant staff held to account.

Crime audit results are included on the agenda of the meetings alongside operational performance data. However, it is not clear how any links between the two are identified and discussed; for example, when an increase in crime might result from an improvement in the level of recording).

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should develop a means of highlighting links between NCRS and HOCR compliance and operational performance. This will help to ensure the force is able to more clearly demonstrate 'performance with integrity'.

Systems and processes

Accuracy of crime recording

We examined 306 incident records⁴ and found that 253 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 253 crimes that should have been recorded, 241 were. This represents a crime recording accuracy rate from incidents of 95 percent⁵, with a confidence interval of less than +/- 3%. Of the 241 recorded crimes, four were wrongly classified and five were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR.

The force has a centralised crime recording unit, but does not record reports of crime directly from members of the public without the creation of an incident record.

Our audit revealed that call handlers were polite and professional and that the transfer of information from members of the public was accurate and precise. There was evidence from the crime recording centre (CRC), the force control rooms and the first contact centre (FCC) that call handing is monitored, both in live time and by dip-sampling of recorded calls. However, it was clear that such monitoring was not consistent across all the centres where calls are handled.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should review processes to ensure that the level of monitoring of individual operators within force control rooms, the FCC and the CRC is consistent across the force and carried out in accordance with existing force policy.

Supervisors within the force control rooms and FCC check all incident logs before closing them. Where incidents have been opened with a crime code and closed with a non crime code they will expect to see appropriate justification. On a daily basis crime management unit (CMU) staff also check all incidents opened with a crime code and closed with either a crime or non-crime code and, where a crime has been missed, they will arrange for the CRC to create a record.

The force has a comprehensive crime recording policy and this is made available to staff via the force intranet. Crimes are recorded either within the CRC (which can record all crimes) or the FCC (which can only record volume crime).

⁴ 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.

⁵ Using the unweighted sample

Line management of the CRC and FCC is outside of operational command structures. This provides a degree of independence in crime recording decision making. Where, following deployment, operational staff report that a crime record is not necessary, they will be challenged to provide justification. If the justification is not sufficient a crime will be recorded.

Concern was expressed regarding the recording of thefts of personal property; which is a high volume crime for BTP. It is often difficult to assess whether the item had actually been stolen or just lost somewhere within the transport system. In such cases the crime recorders tend to err on the side of caution and record the crime. This is good practice as property initially lost is, on the balance of probability, likely to have then been stolen. It is recognised that on some occasions this may lead to over-recording. HMIC accepts that dealing with lost property on premises owned by a private concern is not the responsibility of BTP but there may be an opportunity to engage with train operating companies and premises owners to establish clear processes for the exchange of information. Such a process may support better decision making in terms of the initial recording of crimes or subsequent no-criming of records.

Recommendation: Within six months the force should engage with train operating companies to establish processes to improve the exchange of information in relation to property lost and found. This should enable staff to ascertain more quickly that property has been lost, rather than stolen, and ensure those reporting are re-united with their property without a crime being created.

The classification of crime takes place within the CRC or FCC at the time of recording. Classifications are checked within the CMU where, if necessary, re-classifying can be done by nominated supervisors who are authorised dedicated decision makers (DDMs)

The force has procedures and provides guidance for the transfer of crimes in and out of the force.

Out-of-court disposals

Out-of-court disposals used by BTP include cautions, Penalty Notices for Disorder (PNDs)⁶ and cannabis warnings⁷. The HOCR (section H) states that national guidance must be followed⁸.

Cautions – Out of the 20 cautions we dip-sampled, we found that in one case the offender's previous history made them unsuitable to receive a caution. In 14 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 6 cases where there was a victim to consult, 2 cases showed that the views of the victim had been sought and in 4 cases the victim had been informed of the outcome.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – We dip sampled 20 PNDs and found that the offender was suitable for the issue of 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 it. Out of the 5 cases, where there was a victim to consult, we found that none had been consulted.

Cannabis warnings – We dip sampled 20 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in 15 cases. However, in all 20 cases there was no evidence to indicate that the offender had been warned of the implications of accepting the warning.

Through its own audit regime the force recognised that there were problems with the use of out-of-court disposals. The force has undertaken an education programme for staff and has introduced a review system. Currently, PNDs and cannabis warnings are issued by officers without any supervisor intervention being required. Cautions are checked by an evidential review officer (ERO) prior to forwarding to an inspector for approval.

⁶ 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.

⁷ 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.

⁸ 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

The force is aware of the need to involve victims in decisions regarding out-of-court disposal. We were concerned that this has not happened as frequently as it should. New forms have been designed to ensure victims views are considered by staff issuing the disposal.

Prior to the recent changes in reviewing of out-of-court disposals, monitoring was described as ad hoc. It is likely that some of the problems were caused by the recent re-structuring of the CMU and criminal justice units (CJU), when the 'carrying over' of responsibilities was missed. The force has recognised these problems themselves and have implemented processes to improve.

Recommendation: Whilst recognising the work that the force is doing to resolve problems in relation to out-of-court disposal, within three months the force should develop processes which ensure that:

- the disposal options comply with national guidelines;
- they are appropriate for the individual offences/circumstances;
- they are appropriate to the offender concerned;
- where relevant, victims are consulted and updated;
- relevant records are properly updated with the correct outcome.

No-crime

The term 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 104 no-crime records and found that 95 were compliant with NCRS and the HOCR.

No-crimes, with the exception of rape offences, can only be authorised by those supervisors within the CMU who are authorised designated decision makers⁹ (DDMs). There are only about four individuals who are able to perform this function and at least ten percent of their no-crime decisions are reviewed by the divisional DCIs. CMU staff and the DCIs are line managed within the divisional command structure and not truly independent of the investigations. However, no-crime decisions are audited by the FCR and his team as part of the structured audit process. This provides the necessary oversight and independence. In the event of disagreement the FCR is clearly regarded as being the final arbiter.

⁹ The DDM role is to provide practical advice, guidance and act as arbitrator at a local level to ensure the accurate recording of crime and crime-related incidents in accordance with national standards.

Victim-centred approach

There is a strong victim focus within contact centres. Vulnerability of victims is assessed immediately on receipt of a call and repeat and/or vulnerable victims are identified. Call handlers have access to Language Line services and are able to use agreements with other forces for some languages such as Welsh. Because of the high rate of suicide at or near railway lines, all call handling staff have received specialist training in relation to dealing with suicidal callers.

There appears to be variation between control rooms in terms of how incident system, the National Strategy for Police Information Systems (NSPIS) logs containing allegations of crime are progressed. Some staff seemed unsure whether the logs should be passed to the CRC or CMU. This situation causes inconsistency and unnecessary delay in recording crimes, which in turn may impact on the timeliness of service received by victims.

Recommendation: Within six months, the force should publish a clear operating procedure around the routing of reports of crime on the NSPIS system. This should ensure consistency between control rooms. The procedure should also recognise the quality of the victim interaction and not just focus on reducing the time taken to complete it.

The force crime policy recognises the importance of a victim focus in relation to crime recording. The overwhelming view of call handlers was if the victim's perception is that a crime has been committed then it is crimed.

The restructuring of CMUs may have resulted in a gap in knowledge concerning the way victims should be supported. Investigating officers are now expected to maintain regular contact with victims. A 'Victim Console' search engine draws information from relevant fields within the crime records and enables dealings with victims to be monitored. However, the system is not available to all officers. Reminders are sent to investigating officers by the CMU; this ensures compliance with targets. Feedback on performance and compliance with reminders is provided to divisional DCIs.

Victim surveys are carried out as well as sampling of people reporting property lost. This is undertaken by an independent company on behalf of BTP and losers have an opportunity to indicate whether they felt they were a victim of theft rather than losing their property. Policing and security issues form part of the customer surveys conducted by individual train operating companies. Results from all surveys are made available to senior managers through the SEB.

CCTV is vital to the effective investigation of many crimes which occur within the BTP jurisdiction; anecdotal evidence suggests that the significant reduction in robbery offences has been due in large part to the increased availability of CCTV. However, in some cases there would appear to be significant delay in accessing CCTV from train operating companies (particularly that from trains). This situation causes delays in investigation and a need to make extensive use of police bail, which has an impact on victims by extending the time taken to progress their crimes.

Recommendation: Within six months, the force should develop a single service level agreement with all train operating companies and CCTV providers that ensures timely and efficient delivery of CCTV product.

The force is required to deal with a large number of CPS regions and offices with differing standards required papers and contents of case files. The issue has already been identified by the force and work is underway to try to standardise approaches across the regions.

Recommendation: Within six months the force should develop a single standardised agreement with all CPS offices with which it deals for the provision, timeliness and content of case papers. This should ensure for consistency in terms of the standards required from BTP staff.

BTP are currently conducting a full review of contact handling processes to enhance public contact. As part of the work a project has been established under the CJU to take forward victim care issues.

Rape offences

The force has issued guidance in relation to the recording of rape crimes. This deals with when and where offences are to be recorded and who can approve no-crimes and under what circumstances. Routes of reporting include both direct calls from the victim and referrals from Sexual Assault Referral Clinics. The guidance is made available to all staff via the force intranet and allegations of rape are now recorded within 24 hours, either by the specially trained sexual offences officer or the investigating officer. The guidance does not include rape offences reported to BTP but occurring in another force area. Reality testing provided evidence that staff were aware of the need to take responsibility for the care of the victim and secure forensic evidence.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should issue policy and procedural guidance on the action required for dealing with reports of rape that occurred in another force area and those received by BTP that are reported to other forces. This should include expectations for victim care, evidence recovery and the transfer of case papers.

Rape investigations are overseen by a senior CID officer within the force major crime unit. The officer also reviews all incidents opened as sexual offences whether finally recorded as a rape or not. There is 24-hour coverage of specially trained sexual offences officers.

No-crime decisions in relation to rape offences are taken by the head of rape investigation with oversight by the FCR. There is no external independent scrutiny body.

IT systems

The force has a single crime recording system (CRiMe). This is also used to record non-notifiable offences, e.g. railway act matters such as trespass. Where major investigations are recorded on the HOLMES IT system, any identified offences are entered and cross referenced on the CRiMe system.

Most crime records have a corresponding entry on NSPIS. Staff within the CRC and FCC currently create an NSPIS log on almost every occasion a crime is recorded; this includes those occasions where no further police deployment is necessary. There would appear to be scope to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy by examining the need to create an NSPIS incident log on every occasion a crime is recorded.

Recommendation: Within three months, the force should examine the need to record reports of crime on both NSPIS and CRiMe. Where no deployment of staff is necessary there may be a case for restricting the record to CRiMe only, thereby reducing duplication.

There is no automatic linkage between the NSPIS incident system and CRiMe crime recording system, with no sharing of data between the two. This results in the need for multiple manual logging in, significant 'double keying' and duplicate entries. The force is currently pursuing an ambitious IT Integrated Systems Project which aims to provide linkage between a number of force systems and offer greater scope for sharing data with other forces and agencies.

Recommendation: Within six months and as part of the ongoing IT Integrated System Project, the force should ensure that the outcome of this work has appropriate linkage of functionality and data between crime recording and incident recording systems.

People and skills

As previously highlighted, the creation of crime records within BTP only takes place within two units; the CRC and the FCC. This limits the number of staff involved in the creation of crime records and enables knowledge and training to be targeted accordingly. All staff within the CRC and FCC have been given training in NCRS, NSIR and the HOCR. They are also aware of the definitions of specific offences in order to assist them in classifying crime records.

The CRC operates from 0700–0100 seven days per week. Staff are therefore available to give advice and guidance to others and will use their own knowledge and judgement when dealing with reports that come to them through officers and other operational staff.

There is an 'in house' trainer within the CRC who is able to provide update sessions for groups of staff as well as more bespoke, individually tailored, training. This ensures that knowledge and skills remain current and where problems are identified these can be addressed. Whilst there are often vacancies in the unit there has been no reduction in overall staff numbers since the unit was first set up in 2006.

The staff in the FCC are confident that they have the knowledge required to undertake their core function of recording volume crime such as the theft of pedal cycles and theft of personal property.

The number of Crime Management Units (CMUs) has recently been reduced from seven to three. This was done to reflect changes in the force structure and a reduction in the number of operational divisions. The changes involved an overall 10 percent reduction in staff numbers within the CMUs. The new structure and staffing levels of the CMUs was based on only notifiable crime being recorded on the CRiMe system. However, the recording of non-notifiable matters (40,300 reports recorded in 2013/14) has not yet ceased. This causes some workload pressures on CMU staff. CMU staff are trained in the use of relevant force IT systems and receive training in NCRS and HOCR. However, some concern was expressed that they do not receive enough practical instruction on how to use the IT systems have to rely on colleagues showing them how to use the IT systems.

The FCR has run regular 'Crime and Incident Clinics' with staff from the CRC, FCC, CMU and force control room. These are based on findings from audits and therefore enable the force to develop organisational learning.

Apart from undertaking the National Centre for Applied Learning Techniques (NCALT) training package operational staff have received little or no training specifically on NCRS or the HOCR. The FCR pages on the force intranet provide them with access to policy, procedures and as a detailed FAQ section.

Operational staff felt they were well supported by the CRC, which was able to provide advice and guidance. Supervisors have recently been given training by the FCR in relation to the new crime outcomes.

We found no evidence that staff felt under any pressure, either explicit or implied to not record crime or record allegations in a certain way. If a crime does not get recorded, the evidence led us to believe that this would be through ignorance of the crime-recording requirement or as a result of a lack of understanding, rather than unethical behaviour.

Whilst staff were not aware of any clear messages from chief officers in relation to the need for accurate and ethical crime recording, they do seem clear on the need to record crimes based on what they are told by victims. Within the force the creation of crime records is undertaken by units which are outside operational command and, as such, there is some independence from any operational pressures

Force crime registrar

The force employs a full time Force Crime Registrar (FCR) who works within the DCC portfolio of commands. The post holder is knowledgeable in relation to NCRS and the HOCR and does not feel under pressure of any kind to compromise ethical crime recording. Those who know him recognise and respect his knowledge.

The accuracy of crime recording by the force is overseen by the FCR through a robust structure of auditing. Results from the audits are properly considered at relevant meetings that are able to influence change within the force. There is clear evidence that the FCR is regarded as the final arbiter in relation to crime recording matters. Whilst some of the staff spoken to during the inspection were not aware of the FCR and his role, there was evidence that they know where to go to get the right advice and guidance. This included information contained on the FCR pages of the intranet.

Whilst the DCC is regarded as the professional manager of the FCR, there are a number of layers of line management between them. Where the FCR identifies a problem, communication through this chain of command can cause delay. In addition, the FCR is not a standing member of the Service Excellence Board (SEB) or Integrity Compliance Board (ICB), and is therefore not party to force level discussion of the NCRS compliance audit results. He is therefore unable to use his knowledge of crime recording processes to add context to crime performance data. Taken together these issues could be interpreted as the organisation not providing the correct level of support for the FCR.

Recommendation: Immediately, the force should establish a formal and regular meetings schedule between the Force Crime Registrar and Deputy Chief Constable to enable effective discussion of crime data integrity issues.

It should also consider his inclusion as a standing member of the Service Excellence Board and Integrity Compliance Board.

Recommendations

Immediately

1. The force should deliver a clear message from its chief officers that leaves no doubt that accurate and ethical crime recording will not be sacrificed in the pursuit of operational performance targets.
2. The force should establish a formal and regular meetings schedule between the Force Crime Registrar and Deputy Chief Constable to enable effective discussion of crime data integrity issues. It should also consider his inclusion as a standing member of the Service Excellence Board and Integrity Compliance Board.

Within three months

3. The force should develop action plans from audit findings that clearly identify action owners and timescales so that progress can be properly monitored and relevant staff held to account.
4. The force should develop a means of highlighting links between NCRS and HOCR compliance and operational performance. This will help to ensure the force is able to more clearly demonstrate 'performance with integrity'.
5. The force should review processes to ensure that the level of monitoring of individual operators within force control rooms, the FCC and the CRC is consistent across the force and carried out in accordance with existing force policy.
6. Whilst recognising the work that the force is doing to resolve problems in relation to out-of-court disposal, the force should develop processes which ensure that:
 - the disposal options comply with national guidelines;
 - they are appropriate for the individual offence/circumstances;
 - they are appropriate to the offender concerned;
 - where relevant, victims are consulted and updated;
 - relevant records are properly updated with the correct outcome.
7. The force should issue policy and procedural guidance on the action required for dealing with reports of rape that occurred in another force area and those received by BTP that are reported to other forces. This should include

expectations for victim care, evidence recovery and the transfer of case papers.

8. The force should examine the need to record reports of crime on both NSPIS and CRiMe. Where no deployment of staff is necessary there may be a case for restricting the record to CRiMe only, thereby reducing duplication.

Within six months

9. The force should engage with train operating companies to establish processes to improve the exchange of information in relation to property lost and found. This should enable staff to ascertain more quickly that property has been lost, rather than stolen, and ensure those reporting are re-united with their property without a crime being created.
10. The force should publish a clear operating procedure around the routing of reports of crime on the NSPIS system. This should ensure consistency between control rooms. The procedure should also recognise the quality of the victim interaction and not just focus on reducing the time taken to complete it.
11. The force should develop a single service level agreement with all train operating companies and CCTV providers that ensures timely and efficient delivery of CCTV product.
12. The force should develop a single standardised agreement with all CPS offices with which it deals for the provision, timeliness and content of case papers. This should ensure for consistency in terms of the standards required from BTP staff.
13. As part of the ongoing IT Integrated System Project, the force should ensure that the outcome of this work has appropriate linkage of functionality and data between crime recording and incident recording systems.

Part B: Audit findings in numbers

The examination of records in BTP will not be used as part of the England and Wales audit.

Crimes reported as part of an incident record		
Incidents Reviewed	Crimes identified	Crimes recorded
HMIC reviewed the following number of incident records in British Transport Police. 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 British Transport Police recorded the following number of crimes.
306	253	241
No-crimes		
HMIC reviewed the following number of recorded crimes of rape, violence and robbery which British Transport Police had subsequently recorded as no-crime.	From these HMIC assessed the following number of no-crime decisions as being correct.	
104	95	

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 Does the force have arrangements at a senior level to ensure there is confidence in recorded crime figures and all aspects of the HOCR?

1.1. How is British Transport Police ensuring that leadership responsibilities and expectations for crime data integrity are clearly defined and unambiguously communicated to staff?

Within British Transport Police the deputy chief constable (DCC) is the named chief officer lead for crime data integrity (CDI). The DCC's role is set out in the force crime recording policy, with accountability for compliance directed through area commanders and ACC (Crime). A number of staff interviewed during the audit were not aware that the DCC's had this role; some cited the ACC (Crime) or FCR as having the lead responsibility. However, where staff were unable to name the chief officer lead, they were able to identify other key members of staff who support the DCC as well as the structures in place to ensure accurate and ethical crime recording.

The DCC also has some responsibility for holding others to account for operational performance issues. His chairmanship of both the Service Excellence Board (SEB) and the Integrity Compliance Board (ICB) means that he is able to support a common approach for crime performance and ethical crime recording at force level. Both of these meetings are supported by data from internal audits of the crime recording function. There is evidence of the chief officer making a difference in terms of crime recording. The most recent example of this is his involvement in directing a robust and wide-ranging review of the use of out-of-court disposals.

At the time of the inspection the chief constable had recently embarked on a schedule of 'face to face' visits and group events; his intention is to speak personally to every member of staff within the coming months to reinforce messages about the need for accurate and ethical recording generally. A few members of staff spoken to had already met with the chief constable but, in the main staff were not aware of any clear messages from chief officers regarding the need for integrity and ethical crime recording. Many stated that any messages they did get usually came from either the FCR or through the internet. Despite the apparent lack of a clear message, staff understood the importance of recording crime accurately and ethically.

The BTP 'Employee Conduct and Standards of Behaviour Policy' highlights the force's commitment to maintaining open and honest culture with high standards of accountability and ethical behaviour. Employees are encouraged to raise concerns and a confidential reporting line (CARS/SafeCall) exists for them to do this. The BTP professional standards of behaviour (December 2009) comprises of 10 principles – number 1 is 'honesty and integrity' and number 10 'challenging and reporting improper conduct'. From interviews conducted during the fieldwork, staff are clearly aware of both the need to act with integrity and the routes through which their concerns can be reported. In the main staff felt confident to report improper conduct but, there were a few isolated examples of individuals who were not happy to report wrongdoing because of negative previous experience.

The force crime recording policy is clear regarding the need for integrity in crime data, both as part of a duty of care to victims and to ensure accurate and timely intelligence. Its stated purpose is to ensure compliance with NCRS and it encourages a victim oriented approach to crime recording. The force's strategic plan for 2013-2019 includes an objective of reducing crime overall by 20% during the life time of the plan. However, it also makes a number of references to the need for integrity; although these are not specific in relation to crime recording. Within the last two years targets in relation to detections have been removed and this has reduced any pressures which might have previously encouraged unethical behaviour.

1.2. How does British Transport Police ensure they have a proportionate approach to managing the strategic and organisational risk of recording crime data?

The force is aware of the various routes by which crime is reported. The vast majority of crime is reported either through the emergency or non emergency telephone systems or direct to staff on operational patrol. Some reports of crime are received via CRIS (Metropolitan Police Crime System) direct transfer via a terminal situated in B Division CMU. These result in an incident being raised and transferred to the CRC. In relation to tweets and text these are monitored by the FCC in Birmingham resulting in an incident record being generated. Following investigation, if a crime is to be recorded, this is sent to the CRC for a crime to be raised. The force crime registrar's team audit these incidents as part of the published audit process.

The force is also clearly aware of its key crime categories and the risks associated with under recording in these areas. Crime and incident groups have been risk assessed in terms of impact and probability. To ensure that data is accurate and of sufficient quality an audit regime has been established which is aligned and structured to the identified risk areas. Those crimes which present the highest risk are audited in greater depth and in larger numbers than others; this ensures an appropriate level of confidence in terms of recording accuracy. No-crimes and outcomes are also regularly audited. The intention and responsibility for audits is

highlighted in the force crime recording policy. Results from audits are fed into the Integrity and Compliance Board, which meets monthly, and the Service Excellence Board. Comparison is made between performance and recording standards.

There is no policy which requires a proportionate approach to the level of detail included in crime records; this is determined by the seriousness of the crime. However, there are minimum standards for investigation that influence what is recorded. It is recognised that, by their very nature, more serious crimes will tend to generate more information and involve more detail. The minimum standards are documented in a nine-point plan which is available for all staff on the force intranet.

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

The force's audit plan includes regular and detailed audits of specific crime types, outcomes and no-crimes. Audits follow guidance contained in Data Quality Audit Manual (DQAM) and recognise Audit Commission guidance and standards. NCRS and the HOCR are used as a benchmark. Auditing is not constrained by the use of limited opening/closing codes. The audit plan is flexible and the FCR is empowered to carry out additional auditing where necessary.

The results of auditing are used to inform discussion at both the SEB and the ICB. There is evidence from meeting minutes that this happens. However, the means by which findings and recommendations contribute to organisational learning, through an improvement plan, is less clear. Identifying actions from reports, together with identified action owners, may ensure progress/implementation can be properly monitored by the meetings and relevant staff held to account. In addition, whilst crime audit results are included on the agenda of the meetings alongside operational performance data, it is not clear how any links between the two are identified and discussed (i.e. an increase in crime due to an improvement in the level of recording). The development of a means of linking NCRS and the HOCR compliance with operational performance may assist the force in being able to more clearly demonstrate 'performance with integrity'.

In addition to driving organisational learning, audit reports also outline immediate action to be taken in relation to any errors found. This will include recording of a crime where there is clear information that one should have been recorded or, where the requirement to record a crime is not immediately obvious, referral to a crime management unit for further enquiry. Results of audits are passed to supervisors and divisional/departmental heads so that appropriate action can be taken locally.

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 British Transport Police effectively manage and supervise incidents, other reporting routes and crime records in order to ensure that crimes are correctly recorded?

We examined 306 incident records¹⁰ and found that 253 crimes should have been recorded. Of the 253 crimes that should have been recorded, 241 were. This represents a crime recording accuracy rate from incidents of 95 percent¹¹, with a confidence interval of less than +/- 3%. Of the 241, four were wrongly classified and five were recorded outside the 72-hour limit allowed under the HOCR.

The force does have a centralised crime recording unit but does not record reports of crime directly from members of the public without the creation of an incident record.

The audit revealed that control room operators were polite and professional and that the transfer of information from members of the public to the incident management system (NSPIS) log was accurate and precise. This last point is particularly important given the information taken by the operator forms the basis of any resulting crime record. There was also evidence from the CRC, the force control rooms and the FCC that call handing is monitored, both in live time and by dip-sampling of recorded calls, in order to ensure good performance is maintained. This forms part of the individual performance appraisal process. However, it was clear that such monitoring was not consistent across all the centres where calls are handled.

Supervisors within the force control rooms and first contact centre check all incident logs before closing. Where incidents have been opened with a crime code and closed with a non-crime code they check to see appropriate justification has been given. On a daily basis CMU staff also check all incidents opened with a crime code and closed with either a crime or non-crime code and, where a crime has been missed, they arrange for the CRC to create a record. A crime record number is required for an incident, coded as a crime, to be closed. Feedback from these checking processes is provided to divisional commanders and team inspectors.

¹⁰ 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.

¹¹ Using the unweighted sample

The force has a detailed and comprehensive crime recording policy and this is made available to staff via the force intranet. Crimes are recorded either within the CRC (can record all crimes) or the FCC (record only volume crime).

Line management of the CRC and FCC is outside of operational command structures. This provides a degree of independence in crime recording decision making. Where, following deployment, operational staff decide that a crime record is not necessary they will be challenged to provide justification. If the justification is not sufficient a crime will be recorded. Examples of challenges were provided; these included cases where a crime had been reported but when an officer attended the victim does not wish to pursue an investigation. In these cases the crime a crime was correctly recorded.

Concern was expressed regarding the recording of thefts of personal property; which is a high volume crime for BTP. Staff pointed out that it was often difficult to assess whether the item had actually been stolen or just lost somewhere within the transport system. In some cases even the victim was unclear. In such cases the crime recorders tend to err on the side of caution and record the crime. This is good practice as property initially lost is, on the balance of probability, likely to have then been stolen. It is recognised that on some occasions this may result in over-recording. It is recognised that this may on occasions result in some over recording. The sharing of information in relation to lost property is not regarded by staff as not being as good as perhaps it could be. We accept that dealing with lost property on premises owned by a private concern is not the responsibility of BTP, but there may be an opportunity to engage with train operating companies and premises owners to establish clear processes for the exchange of information regarding lost and found property. Such a process may support better decision making in terms of the recording of crime or subsequent no-criming of records.

Classification of crime takes place within the CRC or FCC at the time of recording. Classifications are checked within the CMU where, if necessary, re-classifying can be done by nominated supervisors who are authorised dedicated decision makers (DDMs)

The force has procedures and provides guidance for the transfer of crimes in and out of the force. 'No-crime', on the basis of the offence taking place in another force area, will not be allowed if this process has not been followed and/or a clear audit trail has not been established. BTP has specific computer links with some forces i.e. MPS (CRIS) to facilitate the direct transfer of crimes.

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

When using out-of-court disposals the force needs to ensure it only uses them in line with appropriate guidance so that only offenders who are entitled to be offered an out-of-court disposal receive them. BTP does not currently use community resolution as a disposal option.

Cautions – Out of the 20 cautions we dip-sampled, we found that in one case the offender's previous history made them unsuitable to receive a caution. In 14 cases we found evidence that the offender was made aware of the nature and future implications of accepting the caution. Out of the 6 cases where there was a victim to consult, 2 cases showed that the views of the victim had been sought and in 4 cases the victim had been informed of the outcome.

Penalty Notices for Disorder – We dip sampled 20 PNDs and found that the circumstances/offence was suitable for the issue of 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 it. Out of the 5 cases, where there was a victim to consult, we found that none had been consulted.

Cannabis warnings – We dip sampled 20 cannabis warnings and found that the offender was suitable to receive a warning in 15 cases. However, in all 20 cases there was no evidence to indicate that the offender had been warned fully in relation to the implications of accepting the warning.

During the period covered by the audit the force was not administering restorative justice or community resolution disposals.

Through its own audit regime the force recognises that there are problems with the use of out-of-court disposals. Some of the issues were also revealed in our audit. The force has undertaken an education programme for staff in order to improve and from 1st September 2014 two members of staff (Evidential Review Officers (ERO)) have been engaged to review all cases. Divisional champions have also been appointed as a source of advice and guidance. Currently, PNDs and cannabis warnings are issued by officers without any supervisor intervention being required. Cautions are checked by the ERO prior to forwarding to an inspector for approval.

The force is aware that, where appropriate, victims should be involved in decisions regarding out-of-court disposal. There is some concern that this has not happened as frequently as it should. New forms have been designed to ensure victims views are considered by staff issuing the disposal.

Prior to the engagement of the EROs the monitoring of out-of-court disposals was described as ad hoc. It is likely that some of the problems were caused by the recent re-structuring of the CMU and criminal justice units (CJU), when the 'carrying over' of responsibilities was missed.

We are aware of the significant work that is taking place to resolve problems in relation to out-of-court disposal and that some changes have already been implemented. The aim must be to ensure disposal options are appropriate for the individual offence/circumstances, appropriate to the offender concerned, where relevant that victim's are consulted and updated and that relevant records are properly updated with the correct outcome.

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

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 104 no-crime records and found that 95 were compliant with HOOCR and NCRS.

Within BTP, no-crimes, with the exception of rape offences, can only be authorised by those supervisors within the CMU who are authorised DDMs. There are four individuals who are able to perform this function, which ensures consistency. Ten percent of these no-crime decisions are reviewed by the divisional DCIs. Both the CMU staff and the DCIs are line managed within the divisional command structure and therefore not truly independent of the investigations. However, no-crime decisions are audited by the FCR and his team as part of the structured audit process. This provides the necessary oversight and independence. In the event of disagreement the FCR is clearly regarded as being the final arbiter.

2.4. How does British Transport Police promote a victim-centred approach to crime recording and associated outcomes?

Training at contact centres has a strong victim focus. The vulnerability of victims is assessed immediately on receipt of a call and repeat/vulnerable victims are identified. During the call a repeat/ vulnerable victim proforma is created; this also serves as a prompt to ensure appropriate questions are asked. The completed proforma is saved as part of the incident log. Where victims do not speak English, call handlers have access to Language Line services and there are also interpreting agreements with other forces for some languages such as Welsh. Because of the high rate of suicide at or near railway lines, all call handling staff have received specialist training in relation to dealing with suicidal callers.

There appears to be some variation between control rooms in terms of how NSPIS logs containing allegations of crime are progressed. Some staff seem unsure whether such logs should be passed to the CRC or the local CMU. This situation causes inconsistency and unnecessary delay in recording crimes, which in turn could impact on the service provided to victims.

The force crime policy recognises the importance of a victim focus in relation to crime recording. The overwhelming view of call handlers was if the victim's perception is that a crime has been committed then it is crimed.

As a result of the restructuring of CMUs the post of victim care manager has been removed. Many of the staff interviewed felt that this had left a gap in knowledge and that the service provided was no longer consistent. Investigating officers are now expected to maintain regular contact with victims. Initial contact is usually made within 48 hours (24 hours if vulnerable) and thereafter as often as the victim requests and always at the 28 day mark. A 'Victim Console' search engine draws information from relevant fields within the crime records and enables dealings with victims to be monitored. However, the system is not available to all officers. Reminders are sent to investigating officer by the CMU following prompts which are automatically generated by victim console. This ensures targets are complied with. Feedback on performance in relation to victim care, and compliance with reminders, is provided to divisional DCIs.

Victim surveys are carried out and there is also sampling of persons reporting property lost. This additional sampling is undertaken by an independent company on behalf of BTP and gives losers an opportunity to indicate whether they felt they were a victim of theft rather than losing their property. Policing and security issues are also included in customer surveys conducted by individual train operating companies. The results of all surveys are made available to senior managers through the Service Excellence Board.

CCTV is clearly vital to the effective investigation of many crimes which occur within BTP jurisdiction; anecdotal evidence suggests that the significant reduction in robbery offences has been due in large part to the increase in availability of CCTV. However, in some cases there would appear to be significant delay in accessing CCTV from train operating companies (particularly that from trains). This situation is causing delay in investigation and a need to make extensive use of police bail. This has an impact on victims by extending the time taken to close or progress their crimes.

The structure of the BTP results in the force having to deal with a large number of CPS regions and offices. This creates difficulties in terms of a lack of clear and consistent standards and will impact on victims. We are aware that the issue has already been identified by the force and work is underway to try to resolve problems.

BTP are currently conducting a full review of contact handling processes to enhance public contact. This work will investigate improvement to the quality of incident and crime recording, the realigning of capabilities to meet increasing demand and maximising efficiencies through introduction of integrated systems. As part of this work a project has been established under the CJU to take forward victim care issues.

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

The FCR has issued guidance to the force in relation to the recording of rape crimes. This deals with when and where offences are to be recorded and who can approve no-crime and under what circumstances. Identified routes of reporting include both direct calls from the victim and referral from Sexual Assault Referral Clinics (SARCs). The guidance is made available to all staff via the force intranet. Whilst historically there may have been some delay in recording rapes crimes, reports of rape would now normally be recorded within 24 hours, either by the specially trained sexual offences officer or the investigating officer. The guidance does not make reference to rape offences reported to BTP but occurring in another force area. However, reality testing provided evidence that staff were aware of the need to take responsibility for the care of the victim and secure forensic evidence.

All rape investigations are overseen by a senior CID officer within the force major crime unit. This officer also reviews all incidents opened as sexual offences whether finally recorded as a rape or not. Specially trained sexual offences officers are available on each area and are on a call out rota providing 24-hour coverage.

No-crime decisions in relation to rape offences are taken by the head of rape investigation but are reviewed/audited by the FCR. There is no independent scrutiny body.

2.6. How do British Transport Police IT systems allow for efficient and effective management of crime recording?

The force has a single crime recording system (CRiMe). This is also currently used to record non-notifiable crimes such as the railway act offences of trespass. A decision has been taken to cease recording non-notifiable matters on CRiMe and leave the record on the incident system only. Where investigations are recorded on HOLMES this is cross referenced with a CRiMe system entry.

Most, if not all, crime records have a corresponding entry on the NSPIS. The incident record is used to record deployments. Staff within the CRC and FCC currently create an NSPIS log and a crime record on almost every occasion a crime is recorded; this includes those occasions where no further police deployment is necessary. There may be scope for examining the need for duplicating such records; thereby reducing unnecessary bureaucracy.

There is little or no linkage between NSPIS and CRiMe. Consequently there is no sharing of data between the two systems. The lack of interconnectivity results in the need for multiple logging in, significant 'double keying' and duplicates entries. Copy/pasting of information from one system to another also creates a risk of information being lost or missed. The force is currently pursuing an IT Integrated

Systems Project which aims to provide linkage between a number of force systems and offer greater scope for sharing data with other forces/agencies.

People and skills

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

3.1. What arrangements do British Transport Police have in place to ensure that staff have the necessary skills to ensure accurate crime recording?

As previously highlighted, crime recording within BTP only takes place within two units; the CRC and the FCC. This limits the number of staff involved in creation of crime records and enables knowledge and training to be targeted accordingly. All staff within the CRC and FCC have been given training in NCRS, NIRS and HO CR. They are also aware of crime definitions in order to assist them in classifying crime records.

The Crime Recording Centre operates from 0700–0100, seven days per week. Staff are therefore available to give advice and guidance to others and will use their own knowledge and judgement when dealing with reports that come to them through officers and other operational staff.

There is an 'in house' trainer within the CRC who is able to provide update sessions for groups of staff as well as more bespoke, individually tailored, training. This ensures that knowledge and skills remain current and where problems are identified these can be addressed. Whilst there are often vacancies within the unit there has been no reduction in overall staff numbers since the unit was first set up in 2006.

The FCC operates a 24/7 service and staff are confident that they have the knowledge they require to undertake their core function of recording volume crime i.e. theft of pedal cycles and theft of personal property. There has been no reduction in staffing numbers since the FCC was first established.

The number of Crime Management Units has recently been reduced from seven to three. This was done to reflect changes in force structure and a reduction in the number of operational divisions. The changes involved an overall 10 percent reduction in staff numbers within the CMU. The new structure and staffing levels of the CMUs was based on only notifiable crimes being recorded on the CRiMe system. However, the recording of non-notifiable matters (some 54,000 per annum) has not yet ceased. This does cause some pressure of workload on CMU staff. CMU staff are trained in the use of relevant force IT systems, NCRS and the HO CR. However, some concern was expressed that they do not receive any instruction on how to put these into practice operationally. This element is dealt with through 'on the job' training.

The FCR has run regular 'Crime and Incident Clinics' with staff from the CRC, FCC, CMU and force control room. These are based on findings from audits and therefore enable the force to develop organisational learning.

Apart from undertaking the NCALT training package operational staff have received little or no training specifically on NCRS or HOOCR. The FCR pages on the force intranet provide them with access to policy, procedures and as a detailed FAQ¹² section. Operational staff considered they were well supported by the CRC which was able to provide advice and guidance. Supervisors have recently been given training by the FCR in relation to the new crime outcomes.

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

There is a strong belief within the force that the removal of numerical targets for crime detection has driven a shift away from any performance pressures which might encourage unethical behaviour. We found no evidence that staff felt under any pressure, either explicit or implied to not record crime or record allegations in a certain way; if anything they believe there is a culture of erring on the side of caution and a tendency to over-record. This has been noticed when transferring crimes to another force which may not, in the same circumstances, have recorded the crime. If a crime does not get recorded this would be through ignorance or, as a result of a lack of understanding, rather than unethical behaviour.

Whilst staff do not seem to be aware of any clear messages from chief officers in relation to the need for integrity and ethical crime recording, they do seem clear on the need to record crimes based on what they are told by victims. The planned 'face-to-face' meeting with the chief constable are likely to support this. Within the force the actual creation of crime records is undertaken by units which are outside operational command and, as such, there is some independence from any operational pressures

Through its 'Employee Conduct and Standards of Behaviour Policy' the force encourages openness and the reporting of concerns in relation to integrity.

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

The force employs a full time FCR who works within the DCC portfolio of commands. The post holder is knowledgeable in relation to NCRS and the HOOCR and does not feel under pressure of any kind to compromise ethical crime recording. Those who know him recognise and respect his knowledge.

¹² Frequently Asked Questions

The accuracy of crime recording by the force is overseen by the FCR through a robust structure of auditing. Results from the audits are considered by the relevant meetings which are able to influence change within the force. There is clear evidence that the FCR is regarded as the final arbiter in relation to crime recording matters. Whilst some of the staff spoken to during the inspection were not aware of the FCR and his role, there was evidence that they know where to go to get the right advice and guidance. This included information contained on the FCR pages of the intranet.

Whilst the DCC is regarded as the professional manager of the FCR, there are a number of layers of line management between them. Where the FCR identifies a problem, communication through this chain of command can cause delay. In addition, the FCR is not a standing member of the SEB or ICB, and is therefore not party to force level discussion of the NCRS compliance audit results. He is therefore unable to use his knowledge of crime recording processes to add context to crime performance data. Taken together these issues could be interpreted as the organisation not providing the correct level of support for the FCR.