



INDEPENDENT CRIME RECORDING CONFIDENCE PANEL

1 February 2019 12.00pm to 2.05pm
OPCC Meeting Room
Police Headquarters

NOTES

In attendance:

Cate Moore – Panel Chair
George Krawiec – Panel Deputy Chair (Member of the Lincolnshire Police and Crime Panel)
Malcolm Burch (Chief Executive, OPCC)
David Forbes (Chair of the Joint Independent Audit Committee)
Professor Matthew Hall (Professor of Law & Criminal Justice, Lincoln University)
Nick Gray – Panel Advisor (Force Crime and Incident Registrar, Northamptonshire Police)

Craig Naylor (Deputy Chief Constable, Lincolnshire Police)
Andy Carr (Force Crime and Incident Registrar, Lincolnshire Police)

Mark Stainforth (Deputy Portfolio Director and Crime Data Integrity Lead, HMICFRS)
John Bainbridge (Audit Lead, HMICFRS)
Ali Davies (Force Liaison Lead, HMICFRS)

John King (Corporate Administration Officer, OPCC)

Ref	Item	Action
1.	Apologies Laura Wint-McKane (Chief Executive Officer, Lincolnshire Rape Crisis)	
2.	Notes of 1 February 2019 meeting The notes were agreed.	
3.	Action Log Progress with the Action Log was noted.	

4. HMICFRS Crime Data Integrity Report

Part 1 – Panel Discussion

It was agreed that the questions developed by the Panel and circulated in advance to HMICFRS, would be asked by the Chair.

Members were interested in receiving HMICFRS' perspective on whether the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) that they were inspecting against was the right standard given the number of forces that had been assessed as 'inadequate', and whether they believed that 100% compliance with the NCRS actually benefitted victims. Furthermore, would it be sustainable for Lincs to be viewed as 'inadequate' because it worked outside of the rules?

The Chair queried whether the achievement of a 'good' rating reflected compliance with the NCRS or the level of service provided to victims. Could efforts to meet the standard potentially cause perverse behaviour? The Panel Advisor highlighted the recent investment of £800k by one particular Force to improve their crime recording arrangements, including the funding of additional audit resource. It was recognised that current financial constraints meant that such a level of investment would be impossible for Lincs.

Part 2 – DCC, Force Crime Registrar and HMICFRS (12.30pm)

The Chair proceeded to put the first of six questions to the delegation from HMICFRS:

'What is the extent to which the findings for Lincolnshire are out of line with those for other forces going through the inspection process? Are there features/practices unique to Lincs?'

HMICFRS explained that following the audit, the Force had been given the opportunity to challenge the Inspection findings, with the National Crime Registrar acting as final arbiter. To ensure consistency, a moderation process had been undertaken to confirm the level of grading awarded. Headline figures for Lincs included recording 81.2% of crime reports (placing them 34th highest) and 72.7% of violent crime reports (placing them 36th highest). With regards to unique features and practices, the approach taken by Lincs to the N100 classification was 'certainly unique'. The use of G4S operators in the Force Control Room was also a distinctive feature. However, many of the areas for improvement identified in the Inspection report were common across many forces, including use of the DASH assessment form and supervision of crime recording decisions. Capturing multiple crimes in a single crime report was also described as a 'national problem'. Austerity meant that many forces were being forced to pare back on their audit capacity/capability with 'quality assurance' taking the place of in-depth audit work, as it was more cost effective.

Is there a direct correlation between the amount of resources dedicated to crime recording and compliance with current rules?

HMICFRS suggested that it was an impossible question to answer as systems/operating processes differed between forces. However HMICFRS did advocate making a recording decision at the point a report was received as this was the most efficient approach. The Panel was advised that HMCIC's 'State of Policing' report for 2018 (expected Summer 2019) would include information and analysis on crime recording systems/processes. The Force Crime Registrar considered that Lincs had a healthy mix of approaches, including G4S colleagues with KPIs handling calls from the public. Once implemented, the Force's new Command and Control system would also improve the efficiency with which reports of crime were recorded at the point of contact. He was confident that the Force would get to where HMICFRS wanted them to be, but acknowledged that they still had some way to go. The DCC also briefed on the steps being taken to improve, support and inform decision-making by police officers. HMICFRS stated that victims were at the heart of the NCRS, which included the requirement to record crimes as soon as possible. This provided a better service to victims and in turn improved force performance in dealing with incidents. Whilst the DCC acknowledged the importance of getting decisions right, he suggested that when certain factors came into play – such as having to make a decision at 3.00am – the expectation would be that officers would make their 'best effort'. HMICFRS recommended oversight of decision-making by supervisory officers as particularly beneficial. Chief Officers also had a role in shaping the culture and providing momentum in this area.

The Panel queried what evidence HMICFRS had for their view that Lincs needed to improve when the Force was convinced that their approach was benefitting victims. In response, HMICFRS cautioned against focussing too much attention on the section of the Inspection report that dealt with 'Rape'. Domestic abuse cases were highlighted as a case in point. The Force had deemed a number of such cases as being suitable for diary appointments. However, it had been found that on a number of occasions, officers had either attended appointments many days after the alleged incident or they had been cancelled by victims. This had not only been a failure of the NCRS but provided a poor service to victims. The DCC explained that Force practice was very much victim-led. Diary appointments would be made at a time/location convenient for the victim. Should the victim later decide not to engage with the police, their decision would be respected and the appointment cancelled. He suggested that there had to be a subtler way of reflecting this rather than simply recording missed appointments. The Crime Registrar commented that if a diary appointment were made, this would also be recorded within CMB and could be added to at a later point depending on how the case developed. HMICFRS also welcomed steps that had since been taken by the Force to improve some of the timeliness issues around diary commitments.

Can you please explain to us the methodology used by HMICFRS and perhaps forward to us a copy of the spreadsheet they use? This would assist the panel members in their understanding.

HMICFRS advised that a technical explanation of the methodology was available on their website. However, a brief overview of the crime recording audit methodology was provided. The first stage involved defining the audit sample and size. An estimate was also made of the volume of crime and level of compliance with the NCRS. It was confirmed that the sample represented all reporting routes into a force, such as, for example, the '999' emergency number. Dip sampling was used to determine the extent to which incidents of violent offences, sexual offences and other offences (excluding fraud) had been correctly recorded. This sample also included transfers, cancellations, vulnerable victims and the N100 classification, although this did not apply to Lincs. The timescale between working with a force to produce the required sample and undertaking the formal inspection was around 5 weeks. The team would start by auditing the core sample, which comprised the core reporting routes. A judgement would be made about the numbers of crimes reported after listening to audio files and reviewing relevant incident/crime records and associated documentation. This exercise would take approx. 2 weeks to complete. Copies of the completed HMICFRS Work Books would then be provided, which might lead to challenges being made by the force via the resolution process. This could include, for example, a disagreement over the way a particular rule had been interpreted. The National Crime Register would act as the final arbiter in such disputes.

Members acknowledged that forces used different reporting and recording processes/systems but queried what the top performers in this area were doing that others were not. HMICFRS articulated a number of success factors that included:

- making a recording decision at the point a report is received
- making a separate decision about whether to investigate
- decision-makers well trained in their respective roles
- development of bespoke crime recording training packages

The Panel queried whether there were any particular systems that high performing forces were using. HMICFRS identified Athena and Niche as the most commonly used systems. There were also a number of bespoke systems that had been developed for individual forces, such as Red Sigma. The DCC confirmed that there wasn't a nationally recognised and badged crime recording IT system currently.

What is the extent to which HMICFRS as an organisation, have the ability to feed back to the Home Office on whether there is a need to review the rules and practices that currently underpin the current recording regime.

HMICFRS confirmed that they had some ability to do this, as did

individual forces. They were represented on the National Crime Recording Steering Group and on a number of other national groups, and would use the opportunity to draw attention to issues and concerns, including potential changes to rules and practices. A recent example of this related to modern slavery with victims who had been coerced into prostitution being unable to distinguish between those individuals with whom they had consensual intercourse and those who had raped them. In one particular case, just 5 out of 150 incidents of rape had been recorded. The rules had been changed to ensure that the extent of such abuse was fully captured and understood.

CN referred to the reputational damage suffered by Lincs after it was revealed in the Inspection report that some 23 reports of rape had not been recorded. However when the force had sought to challenge this aspect of the report, it had been rejected. It was noted that a change in the rules that was due to come into effect on 1 April would bring the recording of sexual offences in alignment with the Lincs approach. HMICFRS stated that they could not retrospectively change their Inspection report to accommodate the forthcoming rule change. The Panel queried whether an earlier change in the rules would have materially changed their report. The Force Crime Registrar advised that if the rule change had been in effect, 10 out of the 23 rapes would have been condensed into 1. HMICFRS acknowledged the strength of feeling about the issue but pointed out that the change in rules had come about following evidence from a number of forces, not just Lincs.

What is HMICFRS ability to identify and promote good practice if they come across it even if that practice does not conform to current rules?

HMICFRS acknowledged that the question was primarily aimed at the approach taken by the Force to N100. It was confirmed that Lincs was not technically breaching the rules by submitting a zero return but nor was it complying with the NCRS. There was a clear purpose to N100 and it was important to ensure that there were common rules across all forces. If Lincs did not want to use N100, then it had to ensure that there were sufficiently robust processes and systems in place to ensure that such reports were recorded, reclassified, etc. The Force Crime Registrar reminded the Panel that recording procedures had been at fault in respect of those instances identified during the audit. The issue had been the failure to create records, which was unconnected with N100. HMICFRS referred to 10 reports that had been missed and should have been recorded. The Panel was advised that under N100, those particular reports would not have been missed. The Panel queried whether the benefits of N100 had been reviewed. HMICFRS advised that N100 had only been introduced in April 2015 and that they were unaware of any appetite to withdraw it.

The Panel sought a perspective from HMICFRS on the

	<p>implications/consequences of non-compliance with the NCRS particularly as a number of Chief Constable’s had been quite ‘bullish’ about not meeting the required standard. HMICFRS sought to understand the local context within which strategic decisions were being made, such as the Force’s financial position. They would seek to understand the rationale for such decisions and whilst they would probably comment, they were unlikely to be critical. However, issues relating to skill sets, training, supervision and knowledge were clearly not strategic in nature.</p> <p><i>We heard evidence from Laura Wint-McKane from Lincolnshire Rape Crisis that many people in the County were very upset when the HMICFRS report came out. That demand fell on Laura and her colleagues, not on Lincolnshire Police. Without seeking to apportion blame on either HMICFRS or the Force, can we use this meeting to look towards a jointly more responsible approach, keeping the needs of the public at the forefront?</i></p> <p>The Chair reiterated that the tone/adversarial language used in the Inspection report had genuinely affected people in Lincolnshire. Whilst such reports were of value to forces, most members of the public would not understand the complexities of crime recording and would simply conclude that the Force was “letting them down”. She asked whether there was anything that HMICFRS could do about the way they presented their reports. The Deputy Chair also referred to anecdotal evidence that appeared to suggest that as a consequence of the report, some victims had decided to contact organisations such as Rape Crisis rather than the police. However he accepted that the media had also played a part in this. HMICFRS suggested that it would be difficult to comment given that the tone of the Inspection report was set by the HMI. However, they also reminded the Panel that victims were at the heart of the inspection regime and that such reports were in the public interest, although phrases such as ‘let down’ were not generally employed. (Note: it was clarified that the phrase had originated from an interview given by the HMI about the Lincs Inspection report). The Force Crime Register confirmed that a copy of the draft report had been provided for factual accuracy checks. However comments had also been made about the tone/language, leading to changes being made to make it more explanatory. Some contextualisation had also been added.</p> <p>[Prof Hall left at 2.00pm]</p> <p>The Panel welcomed the comments that had been made and expressed a desire to ensure that meetings such as this delivered a positive outcome for the people of Lincolnshire.</p> <p>The Chair thanked all participants and closed the meeting.</p>	
6.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Friday 5 April 2019 12.00 to 2.00pm in the OPCC Meeting Room.</p>	All