

Leicestershire Police: Crime Data Integrity inspection 2017

Please note: This inspection was carried out before 19 July 2017, when HMIC also took on responsibility for fire & rescue service inspections and was renamed HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services. The methodology underpinning our inspection findings is unaffected by this change.

References to HMICFRS in this report may relate to an event that happened before 19 July 2017 when HMICFRS was HMIC.

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Overall judgment

● ○ ○ ○ Inadequate

The integrity of the crime-recording arrangements in Leicestershire Police has deteriorated since [HMICFRS' 2014 Crime Data Integrity inspection report](#).

The force has made insufficient progress with implementing and sustaining changes recommended in our 2014 report which is seriously undermining the effectiveness and efficiency of its crime-recording arrangements.

However, we found that:

- the majority of officers and staff have made progress in placing the victim at the forefront of their crime-recording decisions;
- its victim support service ([Victim First](#)) is well-established, providing victims of recorded crime with access to support services to which they are entitled; and
- it has recently changed its scheduling of diary appointments for victims of crime, which it intends will improve the time taken to respond to those victims whose reports do not require an urgent response.

Nonetheless, much more remains to be done. Based on the findings of our examination of crime reports for the period 1 August 2016 to 31 January 2017, [we estimate that the force fails to record over 21,200 reported crimes each year](#). This represents a recording rate of 75.8 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 1.94 percent). The 24.2 percent of reported crimes that go unrecorded include serious crimes such as sexual offences and domestic abuse. The recording rate for violent crime is a particular cause of concern at only 65.8 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 3.25 percent). This means that on far too many occasions, the force is failing victims of crime.

Immediate improvements must be made. In particular, we consider that there are too many failures to make the correct crime-recording decision at the first opportunity. These failures are often due to poor crime-recording processes and an insufficient understanding of crime-recording requirements by officers and staff, compounded by limited supervision to correct these decisions at the earliest opportunity and the absence of effective auditing of crime-recording decisions.

Summary of inspection findings

The force has not maintained the standards of crime-recording accuracy reported in our 2014 report. However, we found that:

- some progress has been made against the recommendations following the 2014 report. This includes improvements to the force's use of [out-of-court disposals](#) (e.g. cautions and community resolutions); and
- the force has made good progress in developing an understanding of modern day slavery offences among officers and staff.

Despite these advances, the force's performance in respect of crime recording is unacceptable in the following areas:

- The force is currently under-recording too many reports of crime, including:
 - violent crimes;
 - reports of rape; and
 - other sexual offences.

The force needs to act promptly to improve the accuracy of its recording of these reports and to provide all victims with the service to which they are entitled and deserve.

- The force has made insufficient progress with implementing changes recommended in the 2014 report.
- Incidents which have been disclosed directly to public protection teams as part of multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, and which amount to a crime in law, are not always recorded as such.
- Delays to the recording of a reported crime are leading to delays in the referral of victims to the force's victim care service (Victim First), letting down those victims who need the early support this team can provide.
- Internal crime-recording audits are not being conducted in accordance with national standards and consequently they are providing an incorrect picture to senior managers of the effectiveness of crime-recording arrangements in the force.
- The force must improve the extent to which it collects information regarding the effect of criminality on identifiable groups within communities.

Some of these failings are a consequence of the force not maintaining effective and efficient oversight of crime-recording arrangements. In addition, there is limited supervision of the crime-recording decisions taken by officers and staff, and insufficient progress has been made to ensure officers and staff understand their crime-recording responsibilities.

Senior leaders of the force have also concluded that a change in the crime-recording system, moving to NICHE, and a change in the force operating model designed to produce savings, have affected negatively the service provided to the public in respect of accurate crime recording and has resulted in the degradation of data quality.

We note, however, that the force has recently improved its scheduling of non-urgent diary appointments to see victims of crime; as a consequence all such appointments should take place within 24 hours of the report of a crime. This is a welcome development.

Cause of concern

In Leicestershire Police there is a failure of officers and staff to make correct crime-recording decisions at the first opportunity. This is due to deficiencies in the force's crime-recording processes, insufficient understanding of crime-recording requirements and limited supervision to correct the decisions of officers and staff and improve standards from the outset. This means that the force is letting down many victims of crime.

The force is failing to ensure it adequately records all reports of rape, other sexual offences and violence, including domestic abuse crimes and crimes reported directly to its public protection department. In addition, on many occasions, it is incorrectly using classification [N100](#).

Recommendations

- Immediately, the force should review the operating arrangements of its contact management department, including the use of appointments, and ensure that these arrangements secure the recording of all reported crimes at the first point of report when sufficient information exists to do so and in any event within 24 hours of receipt of the report.
- Immediately, the force should take steps to identify and address gaps in its systems and processes for identifying and recording all reports of crime. This work should include a review of the means by which the investigation management unit (IMU) identifies crimes needing to be

recorded, and also provide a consistent and structured approach to call-handling quality assurance processes that includes checking compliance with the [National Crime Recording Standards](#).

- Immediately, the force should take steps to ensure that reports of crime received in respect of vulnerable adults and children from other agencies or disclosed during investigation are recorded as crimes at the point of reporting.
- Immediately, and in accordance with the crime-recording rules, the force should transfer to the force crime registrar (FCR) the responsibility for the development and oversight of the crime-recording audits conducted within the force, and ensure that these audits are conducted in accordance with national standards.
- Within three months, the force should develop and implement procedures for the effective supervision of crime-recording decisions throughout the whole force.
- Within three months, the force should put in place arrangements to ensure that:
 - **at the point of report**, greater emphasis is placed on the initial account of victims; and
 - where more than one crime is disclosed within an incident record, or is identified as part of other recorded crime investigations, these are recorded.
- Within six months, the force should design and provide training for all staff who make crime-recording decisions. This should include training in regard to:
 - the extent of the information required to provide for a crime-recording decision to be made;
 - the expectation that reported crime is recorded at the first point that sufficient information exists to record a crime, which in the majority of cases will be at the point of report;
 - the importance of believing the first account of the victim;
 - the proper use of classification N100 for reports of rape and recording crimes of rape involving multiple offenders and from third party reports;
 - offences involving the public order act, malicious communications, harassment and common assault; and

- the additional verifiable information required in order to make crime-cancellation decisions.

Areas for improvement

- The force should immediately improve how it collects diversity information from victims of crime and how it uses this to inform its compliance with its equality duty.
- The force should immediately take steps to ensure that all modern slavery and other offences disclosed during modern slavery investigations are recorded.
- The force should immediately put in place arrangements to improve the process for informing victims when their recorded crime has been cancelled.

How effective is the force at recording reported crime?

● ○ ○ ○ Inadequate

Overall crime-recording rate

75.8% of reported crimes were recorded

Over 21,200 reports of crime a year are not recorded

The force has considerable work to do in order to ensure it records all reports of crime in accordance with the [Home Office Counting Rules](#) (HOCR). We examined reports of crime which the force received, and for which an [auditable record was created](#). The force informed HMICFRS that all crime that is recorded (excluding fraud) came through an auditable crime reporting route.

We found that the force recorded 75.8 percent of these crimes (with a confidence interval of +/- 1.94 percent). [We estimate that this means the force is not recording over 21,200 reports of crime each year](#). Those failings are depriving many victims of the services to which they are entitled and are a cause of concern.

Of a total of 1,781 reports of crime that we audited, we found 454 that we assessed to be crimes related to domestic abuse. Of these 454 crimes, the force had recorded 311. The 143 offences not recorded included a serious assault, offences of violence and crimes involving harassment and malicious communications.

We found that many of these reports involved the reporting of a crime at the first point of contact with the force, but these crime reports went unrecorded with little rationale to explain why. We also found that many officers attending reports of crime believed incorrectly that if a victim reported a crime but did not want any formal action taking, there was no need to record the crime. All reports of crime should be recorded irrespective of the subsequent action sought by the victim. Doing so enables the force to understand clearly the extent and types of crime being committed against its communities and to then use its resources efficiently and effectively to respond to that demand. It also enables the force to understand more fully those crimes previously reported by individual victims. This may assist the force to provide the most appropriate response in the future, including in respect of the victim's safeguarding needs.

We found that the force had correctly identified at the outset that it was dealing with a domestic abuse report in virtually every domestic abuse case, and that safeguarding requirements were considered in the majority of these cases, but not all. We also found that no investigation was undertaken in the majority of these reports of crime, thereby increasing the potential risk of harm to the victim.

The absence of understanding of the extent of domestic abuse crime, the under-recording of crimes related to domestic incidents, and the failure to provide a satisfactory service to these victims are a serious concern. This is because domestic abuse often involves victims who are particularly vulnerable to further offences being committed against them.

Factors contributing to the force's under-recording of crime reports are its crime-recording processes, its workforce's crime-recording knowledge and the limited capacity of supervisors to provide effective oversight of crime-recording decisions.

Deficiencies in the force's crime-recording processes are a concern. In particular, we found that:

- when further offences come to light after the initial deployment or during subsequent investigation, the force does not always record reported crimes;
- incident records that contain multiple reports often result in only one crime report being recorded;

We found that IMU staff and frontline officers are not always sure of crime-recording requirements. In particular:

- basic crime-recording principles and knowledge of crime-recording requirements relating to common assault, malicious communications and harassment are not always understood. For example, we found that staff were unsure of the crime-recording rules regarding common assault where there is no physical assault but there is the threat of one; and
- **at the point of report**, on occasion, when assessing whether, on the balance of probability, an offence has been committed, insufficient emphasis has been given to the initial account of the victim.

A further problem relates to the force's supervision of its crime-recording decisions. We found supervision of its crime-recording decisions requires improvement and in particular:

- supervisors do not have the capacity to scrutinise adequately all crime related incidents to satisfy themselves that crime-recording decisions are correct;
- supervisors do not have the capacity to scrutinise non-crime occurrences and crime records on the crime-recording system to satisfy themselves that crime-recording decisions are correct;
- domestic abuse incidents are not supervised adequately to ensure that sufficient and appropriate rationale for not recording a crime exists.

We also note, in concluding this section, that the FCR – responsible for ensuring the crime-recording standards are applied in accordance with the national rules, including the setting of crime-recording audit programmes in the force – is not responsible for crime-recording audits in Leicestershire Police. Additionally, she is not responsible for the methodology of the audits

completed by those who undertake this function. Consequently, we found that the audits carried out by the force and reviewed as part of this inspection have not been conducted in line with national best practice, and have wrongly reported high levels of crime-recording accuracy. This suggests that the force has, to a very serious degree, been unaware of the crime-recording issues identified by HMICFRS. The force should address this immediately.

Violence against the person

65.8% of reported violent crimes were recorded

Over 7,900 reports of violent crime a year are not recorded

We found that only 65.8 percent of violent crimes reported to the force are recorded (with a confidence interval of +/- 3.25 percent). This is lower than the overall crime-recording rate noted above. [By our estimate, this means the force fails to record over 7,900 violent crimes that are reported to it each year.](#) As violent crime can be particularly distressing for the victim, this is an area in which the need for improvement is particularly acute.

Many of these crimes involve injury, which can cause even further distress for the victim. These included reports of grievous bodily harm. We therefore find the recording of reports of violent crime by the force to be a serious concern.

In the majority of cases, where violent crimes were not recorded, we found the principal causes to be:

- the processes currently in place for the recording of a reported crime (described earlier);
- officers and staff not understanding adequately the crime-recording rules, particularly around the complexities of some violence offences such as harassment, malicious communications and the more straightforward offence of common assault. This results in the failure to record many such reports of crime; and
- an absence of adequate supervision and satisfactory audit of crime-recording decisions.

Victims of violent crime and, in particular, victims of more serious violence, often require substantial support. This support should come not only from the reporting and investigating officers, but also, possibly, from the force's victim support service, Victim First. Under those circumstances, crime recording

takes on a heightened importance. Failing to record properly a violent crime can result in Victim First receiving no notification that a person has become a victim of violent crime. That in turn, deprives victims of the support they need and deserve.

Sexual offences

79.4% of reported sex offences were recorded

Over 400 reports of sex offences a year are not recorded

The force's recording of reports of sexual offences (including rape), is a cause of concern. We found that the force records 79.4 percent of sexual offence crimes that are reported to it (with a confidence interval of +/- 3.35 percent). [We estimate that this means the force fails to record over 400 reported sexual offence crimes each year.](#)

Those failings are significant given the very serious nature of sexual offences and the harm they cause to their victims. We found, for example, that the force failed to record reports of sexual assault against both adults and children, sexual offences committed online or using social media, and incitement of children to commit a sexual act.

The causes of that under-recording are similar to those described earlier:

- the deficiency of the processes that are currently in place for the recording of a reported crime;
- officers and staff not understanding adequately the crime-recording rules;
- an absence of adequate supervision and satisfactory audit of crime-recording decisions; and
- on occasion, when assessing whether, on the balance of probability, an offence has been committed, insufficient emphasis on the account of the victim, particularly where the victim does not wish to pursue any prosecution, where the victim is intoxicated or where the person reporting the crime is a professional third party acting on their behalf.

We also found that some officers were reluctant to record some types of crime that young people may have committed. They wrongly believed that this could unfairly criminalise these young people. The act of recording a reported crime does not in itself criminalise a suspect. However, it does allow for a force to

have a full understanding of crime in its area and to provide an opportunity for the appropriate intervention with a suspect, such as considering safeguarding needs as an alternative to prosecution.

Sexual offence victims require significant support from the outset. The failure to record such crimes, to provide appropriate support to the victim, or any delay in attendance or investigation will often result in a lack of confidence in the police and reluctance on behalf of the victim to engage in subsequent stages of the criminal justice system. The force must improve its performance in this respect.

Rape

83 of 100 audited rape reports were accurately recorded

Rape is one of the most serious sexual offence crimes a victim can experience. Therefore, the accurate recording of such reports is especially important. It helps to ensure victims receive the service they have a right to expect and deserve, and it allows the police to identify the nature and extent of sexual violence in their local area. In turn, this enables the police to operate with the highest practicable levels of efficiency to identify and deal effectively with perpetrators.

In Leicestershire Police we found 100 reports of rape that should have been recorded, but only 83 of these had been recorded. These include reports that originated on the force incident system, reports made during modern slavery investigations, and from a review of N100 records (see below).

Eight of the unrecorded crimes were disclosed while dealing with victims of modern slavery. Five were recorded as other serious sexual offences, and four had not been recorded at all.

We found that when a report of rape had not been recorded as a crime, Leicestershire Police provided support and safeguarding in all of these cases, including referrals to partner organisations when appropriate. However, we also found that on some occasions when a crime was not recorded an effective investigation was not carried out. This underpins the importance of the recording of reported crime and is wholly unacceptable.

The causes of the under-recording of these 17 crimes are the same as were identified above in respect of sexual offences. These are:

- the deficiency of the processes that are currently in place for the recording of a reported crime;
- officers and staff not understanding adequately the crime-recording rules;
- the absence of a clear policy which sets out who is responsible for recording such crimes; and
- the absence of adequate supervision and satisfactory audit of crime-recording decisions.

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

We found 12 reports for which an N100 classification should have been applied but it was only applied on one occasion.

Separately, we reviewed 19 sample records where an N100 classification had been used. We found that 11 were correctly recorded. Of the eight remaining N100s:

- two had later correctly been recorded as rape crimes;
- two should have been recorded as rape crimes but had remained as N100;
- two had been recorded incorrectly as rape crimes but should have stayed recorded as N100; and
- two should not have been recorded as N100 at all.

Officers and staff spoken to during this inspection had very little awareness of the N100 classification. This included public protection specialists, who are most likely to need to consider the use of the classification.

In order to minimise the delay in recording an offence of rape and to ensure appropriate records are made which justify not recording a reported rape, the force must take action to ensure that it uses classification N100 correctly and consistently.

As with other sexual offences, the recording of a report of rape is important. Victims generally require significant support from the outset and any delay in providing support can be detrimental to both the recovery of the victim and to any investigation. This, in turn, can negatively influence future judicial proceedings.

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

 Inadequate

Crime reports held on other systems

1 of 20 vulnerable victim crimes were recorded

The extent to which crimes reported directly to the force public protection teams are not being recorded is inexcusable. In order to be confident that vulnerable victims always receive the support they need, the force must take immediate action to improve its recording of these crimes.

We examined 48 vulnerable victim records on Niche. Of these, we found that 20 crimes should have been recorded, of which only one had been. The missing 19 crimes that should have been recorded were all assaults, these included offences against both adults and children.

There was evidence that most but not all of the victims of these crimes were being safeguarded and some, but not all of the crimes were being investigated.

Despite this, the extent to which reports of crime received by public protection teams are not being recorded, and the seriousness of the risks associated with the under-recording of these reports of crime, are causes of concern.

We found that the force's audit of vulnerable victim records on Niche focused on those records that were already associated with recorded crimes. The exclusion of records from this audit which were not associated with a crime record means that the force is unaware of the extent of under-recording of reports of crime contained within these records.

Modern slavery

Offences relating to modern slavery are an important and recent addition to the crimes that forces must record and investigate. We therefore reviewed the recording of reports of modern slavery offences. We also examined the force's understanding of the origin of such reports. Again, we found that the crime-recording requirements from these reports must improve.

We examined 15 modern slavery reports and found that 19 crimes should have been recorded but only seven were recorded. Among the missing crimes were five modern slavery crimes, four reports of assault and one report of rape.

We also examined 17 reports which the force had recorded as modern slavery crimes. From these, we found that an additional 14 crimes had not been recorded. These missing crimes included two modern slavery crimes, five reports of assault and seven reports of rape.

The force works regionally, nationally and internationally in its efforts to tackle modern slavery. A detective superintendent is responsible for developing the force's response to modern slavery, supported by a small dedicated team which develops intelligence and manages the response to investigations. The force is developing an intelligence picture in collaboration with partners, including other police forces in the region.

Officers and staff have a good, basic knowledge of modern slavery offences. They are aware that a dedicated team existed which would support them if needed.

Timeliness

The HOCR require that reports of crime are recorded within 24 hours of the receipt of the report. We found that, of the reports of crime that had been recorded by Leicestershire Police, only 65 out of 83 reports of rape, 306 out of 502 reports of violent crime and 88 out of 172 sexual offences (excluding rape) had been recorded within 24 hours of the receipt of the report.

While some victims may be referred to support agencies by other means, the delay in recording a reported crime also delays the referral of the victim to the force's victim support team (Victim First). As some victims would benefit from the early support this team can provide, these delays are unacceptable.

Cancelled crimes

Where additional verifiable information (AVI) is obtained to show that a recorded crime did not occur, the crime record can be cancelled.

We reviewed 20 cancelled recorded crimes each of rape and sexual offence crimes (excluding rape), 22 violence crimes and 13 robbery crimes. We found that the FCR, who has responsibility for the cancellation decisions in regard to recorded crimes of rape, had correctly cancelled 17 out of 20 of these crimes. Other crime cancellation decisions are the responsibility of three staff known as designated decision makers (DDMs.) The DDMs had correctly cancelled 18 out of 20 sexual offences, 21 out of 22 violence offences and all 13 robbery offences. This illustrates a good standard of decision making for most of these crimes. However, the incorrect decisions in respect of rape are of particular concern.

We also found that many officers and staff had a limited understanding of what amounts to AVI for the purpose of cancelling a recorded crime.

Where a crime has been cancelled or transferred to another force for investigation, a victim should always know the status of his or her reported crime. In the case of a decision to cancel a recorded crime, the very least the victim should expect is an explanation of the reason for this decision. We found that the force needs to improve in this respect as, where a victim needed to be told, not all victims had been told of the decision to cancel their reported crime.

Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

The [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#) provides clear guidance to police forces regarding the service that should be provided to all victims of crime. We have concluded that the force is complying with all of its responsibilities on those occasions where a reported crime is recorded.

Victim First supports victims of crime who are referred to it once a crime has been recorded. In some cases victims may self-refer. However, the delays we found in the recording of many reports of crime, together with the failure to record a high number of reported crimes means that referrals to Victim First are either delayed or not made at all. The improvements needed to address the under-recording of reports of crime, as discussed earlier in this report, will assist the force's compliance in this area.

Equality

HMICFRS found that the force must improve in its collection of information regarding crimes affecting identifiable groups within communities.

Protected characteristics, such as gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity, religion and age do not necessarily increase the vulnerability of an individual to the risk of crime. However, it is important that the force records information regarding the characteristics of victims of crime in order to identify any patterns which may exist between different community groups and their vulnerability to (or their relative likelihood to report) different types of crime. We found that the force records equality information in relation to the victim such as age and gender on every occasion, but only records other protected characteristics where these are determined to be relevant to the offence.

Importantly, so long as the force fails to record such information, it will be unable to understand clearly whether its crime-recording decisions are consistent across different community groups. This is, therefore, an area for improvement.

Officer and staff survey

We conducted a survey of officers and staff in Leicestershire Police of their experience in respect of crime-recording. Some 128 respondents completed the survey. While some of these commented that they were under pressure due to the volume of work they had responsibility for, and criticised a new operating model which the force had introduced, there was no suggestion that these in anyway affected the crime-recording decisions they would make.

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

●●○○ Requires improvement

The integrity of the crime-recording arrangements in Leicestershire Police has deteriorated since [HMICFRS' 2014 Crime Data Integrity inspection report](#). Senior officers understand this, and have recognised that the introduction of a new crime-recording system, and changes to the force operating model introduced in February 2015, have in some respects affected negatively the standard of service the force provides to the public, including the accuracy of crime recording.

The force is now working to adapt its operating model. Senior leaders are ensuring that this includes an emphasis on accurate and effective crime recording. This is welcome.

We found that officers and staff always seek to place the needs of the victim at the heart of their crime-recording decisions but due to insufficient knowledge of crime-recording requirements many victims are being failed. This included those occasions when officers attending reports of crime believed wrongly that because the victim did not want any formal action taking, there was no need to record the crime. This absence of knowledge is exacerbated by limited supervision to challenge or correct wrong crime-recording decisions.

Insufficient progress has been made with implementing and sustaining changes recommended in the 2014 report. We also note that more needs to be done if the force is to fully meet the expectations of the action plan developed by the national policing lead on crime statistics following the 2014 report, and which all forces have been asked to implement.

However, the progress made in the use of out-of-court disposals is notable. Effective processes are now in place to monitor all such disposals, including the use of independent scrutiny panels. Procedural documents are clear and concise; these ensure that considerations as to the suitability of the use of the disposal for both the victim and offender are very good.

Conclusion

Leicestershire Police's crime-recording arrangements are currently below an acceptable standard.

The force also needs to address shortcomings in its auditing arrangements to ensure that this provides a substantially clearer picture of crime-recording accuracy, so that senior leaders can address any identified shortcomings and ensure that the force provides a good service to all victims of crime.

What next?

HMICFRS expects the force urgently to make progress implementing recommendations we make in this report.

The serious causes of concern found during this inspection are such that HMICFRS will re-visit the force in 2018 to assess progress.