

**Police and Crime Commissioner West Midlands** response to the publication of  
**West Midlands Police: Crime Data Integrity Re-Inspection 2018<sup>1</sup>**

by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Service (HMICFRS)

Overall rating for West Midlands Police	<b>Inadequate</b>
Number of recommendations	<b>4</b>

On 15 January 2019 HMICFRS published the report on their West Midlands Police Crime Data Integrity Inspection which examined crime reports for the period 1 March 2018 to 31 May 2018.

HMICFRS estimated that:

- 78.2 percent of violent crime (with a confidence interval of +/- 2.87 percent); and
- 89.2 percent of sexual offences (with a confidence interval of 2.70%).

HMICFRS found that West Midlands Police had:

- designated the deputy chief constable (DCC) as the lead for the CDI improvement plan;
- developed and begun to implement bespoke crime-recording improvement plans for all relevant departments;
- improved its arrangements for the recording of modern slavery offences; and
- continued to provide crime-recording training to officers and staff responsible for making crime-recording decisions.

However, the report concluded:

“West Midlands Police has improved some elements of its crime-recording arrangements since our 2017 crime data integrity (CDI) inspection report. However, we found more still needs to be done.”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.justiceinspectors.gov.uk/hmicfrs/our-work/crime-data-integrity/reports-rolling-programme-crime-data-integrity/>

Under the Policing and Crime Act 2017 PCCs must publish a response to HMICFRS reports, together with any comments submitted by the Chief Constable, within 56 days of the report being published. Where reports include recommendations the response must include an explanation of the action the PCC proposes to take in response. The overall response as well as responses from WMP and the PCC to individual recommendations are set out below.

## **Overall response**

Accurate crime statistics are needed to inform the public of issues affecting their areas and by policy makers to guide decision-making and resource allocation at a national and local level. As set out in my Police and Crime Plan, I expect high standards of crime recording. When a crime is committed the public should be able to trust the police to deal with it appropriately and effectively, recording the crime accurately so the right action can follow.

[www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/your-commissioner/police-and-crime-plan](http://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/your-commissioner/police-and-crime-plan)

Most importantly, behind each recorded crime is a victim. Standing up for victims has always been a priority of mine and I want victims of crime to have confidence in reporting crimes to West Midlands Police. It is important to note HMICFRS' finding from CDI inspections that there was strong senior leadership in West Midlands Police in regard to crime-recording expectations and that the majority of officers and staff that places the victim at the forefront of their crime-recording decisions.

However, we recognise that there are still issues with embedding understanding and application of the Home Office Counting Rules across the force and welcome the force's renewed momentum to make improvements. I will continue to monitor their performance in this area in various ways and on an ongoing basis including through:

- a report from West Midlands Police to my Strategic Policing and Crime Board in May
- attendance by my office at the Crime Data Integrity Gold Group
- the Joint Audit Committee.

<http://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/strategic-policing-and-crime-board/spcb-dates-of-meetings-and-reports/spcb-agendas,-minutes-and-reports/>

Police forces face numerous, complex challenges including how they respond to serious violence, organised vehicle theft, the demand resulting from serious mental health related incidents and domestic violence, and how they maintain and improve public confidence in a time of restricted officer numbers. Many of these are harder for HMICFRS to assess compared to technical compliance with the Home Office Counting Rules as assessed in the Crime Data Integrity inspections. Crime Data Integrity does not provide a proxy indicator for the overall quality of service victims receive. While improvement in CDI is desirable and the issues HMICFRS raise unquestionably worthy of concern, the recommendations and areas

for improvement often encourage forces to increase resourcing of specific areas. Such recommendations are at best unactionable, at worst, drive perverse behaviours in chasing grade improvements rather than focusing on how, for a fixed budget, to deliver the best possible service across the policing functions as a whole.

## Cause of concern

In West Midlands Police, officers and staff fail 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 decisions and improve standards from the outset. This means that the force is failing many victims of crime.

The force is failing to ensure it adequately records all reports of sexual offences and violence, including domestic abuse crimes and crimes reported directly to its public protection department.

### Recommendation 1

Within six months, West Midlands Police should take steps to identify and address gaps in its systems and processes to ensure that when officers have attended incidents all reported crimes are recorded. This should include satisfying itself as to the effectiveness of its arrangements for the recording of crimes by officers through the crime service team. The force also needs to implement a consistent and structured approach to call-handling quality assurance processes that includes checking compliance with the National Crime Recording Standards.

### WMP response:

Since the 2017 CDI inspection, WMP has undertaken an extensive review of crime recording across the force area, applying the HMICFRS 'field work' methodology, which helped identify the barriers to crime recording. A CDI Gold Group has been established to oversee the HMICFRS recommendations and is chaired by the DCC. The 2017 CDI improvement plan was revisited, refreshed and updated. Each Core Department; Force Contact, Force Response, Public Protection Unit, Force CID and Initial Investigation Teams have their own CDI improvement plans, which feed into the overall force plan.

The force has invested in a new IT infrastructure and technology; (i). Control Works (Command and Control system) (ii). Connect (Crime System). Control Works will be introduced in late 2019, which will include embedding the 'telephone call' within the incident log, allowing officers to listen to the 'original' call and have a clear understanding of what the victim is reporting. The system will also look to provide a 'rationale box' for officers to complete when a crime isn't recorded. Steve Bond (Home Office National Crime Registrar) has since provided guidance on the '*negation of crime*'.

WMP has purchased Connect Express / Go which will allow officers to record crime through their mobile devices whilst at the scene of a crime. The crime recording decision tree will assist officers in making the correct crime recording decision. This will allow for digitally record crime at the scene and improve timeliness of crime recording.

The mobility crime recording concept is also being adapted for Desk Top use for the Initial Investigation Team; if successful this will be extended to the PPU Central Referral Unit, Modern Slavery Team and Domestic Abuse Resolution Team.

Force Contact continues to complete a monthly log audit which assesses the log details from a number of perspectives, including crimes recording, THRIVE assessment and any deployment grading changes etc. Following on from their 80 point plan, they have increased the number of logs reviewed; which now includes open logs for effective management, response compliance, escalation decisions etc., There is also a specific focus vulnerability logs (including Domestic Abuse, Child Abuse, Missing Persons etc.). The Force Contact review process includes 1-2-1 call listening within Contact Centres, where each supervisor assesses the management and handling of selected calls.

Whilst HMICFRS Inspection findings for Violence and Sexual Offences mirror those identified by our own audit team, the '*All Other*' crime category has significantly improved (*in excess of 90%*) but was not included within the final CDI inspection report. The force remains committed to determined improvement activity for Violence and Sexual Offences.

#### PCC response

We will continue to monitor WMP's progress in relation to the action plan and audit results.

The delivery of the IT capabilities we have invested in will be an important milestone in developing a modern police force in the West Midlands. I will ensure these important programmes are delivered and review them to ensure that the benefits promised are delivered and that crime recording through Express / Go is subject to appropriate review and auditing.

#### Recommendation 2

Within three months, the force should review its operating arrangements to ensure that these arrangements secure the recording of all reported crimes at the first point at which sufficient information exists to make a crime-recording decision, and in any event within 24 hours of receipt of the report.

#### **WMP response:**

WMP advised HMICFRS in 2017 that this recommendation wasn't viable due to demand, the volume of calls received (5,700 per day) and the current operating model. The recommendation is under review and will be revisited when WMP introduces its new Command & Control system - Control Works (late 2019) and the new crime recording system Connect (late 2019/20)

The Force is recording more crime at point of call, currently around 38% and looking to expand this further. This will be improved with mobility devices for front line officers and

desk-top crime recording for specialist functions, such as Initial Investigation, Public Protection and Modern Slavery.

The Force is also reviewing the 'on-line' reporting methodology, with consideration being given to increasing the offence types the public can report against. We remain committed to continual improvement of our current crime recording processes as specified within our improvement plan and it is a key objective within the PCC's Police and Crime plan.

#### PCC response

A detailed response to this recommendation was provided in 2017 where I supported the Chief Constable's view that the recommendation was unreasonable and not feasible. Full details of that response are available below

<https://www.westmidlands-pcc.gov.uk/media/470971/HMIC-Crime-Data-Integrity-Inspection-PCC-response-2017.pdf>

I continue to support WMP's response to this recommendation. My office will follow the implementation of the force's revised CDI improvement plan and monitor accuracy of crime data recording as assessed by ongoing internal audit. Whilst I hope that this will see real improvements to recording, and therefore to victims, if such improvements are not achieved I will revisit this issue, and any other learning that comes from this national programme of inspections, to seek further change.

It is important that, where causes of concern are raised, the force delivers improvements that are cost effective and that we balance the costs and benefits of recommendations made by HMICFRS across its inspections to deliver the best service overall.

#### Recommendation 3

Within three months, the force should develop and implement procedures for the effective supervision of crime-recording decisions throughout the whole force.

#### **WMP response:**

An overhaul of the approach to CDI audits has meant that supervisors are now much more involved in checking CDI compliance and resolving errors. A key component of the WMP CDI Improvement plan is the active engagement of supervision with the internal incident log audits. The audit results are quality assured, then fed back to each department and supervisors provide individual feedback to officers / staff with regards to any error.

This inspection recommendation was considered at the force Crime Governance Board and performance analysts were tasked to identify a supervisory footprint on all open investigation logs. Results ranged from 71.8% to 80.0%, demonstrating a much increased rate of supervisor entry on open investigations and active management of crime reports. Unfortunately, WMP cannot carry out the same analysis for incident logs as the Oasis

system is not configured for that type of data retrieval. This, however, should be addressed through the new Control Works system.

The Crimes Services Team (CST) supervision now actively manage all N100 Reported incidents of Rape and review non-crime records (Domestic Abuse, Child Abuse, Vulnerable Adult). The results are fed back to the relevant department and individual feedback is given to the officer concerned and their supervisor.

PCC response

I am pleased that CST now actively manage all N100 reported incidents of rape and other serious non-crime records. It is essential that lessons learnt from supervision are communicated appropriately across the force to make sustainable improvements to recording practices.

Recommendation 4

Within six months, the force should put in place arrangements to ensure that:

- at the point of report, particularly in domestic abuse cases, greater emphasis is placed on the initial account of the victims;
- where more than one crime is disclosed within an incident record, or identified as part of other recorded crime investigations, these are recorded.

**WMP response:**

In addition to the HOCR NCALT training package, the Audit & Compliance Team has produced additional HOCR PowerPoint training which specifically covers both points. This is delivered through face-to-face training for the different teams within the five Core Departments. Real case examples are used to enhance the training and engage the audience.

This has also formed part of the internal crime recording messaging which appears as Lock Screens on the WMP Desktop computers. These will also be included within the revised Crime Recording Communications Plan developed by Corporate Communications and the FCR.

The regular audit of Domestic Abuse incidents will continue and the focus on accurate crime recording is still a clear mandate for the PCC and Chief Constable. Additionally, the force plans to deliver the College of Policing recommended DA Matters training programme to Response and Neighbourhood officers through 2019/20. DA Matters is academically evaluated and shown to increase both empathy with victims and understanding of the dynamics of domestic abuse.

PCC response

In my Police and Crime Plan I made clear that domestic abuse will not be tolerated and that I expect the force to continue to improve its knowledge of this crime and to work with partners to intervene and protect victims. This is one of a number of 'hidden crimes' where forces are experiencing significant increases in demand as efforts are made to improve awareness and increase reporting.

The force are required to report on a regular basis to my Strategic Policing and Crime Board on their approach to hidden crimes including domestic abuse. I have also asked my office to work with the specialist providers of domestic violence support that I fund to seek their views on what improvements need to be made to the police's approach to DA.