



CRIME DATA INTEGRITY UPDATE

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In 2014 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) carried out an inspection into the way the 43 police forces in England and Wales record crime data, with a view to establishing whether police-recorded crime information could be trusted. A report on the inspection of West Yorkshire Police was released on 28 August 2014¹. In summary the following strengths and weaknesses were found, and the recommendations made are set out at appendix A:

STRENGTHS

- The force is aware of the threat and risks involved with crime data integrity and has begun to make improvements, examples of which can be seen in the auditing capabilities, IT Management and the development of the Force Crime and Incident Registrar.
- The Chief Officers and Senior Management are positively encouraging accurate crime recording.

WEAKNESSES

- There are clear failings in the way that the force records crimes in relation to vulnerable victims.
- The under recording can be put down to a range of factors including; misunderstanding of counting rules and recording standards, performance pressures, and investigate-to-record tendencies.
- There are current processes in place which allow for no-crime recording which go against the counting rules and recording standards, examples include the use of Dedicated Decision Makers which are not independent from performance.
- Out-of-court disposals are often used where not suitable due to the offender's previous history or without consideration for the victim's wishes.
- There is a strong and improving policy to deal with rape no-crimes however this is not widely known and rarely applied in the correct way meaning that rape no-crime incidents are often recorded in a way that is not compliant with counting rules and recording standards.
- The Chief Officer's direction regarding crime data integrity is positive however it is lost in the lower ranks.

2.0 WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE UPDATE

- 2.1 The Police and Crime Panel have received a variety of inputs from West Yorkshire Police and the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) regarding the inspection findings and activity being undertaken to address this in September 2014, December 2014, March 2015 and June 2015.

¹ The full report can be found at <http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wp-content/uploads/crime-data-integrity-west-yorkshire-2014.pdf>

2.2 West Yorkshire Police have now provided the following update for November 2015 for Panel members. There will be an opportunity at the Panel meeting to ask questions in relation to this activity.

National Perspective

Crime Data Integrity (CDI) remains high on the agenda. Sir Tom Winsor, Chief Inspector of HM Constabulary, confirms that the focus on CDI in inspections will continue, describing some forces whose focus on CDI may have waned as deplorable.

In his recent letter to all Chief Constables, Police Crime Commissioners and the Home Secretary², he highlights the good work recently conducted within West Yorkshire Police since the 2014 inspection, and “how rapidly a poor position should and could be remedied”.

Sir Tom reaffirmed that accurate crime recording is essential if forces are to be able to deploy resources soundly and to operate to the highest practicable levels of efficiency. To ensure this, the HMIC will carry out unannounced inspections of every force, which will include assessment of how the force has responded to HMIC recommendations.

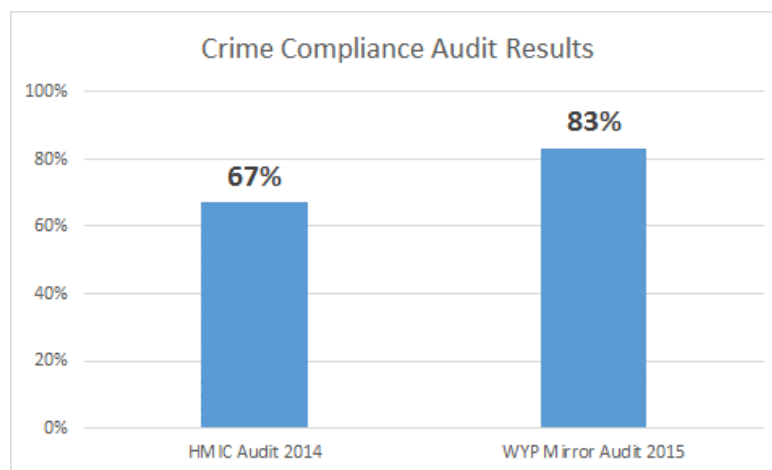
Chief Constable Farrar, the National Police Chief’s Council lead for Crime Recording, has reiterated the importance of continued focus on accurate and ethical integrity of recorded crime, detailing the trend across forces towards recording crime at first contact, and the need for victim belief to be institutionalised.

Chief Constable Farrar also expressed the desire at a national level to achieve re-accreditation of police crime data as a national statistic. This was withdrawn in 2014, and is currently under review again.

West Yorkshire Progress

The Internal Audit Team have recently reviewed the actions taken by the force in response to the five “Immediate” HMIC recommendations made. They have concluded that four out of the five recommendations have been fully implemented, with the fifth having been delayed due to operational resourcing issues in the Customer Contact Centre and the Force Demand Management Review not yet having reported. The Demand Management Review aims to ensure as a force we make the most efficient and effective use of our resources.

In summer 2015, in conjunction with the OPCC, the central CDI audit team carried out a mirror audit, using the same methodology as the HMIC. From the 260 logs, it was found that 166 crimes ought to have been recorded, of which 138 were (83%). This represents significant progress across the force, moving from 67% to 83%. A further similar audit is planned for 2016.



² <http://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic/wpcontent/uploads/crime-recording-chief-inspectors-letter-to-police-force.pdf>

Increase in Recorded Crime in West Yorkshire





There has been a 30.8% increase in recorded crime during April to October 2015 compared to the same period last year. This signals a slight slowing up of the rate of increase (the increase for April to September was 31.2%). The increase equates to 27,291 more recorded crimes. It is estimated that an increase of 18.6% is due to improved compliance with National Crime Recording Standards³ (NCRS), equating to 16,456 more recorded crimes. These are in the crime categories of violence (with and without injury), sexual offences (rape and other sexual offences), robbery, domestic burglary, theft from person, other theft (non-specific), criminal damage, arson, public order and miscellaneous crimes against society⁴.

NCRS Compliance Audits

In addition to tracking crime-related incidents and recorded crime trends, the Force has an audit function in place that reviews a sample of crime-related incidents, with a focus on domestic burglary and sexual crime-related incidents. The audit function has been in place since August 2014 and, since that time, there has been a monthly audit to verify the accuracy of converting crime-related incidents into recorded crimes (with failure identified as where a crime was not recorded when it was appropriate to do so or where there was insufficient detail on the incident log to provide an adequate rationale for not recording a crime). A further dimension was added to the failure, to ensure our audit methodology mirrored the approach of HMIC, in relation to an incorrect recorded crime classification and/or over-criming⁵. This additional dimension has been in place since January 2015 and allows us to view our audit results on a like for like basis with the findings of HMIC. The audit sample sizes each month are significantly higher than that of HMIC, at over 400 crime-related incidents per month (around 1% of all incidents), compared to just 0.04% for HMIC. Our audit sample size is therefore more statistically representative than that of HMIC and allows us to track changes in compliance over time.

Since May 2014 the increased focus on crime recording compliance has resulted in a greater likelihood that an incident initially recorded on Storm⁶ as a Crime related incident will ultimately be finalised as a crime related incident, thereby also increasing the likelihood that a crime will be recorded. Around 18 months ago around 5 out of 10 storm logs that were opened as a crime related incident were finalised as a crime related incident. This is now closer to 6/7 in every 10.

The monthly audit figures shown in the following charts are not statistically significant due to a limited sample size. To allow for this, data is collated over three months, providing a “smoothed” line which is statistically significantly (black line). The ratings and colour coding reflects HMIC methodology and are as follows:

	POOR - 79.9% and below compliance
	FAIR - Between 80%-89.9% compliance
	GOOD - Between 90%-94.9% compliance
	EXCELLENT - 95% and above compliance

³ The national crime recording standard (NCRS) is a standard for recording crime in accordance with the law and was introduced in 2002. It is based on applying legal definitions of crime to victim's reports. The aim of NCRS is to promote greater consistency between police forces when they record crime, and take a more victim-focused approach to crime recording.

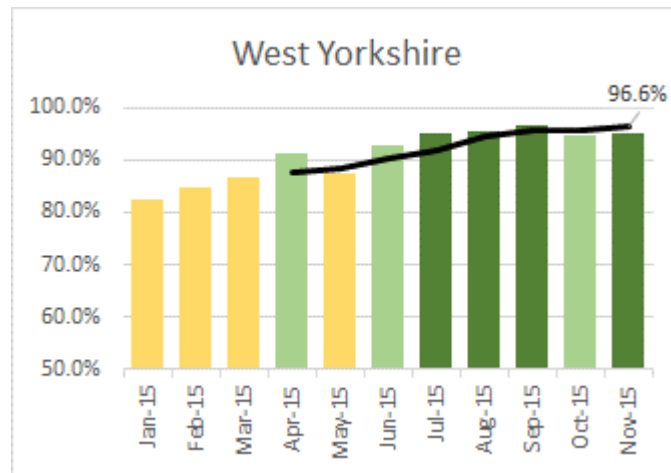
⁴ This category includes crimes such as: bigamy; soliciting for prostitution; going equipped for stealing; making, supplying or possessing articles for use in fraud; profiting from or concealing proceeds of crime; handling stolen goods; perjury; aiding suicide; perverting the course of justice; absconding from lawful custody; bail offences; dangerous driving.

⁵ The term “over criming” is a term used by HMIC to refer to crimes recorded where there was no absolute necessity under the rules, or where multiple crimes are recorded when fewer were required under the rules.

⁶ Storm is a computer system used by West Yorkshire Police to record calls for service from the public.

NCRS Compliance Audits – Domestic Burglary

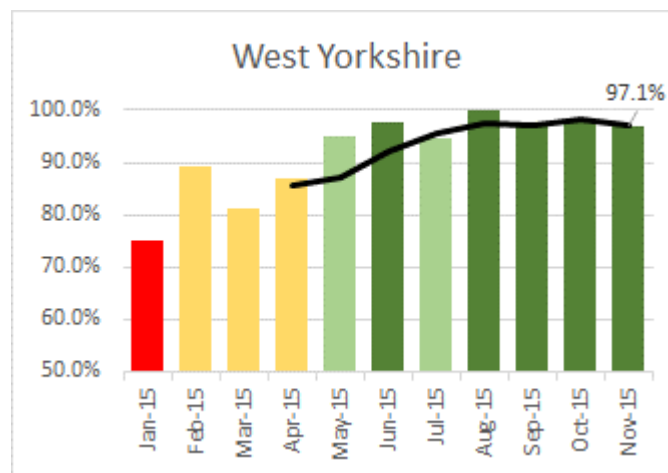
The chart below present the audit results, at Force level in relation to **domestic burglary**:



This generally improving trend is reflected across all Districts, with all Districts currently rated at GOOD or EXCELLENT based on the latest 3 months audits.

NCRS Compliance Audits – Sexual Offences

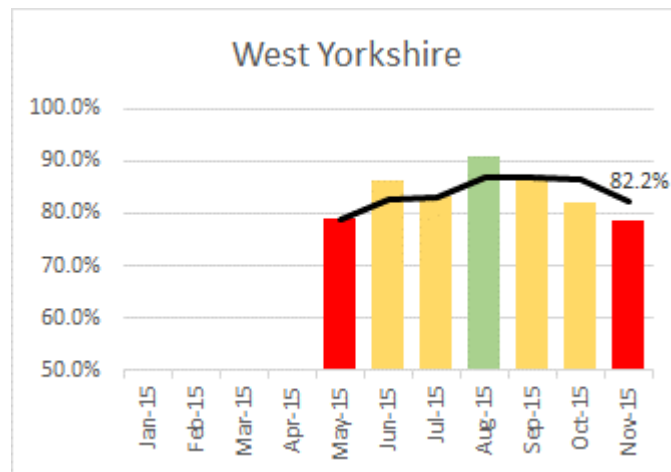
The chart below present the audit results, at Force level in relation to **serious sexual offences**:



The Force has improved its NCRS compliance in relation to recording sexual offences and now consistently achieves EXCELLENT compliance ratings. The latest compliance rating of 97.1% based on the latest 3 audits continues the positive trend with the result again attracting an EXCELLENT rating. The trend at each District is fairly similar to that of the Force as a whole with four out of five Districts attracting an EXCELLENT compliance rating based on the latest 3 months audit results.

NCRS Compliance - Total Crime

Away from a “crime type” specific measure, the more general “total crime” audit is also now routinely audited.



The latest 3 months audit results therefore identifies that, in relation to total crime, the Force achieved a FAIR compliance rating, with 82.2% of records audited found to be accurately recorded. The ratings across District vary, with the latest 3 months results ranging between POOR and GOOD. Analysis of the failures in the total crime audit reveals that the majority of failures are in low level public order and minor assaults. Results of the audits and action setting for preventative measures is done via the Local Accountability Meeting⁷ process and also the Gold group⁸.

NCRS Compliance - Themed Audits

This further work has revealed areas of risk which are now the subject of further detailed analysis. These include Domestic Abuse, Modern Slavery and Hate. To respond to these, plans are in place to extend first contact crime recording⁹ to Domestic Incidents early in January, with other high risk areas following throughout 2016.

Cancellation¹⁰ of Rape Crimes

The Rape cancellation panel (Chaired by the Force Crime Registrar) now consider all submissions for cancellation or reclassification of all Rape and Attempted Rape offences, since September 2014. In this period the below number of submissions were considered:

Applications considered	114
Occurrences cancelled/reclassified	75
Applications rejected	39

This demonstrates the very high standard the force now impose on rape crime cancellations. All of those cancelled/reclassified have been further examined by the CDI audit team and found to be compliant.

The 39 rejected were for a number of reasons. This is often due to the standard of evidence required for cancellation not being sufficient, the victim not being notified, or the cancellation request not having come through an accredited decision maker. Each rejection is fed back to the district/decision maker concerned and examples of good practice are circulated. Repeat and persistent offenders have been suspended from these duties and retrained/replaced.

⁷ Local Accountability Meetings are held within West Yorkshire police districts and departments to consider corporate and local performance issues.

⁸ The Gold Group is chaired by the temporary Deputy Chief Constable and aims to improve the standard and accuracy of recorded crime in West Yorkshire, ensuring victims are provided the best service.

⁹ Where crimes are recorded at the time of the victim contacting the police.

¹⁰ Cancelled crimes (formerly referred to as 'no-crimes') are when the police have originally recorded an offence, but have subsequently determined that the crime did not take place, or was recorded in error.

Ongoing Improvement

Recognising the national drive to professionalise policing, the force supported the formal training and accreditation of the Force Crime Registrar and Deputy by the College of Policing.

The HMIC inspection made clear the need for cultural change. Senior and middle managers have taken steps to make victim focus and ethics everyday business in the force. Policies have been reviewed and amended, the accountability framework revised and unhelpful performance targets removed.

Throughout the accountability framework, from individual to force level, the overt and implied message is a clear one of doing the right thing first time, believing victims, protecting and supporting the vulnerable. This is now fully embedded in the accountability process at district and force level.

The force level review of Demand Management continues, and has CDI as one of the central pillars to be designed into the revised process. District crime recording pilots are being reviewed and feed in to the Demand Management Review, which will define the future process for the force. More crimes are to be recorded at first point of contact and specialist unit's arrangements for crime recording are being reviewed. The CDI action plan has recently been subject of audit by the OPCC and is under review prior to further publication.

Analysis of in force audits carried out by the Force Crime Registrar produce a clear picture of performance pressures having a much lesser impact on staff/officers decision making. Knowledge of when a crime is required is also greatly improved, and is in need of fine tuning only. The nature of many of the failed logs is now only a misunderstanding of the more technical requirements of NCRS/Home Office Counting Rules¹¹, some considerable progress from the previous blatant attempts to avoid recording a crime accurately in order to satisfy performance demands.

As well as reducing the number of Dedicated Decision Makers¹² (DDM's), training and accreditation and quality assurance of their work now routinely takes place. Where a lowering of standards is indicated, a more detailed audit of the DDM's work is carried out, and, where appropriate, authority removed and retraining undertaken. Only when the Force Crime Registrar (FCR) is satisfied that standards are re-established is re-accreditation authorised.

Conclusion

From a compliance rate of 67% in the HMIC 2014 audit, measures introduced have resulted in compliance improving to 83%. Specific "crime type" audits have seen consistent compliance in recent months in excess of 95%.

3.0 GOING FORWARD

- 3.1 The PCC will continue to ask for routine updates and consider improvements, to ensure that the focus on data integrity and accurate crime recording does not diminish.
- 3.2 The Joint Independent Audit Committee, which last received a report into CDI in September 2015, will also be continuing in their scrutiny of this and will receive a further update in April 2016.
- 3.3 As previously mentioned HMIC will continue its focus on crime recording, with unannounced inspections to take place in future.

¹¹ Home Office Counting Rules provide a national standard for the recording and counting of notifiable offences recorded by police forces in England and Wales.

¹² The DDM is responsible for reviewing and subsequently authorising various methods of disposal for cases, including when a crime is cancelled.

HMIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE

Immediately

1. The force should introduce a consistent and structured approach to call-handling quality assurance processes; this should include listening to audio records to assess the accuracy of incident recording and have compliance with NCRS is at its core, with particular attention given to those offences which are of greater risk to public safety.
2. The force should communicate to all staff that an ethical approach to crime recording, done in accordance with the HOCR and NCRS, is expected and that crime-recording decisions should not be based on local performance concerns, undertaken through an investigate-to-record approach or subject to approval by a local supervisor or investigator; and any such processes that are in place should stop immediately.
3. The force should ensure that the oversight of the decision to use out-of-court disposals is sufficiently robust so that they are only used in appropriate circumstances; in particular, that they are not used when the offending history of the offender should preclude their use, and that the views of victims are taken into account. This should be supported by the immediate introduction of an effective mechanism for the monitoring of the use of out-of-court disposals to ensure the decisions being taken to use the disposals are appropriate.
4. The force should review the current structure for the approval of no-crime decisions, ensuring these decisions are made by individuals who are independent of local performance accountability and supported by effective and proportionate oversight by the FCIR.
5. The force should begin the operation of an adequate system for the auditing by the FCIR of rape no-crimes to ensure they are compliant with the HOCR and NCRS, and the results of this audit should be reported into the force performance meetings.

Within three months

6. The force should introduce NCRS compliance performance across the whole of its governance structure and should use this to underwrite crime performance achievements.
7. The force should ensure that the resources available to the FCIR are sufficient to enable the FCIR to fulfil an effective audit regime to monitor and improve compliance with the HOCR and NCRS.
8. The force should establish and, as soon as practicable thereafter, begin operation of an adequate system for the auditing by the FCIR of all computer systems which are in use by the safeguarding teams which may contain reports of crime, with special attention being directed to those reports involving vulnerable adults and children.
9. The force should complete a gap-analysis to aid its understanding of what is required by its communities to ensure its structures, systems and processes are able to support the provision of a victim-centred approach for all victims and, as soon as practicable thereafter, and to the greatest extent economically feasible, make the necessary changes identified through this analysis.
10. The force should establish and begin operation of an adequate system of training in crime recording for all police officers and police staff who are required to make crime recording decisions, and ensure those who require such training receive it as soon as reasonably practicable.