

Crime data quality review

October 2004



Leicestershire Police Authority

Review of Crime Recording 2004

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Summary of results

This report presents the results of the second review of crime recording data at Leicestershire Police Authority. This work is part of the Audit Commission's national study of police authorities' arrangements to secure data quality and ensure compliance with the National Crime Reporting Standard (NCRS), undertaken in partnership with the Police Standards Unit. The work at Leicestershire Police Authority has been undertaken by the appointed auditor in accordance with the Commission's Code of Audit Practice, and Standing Guidance for Auditors.

1. SUMMARY		
Investigation	Overall Rating	Conclusion
AUTHORITY & FORCE ASSESSMENT	Green	A high level of compliance across all data tests combined with structured and comprehensive management arrangements justifies an assessment of 'Green' for Leicestershire.
Crime data testing	Green	<p>Based upon the results of the crime data testing in years 1 & 2 of the review, Leicestershire is given an assessment of 'Green'.</p> <p>Summarised results indicate a strong performance in closing incidents with crime codes. A lack of detail in some incident logs to justify non-criming was identified in year 1. The force declined the opportunity for retesting in year 2.</p> <p>Excellent performance was identified in transferring incidents identified as crimes from the incident system to the crime system.</p> <p>Tests of incidents closed as non-crimes showed a high standard of compliance with NCRS, with opportunity for improvement.</p>
Management arrangements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate arrangements • BCU arrangements 	Amber	<p>Management arrangements are largely robust with evidence of improvement from the year 1 review and resulting action plan. There is clear accountability across the force and evidence of appropriate commitment from senior officers.</p> <p>Clearly stated policies and processes are in place to support compliance with NCRS.</p> <p>The force inspectorate conducts regular, structured audits of compliance with NCRS. Results are circulated to senior officers and used to inform improvement planning.</p>
	Amber	
	Amber	
Direction of travel	↑	The completed actions from the year 1 review action plan and the internal audit work by the force inspectorate show that Leicestershire is improving with regard to its approach to NCRS.
Key messages		<p>The force ethos, policy and practice are supportive of and compliant with the principles of the National Crime Recording Standard.</p> <p>The force culture is appropriately 'victim focused' in accordance with the standard.</p> <p>Awareness and understanding of the fundamentals of NCRS and Home Office Counting Rules are good, with some minor inconsistencies requiring further clarification.</p>

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Investigation	Overall Rating	Conclusion
Good practice		<p>There is evidence of a high level of understanding of compliance with NCRS as shown by the data audits of incident records.</p> <p>The force inspectorate has adopted the Police Standards Unit's audit methodology as a minimum standard for regularly assessing its own compliance with NCRS.</p>
Barriers to progress		<p>The force's incident and crime IT systems are not fully integrated.</p> <p>Access to IT terminals and the use of fax between operational staff and the crime bureau creates a potential bottleneck for officers wishing to update the crime recording system.</p> <p>Some officers reported that they had not received formal training on NCRS. Much emphasis has been placed by the force upon personal development learning for operational staff. Some inconsistent levels of knowledge and understanding identified in focus groups challenges the effectiveness of this approach. The use of a centralised crime bureau largely mitigates this as a major issue, but there is a need to address possible gaps in training to ensure that operational staff are fully aware of any changes to the standard.</p>

Data testing

2. DATA TESTING RESULTS

Overall results

Year 1 assessment	Year 2 assessment	Conclusions
Green	Green	Leicestershire has performed very well in all tests, with 93 per cent of tested incidents being correctly closed with a crime code. Weaknesses in test 1 were generally restricted to a lack of detail in the incident log explaining the decision reached, rather than an incorrect decision being made. Test 1 highlighted a lack of clarity in the decisions to classify disturbances (public order offences). An excellent performance was achieved in transferring incidents recorded as crimes to the crime system. A high level of compliance was also achieved in the testing of incidents closed as non crimes. Exceptions found related to the inconsistency of the level of detailed information deemed necessary to constitute a withdrawal statement from the victim. There is not consistent recording of the Home Office Counting Rules sub category by which the decision to non crime the incident is made.

Results by BCU

BCU	North			East		
	%	Result	Progress since Y1	%	Result	Progress since Y1
Test 1	91%	Green	↔	89%	Amber	↔
Test 2	100%	Green	↔	99%	Green	↔
Test 5	97.5%	Green	N/A	97.5%	Green	N/A
Overall result	Green			Green		
BCU	Central			West		
	%	Result	Progress since Y1	%	Result	Progress since Y1
Test 1	92%	Green	↔	96%	Green	↔
Test 2	99%	Green	↔	99%	Green	↔
Test 5	90%	Amber	N/A	95%	Amber	N/A
Overall result	Green			Green		
Total						
	Result	Progress since Y1				
Test 1	Green	↔				
Test 2	Green	↔				
Test 5	Green	N/A				
Overall result	Green					

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Results by crime category (crimes: percentage closed correctly in the incident system)

Category	North	East	Central	West	TOTAL	Progress since Y1
Burglary	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	↔
Criminal Damage	89%	84%	86%	91%	87%	↔
Vehicle Crime	94%	97%	100%	100%	98%	↔
Violent Crime	87%	88%	94%	88%	89%	↔
Domestic Violence	93%	78%	93%	93%	89%	↔
Racist Incidents	93%	88%	90%	100%	93%	↔
Disturbances	70%	83%	57%	100%	78%	↔
Overall results	91%	89%	92%	96%		

Management arrangements

3. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS RESULTS

Corporate management arrangements

Theme	Year 1 assessment	Year 2 assessment	Conclusions
Accountability and leadership	Green	Green	There is clear accountability for compliance with NCRS. Senior officers are appropriately involved and aware. Responsibility for data quality is the responsibility of individual system owners and is periodically audited by the force's information security manager.
Policy and administration	Green	Green	Leicestershire has clearly stated policies regarding the application of NCRS. Policy information and reinforcing statements are provided via the corporate intranet.
Staff training, knowledge and awareness	Green	Green	Training has been provided through a variety of methods across the force. The use of a centralised crime bureau with staff who have a detailed knowledge of NCRS ensures a high level of compliance. There is acknowledgement of the need for periodic updating at operational level and refresher training has been developed and is being rolled out by BCU.
Resourcing	Green	Green	A centralised crime bureau with sufficient staffing levels provides a consistent approach to crime recording. Interviews established that knowledge of NCRS is high in this key area. Close liaison operates with line managers at BCU level to monitor and maintain compliance. The force has an appropriately resourced and effective crime registrar in place.
Systems for incident and crime recording	Red	Red	The incident and crime systems are not fully integrated. Some improvements in incident recording have been implemented following the year 1 review and progress is supported by the results of internal audits. There is closer control and supervision of crime recording by the crime bureau. Rigid controls are not yet fully implemented. It is currently possible for incidents to be closed as non-crimes by anyone, contrary to force policy. A restriction to this option is proposed by the IT section.
Process for crime recording	Amber	Amber	The force has clear documented processes in place for crime recording. A corporate group has been established with responsibility for ensuring compliance with NCRS consistently across the force. There is not yet a force wide user group in place to address issues at operational level. The review of incident logs found some areas of non compliance with NCRS.
Auditing arrangements, scrutiny and integrity	Green	Green	The force inspectorate regularly monitors compliance with NCRS having adopted methodology applied by the Police Standards Unit as a minimum standards. Results are widely circulated to senior officers and the Police Authority. Action plans for improvement are developed using the results from audits in conjunction with performance monitoring data.
Quality of service	Amber	Amber	The force uses a number of methods to monitor service quality, but there is not specific assessment of user satisfaction with NCRS compliance. The force does not feel that user satisfaction can be appropriately explored through such surveys. There is random monitoring of incoming telephone calls to assess the service quality delivered.

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Theme	Year 1 assessment	Year 2 assessment	Conclusions
Police authority role	Red	Amber	The leader of the Police Authority holds the key responsibility for compliance with the standard. The Police Authority receives regular comprehensive performance management information from the force. The Authority also now receives quarterly audit reports of compliance with NCRS and has the opportunity to challenge performance. The Authority is not yet entirely clear of its overall remit in ensuring compliance with NCRS, but has clearly shown a raised awareness and positive direction of travel from the Year 1 assessment.

BCU management arrangements

Theme	Assessment	Conclusions
Accountability and leadership	Green	Area commanders are confident that NCRS is being applied consistently and that officers are committed to accurately recording incidents as crimes where appropriate. A clear chain of accountability has been established through LPU commanders and sergeants. Front line officers are accountable through the command structure for the accuracy and quality of their individual crime recording.
Policy and administration	Green	Policies and supporting statements are available to all staff via the corporate intranet which is a key medium of communication across the force. Various media are employed to disseminate messages regarding policy updating and to reinforce compliance. Key messages are delivered directly through team briefings.
Staff training, knowledge and awareness	Amber	Given that crime recording is centralised within the crime bureau, focus groups showed that there is a wide variation in the perception of the level of direct training officers feel that they have received, both within command units and across the force. A variety of methods have been employed including team briefings, presentations and intranet reminders. Awareness is also raised by direct interactions with the crime bureau regarding specific incidents. Further refresher training is being rolled out by area training functions.
Resourcing	Green	The use of a centralised crime bureau ensures that adequate resources are maintained to ensure the accurate recording of crimes. The management structure in place allows close liaison between the crime bureau and those managing front line officers, to ensure that crime records are processed in a timely manner in accordance with NCRS.
Systems for incident and crime recording	Amber	The lack of integration of the force's IT systems remains a barrier to progress. The systems for recording crimes and incidents are considered to be adequate at BCU level. There is concern regarding the difficulty of access to IT facilities by some operational staff, which creates a potential bottleneck but does not give a firm indication that this issue directly detracts from accurate crime recording.
Process for crime recording	Amber	There is generally clear understanding at BCU level of the force's process for crime recording and the role of the crime bureau as evidenced by focus groups conducted with operational officers. Officers displayed an understanding of their own obligations, the role of the crime bureau and that of line managers in enforcing compliance. Variance was identified with officers working in specialist units who do not have the same level of day to day involvement. There is not an appropriate force wide forum for operational officers to raise NCRS issues.

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Theme	Assessment	Conclusions
Auditing arrangements, scrutiny and integrity	Green	Independent audits are conducted by the force inspectorate from samples derived using PSU methodology. Results are formerly reported quarterly and assessed by senior officers and the police authority. BCU commanders are fully aware of levels of performance as determined by interviews. Audit and performance reports are used to address areas of identified and potential weakness through the line management structure and progress is monitored by area compliance officers at BCU level.
Citizen focus	Amber	The level of compliance achieved by the force is clearly indicative of a victim centred approach to crime recording. However, there is not a link between customer feedback and the monitoring of compliance with NCRS.

Areas for improvement

4. AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The following issues should be addressed by the action plan arising from this review.

Issue	Findings
Audits have identified incidents being closed inappropriately with non crime codes.	It is currently possible for anyone with access to the crime system to close an incident on a non-crime code. Only authorised personnel within the crime bureau should confirm such decisions when closing incidents of this type.
Data tests show that there is inconsistency regarding the level of information required to justify classifying an incident as a non crime.	Some incidents, whilst being correctly closed on a non crime code, had little verifiable information to support the decision made. Conversely some non crime incidents were supported by detailed withdrawal statements from the complainant.
It is not standard practice to identify non crimes with the Home Office Counting Rules sub category by which the decision to non crime the incident is made.	Data tests revealed that the majority of non crime incidents reviewed did not clearly show a coding that could be related to HOCR categories.
Force IT systems are not fully integrated.	Incident and crime recording systems are not fully integrated requiring higher levels of manual input.
Training received by operational officers has been variable.	As crimes are recorded centrally by the crime bureau there is a lower emphasis upon operational officers to have a thoroughly detailed knowledge of NCRS. Different approaches to training have been applied and heavy reliance has been made upon personal development learning, of which the focus groups identified aspects of weakness with some officers feeling that they had received little or no training.
Inconsistent levels of understanding by operational officers.	Some officers working in specialist units did not have the same levels of understanding of NCRS as front line officers, as they are less directly involved with crime recording.
No forum exists for operational officers to raise NCRS issues.	Focus groups highlighted that there is not yet a force wide forum for officers to raise NCRS issues, ensure consistency and raise awareness.
No clear link between compliance and user satisfaction.	Existing user surveys do not incorporate satisfaction around NCRS issues.

Crime data review

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Appendix A – Action plan

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Review of Crime Recording Data – Action Plan

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Page	Issue to be addressed/Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
<i>Follow-up</i>						
7	The Incident (OIS) and Crime (CIS) systems are not integrated or interfaced. The potential to enhance OIS via 'Vantage' is to be considered, dependent upon a business case being developed. The force should complete its evaluation of the potential to enhance OIS.	3	Criminality Programme Board	Agreed	A decision has been taken in principle to implement NSPIS Command & Control system. An evaluation will be made about how this might be exploited to integrate with the crime system. In the short term, proposals have been made to enhance OIS to prevent crime incidents being closed without a reference number or explanation.	
8	No forum exists for operational officers to raise NCRS issues, raise levels of awareness and consistency across the force and share good practice. The force should consider facilitating a force wide forum in support of its ongoing training policies.	2		Disagree	Given the roles of the centralised crime recording function and the NCRS Compliance Group it is felt that the benefits of a separate user Group are not evident. Operational Chief Inspectors sit on the Compliance Group to allow two way communication in relation to audit, compliance and training issues.	
<i>Data testing</i>						
7	Audits and investigations have identified incidents being closed inappropriately with non crime codes. The force should urgently implement the proposed enhancements to IT systems to ensure that incidents are not inappropriately closed by unauthorised officers.	3	NCRS Compliance Group	Agreed	The technical solution has been developed and should be implemented shortly. In the meantime compliance is being achieved through policy and audit checks.	December 2004
5	Data tests show that there is inconsistency regarding the level of information required to justify classifying an incident as a non crime. The force should ensure that a corporate standard is applied to the level of detail required and monitor compliance through regular audits.	3	NCRS Compliance Group	Agreed	Training has been given to Crime Bureau staff given their gatekeeping responsibilities and will be monitored through future audits.	Ongoing

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Page	Issue to be addressed/Recommendation	Priority 1 = Low 2 = Med 3 = High	Responsibility	Agreed	Comments	Date
5	It is not standard practice to identify non crimes with the Home Office Counting Rules sub category by which the decision to non crime the incident is made. The force should ensure the incidents closed as non crimes are consistently coded to facilitate appropriate analysis.	3		Disagree	There is no national requirement to codify these different types of non crimes. Whilst this may provide interesting information the usefulness is not regarded to be of sufficient operational value.	
<i>Management arrangements</i>						
8	Training received by operational officers has been variable with inconsistent levels of understanding being identified. Formal training records should be maintained and monitored to ensure that all operational officers receive training and updates to a minimum corporate standard.	3	NCRS Compliance Group	Agreed	This may be addressed long term by the data to be held on the new HR system. In the meantime the inconsistent levels of understanding will continue to be mitigated by the role of the centralised input bureau. This is due to be further enhanced in 2005 to cover real time crime recording.	Ongoing
9	The force's user feedback and monitoring systems do not specifically measure user satisfaction with NCRS issues. The force should give consideration to improving citizen focus in this area and adopt appropriate monitoring to evaluate user satisfaction.	2		Disagree	Under national guidance agreed with the Police Standards Unit the local surveys have not been designed to cover this issue. It is not considered to be a subject that needs to be explored through these surveys are victims' needs to obtain a reference number are not prejudiced.	