**Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2018/2019**

**Report to: the Office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for Essex**

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| **Title of Report:** | **Crime Data Accuracy - Update** |
| **Agenda Number:** | **3** |
| **Chief Officer** | **DCC** |
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| **Report from:** | **Essex Police** |
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| **Author on behalf of Chief Officer:** | **Ch Insp Chris Bradford, Force Crime and Incident Registrar** |
| **Date of Approval:** | **22nd January 2019** |

1. **Purpose of Report**

To provide an update in relation to the improvements of the crime data accuracy (CDA) of Essex Police.

1. **Recommendations**

For the Board to consider and note the contents of this report.

1. **Executive Summary**

Essex Police is making improvements to the accuracy of its crime data. This is being achieved through the introduction of strong governance arrangements, an improvement in audit provision, investment in face-to-face training and the introduction of a temporary National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS) Support and Review Team.

Work is needed to further improve crime recording compliance and this is being managed through the ‘CDA Improvement Plan’, overseen by the CDA Board, which is chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable.

The force is seeking to achieve sustainable improvements, which hope to be facilitated by a significant investment in training. It is anticipated that improvements to audit arrangements will assist our understanding as to whether progress is being made.

The force is monitoring Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) Crime Data Integrity Inspection findings, to inform our current improvement plan.

**4.0 Introduction/Background**

This report will provide an overview of the current Essex Police CDA Strategy, an update on the progress being made against the CDA Improvement Plan and an update on our preparations for the HMICFRS inspection regime.

**5.0 Current Work and Performance**

**5.1 Crime Data Accuracy Strategy**

The CDA strategy is set by the CDA Board. In summary, there are two key elements of the strategy:

**Prioritising our efforts to reduce the under-recording of crime** – achieving this element of the strategy will mean the focus on other elements of NCRS and Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) compliance will occur at a later stage. Such elements include improving the timeliness of recording and ensuring crime is correctly classified. At the heart of this decision is the principle of delivering the best possible service to the people of Essex. Not recording a crime when it should be recorded, represents the greatest risk within CDA, as victims do not get access to the support services they deserve and also as an organisation we are unable to fully understand our overall demand. Having delays in recording crime or incorrectly classified crimes are undesirable, however in order to improve in this principal area (unrecorded crime) we must focus our main effort here in the first instance. The key elements of the CDA Improvement Plan are therefore focussed on identifying and rectifying issues of the under-recording of crime.

**We will focus on getting CDA decision-making ‘right first time’** – With competing priorities for funding, we are not in a position to make long-term investment in specialist centralised teams to improve CDA compliance. Instead, our focus must be on getting frontline decision makers to get decisions ‘right first time’. Whilst this means the speed of any improvements will be slower, the sustainability of the solutions will be greater.

**5.2 Crime Data Accuracy Improvement Plan**

In line with the strategy outlined above, an improvement plan has been developed which is organised into four key areas: ‘Structure and Governance’, ‘Learning and Development’, ‘Internal Communications’ and ‘Process’. The key areas of the plan are outlined below.

1. **Structure and Governance**

**Governance** - The DCC chairs a six weekly CDA Board which sets the strategy and holds individuals to account regarding progress of the improvement plan. The Board also provides a forum for senior members of the organisation to highlight strategic CDA issues, which affect the force.

The force has recently restructured the centralised CDA team and recognised the need to increase the seniority of the Force Crime and Incident Registrar (FCIR) role through a grade increase from a PO1 to a PO5 (although filled by a seconded Chief Inspector for the transition period). This reflects the level of importance that the force places on the role and the requirement for additional influence with senior colleagues throughout the organisation. The transactional elements of the FCIR role are now carried out by two deputy FCIRs who have both undergone College of Policing training and accreditation.

The FCIR has regular one-to-one meetings with the DCC, which provide direct access to the force executive lead as a means to escalate any issues. In addition, the FCIR is an attendee at key performance meetings such as the Force Strategic Oversight Board and Synergy. The FCIR provides a quarterly report to the Chief Officer Group which provides a direct link from the FCIR to all Chief Officers and specifically the Chief Constable.

**Audit** – The CDA team restructure saw agreement for the introduction of four full time equivalent (FTE) dedicated CDA auditors. The auditors have recently been recruited and are currently undergoing training and induction to the role.

Over the last 12 months, an interim audit team consisting of two limited duties police officers have carried out audits in some of the highest risk areas. Table 1 shows the compliance rates found across different categories[[1]](#footnote-1).

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| **Category** | **Period** | **Compliance** |
| Sexual Offences | Feb-18 | 90.4% |
| Violence | Apr-18 | 85.9% |
| Domestic Abuse | Apr-18 | 86.5% |
| Athena Non-Crime[[2]](#footnote-2) | Jun-18 | 86.7% |

Table 1 Crime Data Accuracy Audit Results

The force has adopted a more robust audit methodology than HMICFRS use for inspection purposes. This is a deliberate decision to ensure all crimes have been recorded throughout the entirety of the investigation thus going beyond the initial crime recording decision.

In addition, the crime types of Rape and Modern Slavery/ Human Trafficking (MS/HT) are audited on a monthly basis. As part of the audit, all unrecorded crimes which are discovered are subsequently recorded. On average seven unrecorded Rape crimes and seven unrecorded MS/HT crimes are found per month through this process.

The audits have identified several key themes, which affect our compliance rates, these include:

1. Not recognising the need to record crimes when reported by someone reasonably acting on behalf of a victim (parent, carer, professional third party);
2. When a victim confirms a crime from the outset, a crime is not recorded and an insufficient update is provided to justify not recording a crime;
3. Not completing/ recording the ‘reasonable enquiries’ undertaken to trace victims following a report from a third party;
4. Failing to identify and record less serious offences (violence without injury/ public order etc.);
5. Not identifying all of the required crimes from a complex incident with multiple reports.

**Performance Information** - We have recently developed a method for tracking crime recording performance. This involves analysing the incident to crime conversion rate, which shows that currently 57% of incidents initially identified as a potential crime are closed with a crime recorded. The ratio would never be expected to be 100% as many incidents will justifiably be closed without a crime; at this stage we do not know the ideal rate, however we expect as the work is developed and more audit work is completed this will become more apparent.

The graph below tracks the incident to crime conversion rate since April 2016. This shows that there is an upward trend (an improving picture). The significant reduction in August 2017 is believed to be attributable to the re-direction of the compliance teams from Contact Management to assist with reducing live incident lists. This was only a short-term measure but demonstrates the value this team is currently adding to our overall crime recording compliance.

This measure does not represent the entire picture as it is solely driven by incident reports and not all crime is reported in this way. It does however provide a good tracker to understand whether there have been any changes in compliance which can be identified early without the need to wait for audit results. Work is underway to establish whether this type of data can assist in understanding the impact of crime recording improvements on overall crime rates.

Graph 1 - Incident to Crime Rate

1. **Learning & Development**

**CDA Training Team** – In 2018 the force invested in a team of four FTE trainers who specifically deliver CDA training. The team commenced a large-scale training programme in mid-August 2018. This includes delivery of a three-day module for sergeants (acting/ temporary/ substantive), a one-day module for Force Control Room (FCR) staff and an ongoing series of two hour modules for Crime Bureau staff. All of these modules are being delivered face-to-face by the new training team. In addition, training modules for specialist teams, and further e-learning modules in specific areas are being developed.

**Embedding CDA training in existing training modules** – The training team have also reviewed a large number of the existing Essex Police College training courses to ensure CDA issues are adequately covered. In some cases new modules have been added, in others existing modules have been updated.

1. **Internal Communications**

Over the last 12 months a variety of internal communication messages have been sent to staff to emphasise the importance of effective crime recording. Methods used include emails, intranet news articles and entries in the Chief’s blog. In addition, briefing slides which have been disseminated through command team leads, have been used to re-enforce the importance of frontline staff correctly recording crime.

The key issues identified through recent audits are now informing a revised internal communications plan with a focus on trying to identify the most effective methods for delivering communications in this area that influence behaviour.

1. **Process**

**NCRS Support and Review Team (NSRT**) – In September 2017 the NSRT was introduced to provide direct support to officers and staff in relation to NCRS/HOCR compliance issues. The NSRT comprises 12 ‘limited duties’ police officers. The primary function of the NSRT is to provide a timely quality assurance function to identify areas of non-compliance that can quickly be rectified to ensure improved service delivery to victims and provide feedback to staff who make mistakes in this area.

The team reviews records from the previous 24-hours, which are prioritised based on impact on the victim and error rates. Through this process the team review approximately 4,000 incidents per month. Currently 81% of incidents reviewed are compliant, meaning that approximately 760 records per month are corrected which would have otherwise failed to comply with NCRS/HOCR. There is still a high volume of incidents which are not reviewed by the team which highlights the need for a continued focus on initial decision-making.

The NSRT will remain in place until the CDA Board is satisfied the force has achieved the sustainable improvements required.

**Direct Inputting Training** – Since the roll out of mobile first devices, frontline officers have been able to directly input crime templates to the Crime Bureau, removing the need to telephone the Crime Bureau to get a crime recorded. The record is still fully quality assured by the Crime Bureau before being finalised as a crime but this makes the process of recording crime easier for officers. For those who do not have access to mobile devices, training is taking place to allow them to directly input crimes from a desktop. So far, 230 officers and staff have been trained in this area out of approximately 400 requiring the training.

**Empowering Sergeants to Make Outcome Finalisation Decisions** – On 1 October 2018, sergeants were given the authority to finalise the majority of crime outcomes. This removed the previous additional layer of authorisation that was causing a significant backlog and undermining the position of the sergeant. Sergeants have had to complete an e-Learning package and pass an exam before gaining authority to finalise investigations. Single points of Contact (SPOCs) are in place in each of the Local Policing Areas (LPAs) who are carrying out a supportive role as well as taking responsibility for some of the more complex outcomes.

Early evidence suggests in the majority of cases the right outcomes are being applied, however, the national standards for audit are not being met in all cases e.g. a full rationale is not recorded for why a particular outcome has been selected. The SPOCs will continue to work with sergeants to drive improvements in standards and key issues are being fed back into the training team to be included in the training of future students who attend the 3 day CDA course.

**5.3 HMICFRS Crime Data Integrity Inspection**

Since November 2015 HMICFRS have been carrying out a rolling programme of Crime Data Integrity (CDI) inspections across all 43 Home Office forces in England and Wales. The CDI inspection involves a self-assessment by the force, an audit of incidents and crime records, a review of crime recording related documents and fieldwork to interview staff.

The audit of incidents and crime records element of the inspection is significant. The HMICFRS audit team review a ‘statistically robust sample’ of incidents; this is likely to be approximately 1,800 records in Essex. Each record will be reviewed in detail including listening to the call received into the force and in some cases reviewing key documents uploaded to investigations e.g. victim/ witness statements, CCTV, risk assessments etc.

To date, 33 forces have been inspected or are in the process of being inspected. 29 reports have been released with the following judgements:

* Inadequate – 12 forces
* Requires Improvement – 10 forces
* Good – 7 forces
* Outstanding - None

Where forces are graded ‘inadequate’, follow-up inspections are undertaken to ensure improvements. Eight follow-up inspections have been carried out so far. Two forces remained graded as ‘inadequate’, one force moved to ‘requires improvement’, two to ‘good’ and two to ‘outstanding’ (one is yet to be published).

There are at least 14 more inspections to take place (10 initial and four re-inspections for ‘inadequate’ forces), although this number will increase if further forces are judged as ‘inadequate’. The original intention was to carry out follow-up visits in relation to forces assessed as requiring improvement, although with the volume of ‘inadequate’ forces this is looking unlikely in the near future.

Whilst the inspection is unannounced, the force will be given notification approximately five weeks prior to the audit team arriving. The force has a plan in place which will be enacted following notification to ensure the logistical elements of the inspection will go smoothly.

**6.0 Implications (Issues)**

Covered in Section 5.

**6.1 Links to Police and Crime Plan Priorities**

Accurate crime recording is necessary to:

* Ensure that victims of crime receive the service they expect and deserve;
* Prioritise effective investigation of crime in keeping with national standards and the College of Policing’s Code of Ethics;
* Inform the public of the scale, scope and risk of crime in their local communities;
* Allow PCCs, Forces and local partners to build intelligence on crime and criminal behaviour necessary for an efficient and effective response;
* Enable Government, PCCs, Forces and their partners to understand the extent of demands made on them and the associated costs of service delivery; and
* Inform the development of Government policy to reduce crime and to establish whether those policies are effective.

**6.2 Demand**

The accurate recording of crime (and incidents) is vital to allow the force to fully understand its demand.

**6.3 Risks/Mitigation**

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| URN | Score | Risk |
| 1621 | 30 - Red | A failure to identify and accurately record all reported crime without delay would lead to an inability to provide an effective service to victims and a loss in public confidence:-  • It will impact on our victims as it delays their access to external support services.  • It will impact on public confidence as it will lead to a loss of trust in our ability to listen.  • We will be unable to understand the full demand for the service and resources required. |

The ‘CDA Improvement Plan’ is intended to mitigate against this risk.

**6.4 Equality and/or Human Rights Implications**

None

**6.5 Health and Safety Implications**

None

**7.0 Consultation/Engagement**

Crime Data Accuracy Board Members

**8.0 Actions for Improvement**

Covered in Section 5.

**9.0 Future Work/Development and Expected Outcome**

Covered in Section 5.

**10.0 Decisions Required by the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner**

To consider and note the update.

1. Some caution should be exercised in considering the reported compliance rates. The experience and confidence of the audit team is constantly improving, however whilst we continue to develop this function there is the potential for some compliance areas to be under reported. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Different compliance calculation used: percentage based on records passed within total records, rather than percentage of crimes recorded out of crimes required. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)