

Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2022

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

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Author on behalf of Chief Officer:	PSE Ron Scott Strategic Force Crime and Incident Registrar
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1.0 Purpose of Report

To provide a biannual update in relation to the progress of Crime Data Accuracy by Essex Police.

2.0 Recommendations

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

3.0 Executive Summary

- High overall crime recording compliance levels have been maintained during this period of reporting. It is important that the force continues to sustain a high crime recording level. This ensures that victims of crime continue to receive the appropriate support they need and deserve.
- A pilot scheme commenced on 2nd December 2021, to temporarily bolster the NCRS Support and Review Team (NSRT) with additional personnel. The introduction of extra staff has yielded some positive results. The NSRT are now able to review more incidents, including Anti-Social Behaviour incidents on a daily basis. This has also allowed the force to identify victims at a much earlier stage.

- A sexual offence audit, conducted by the CDA Audit Team, resulted in an overall crime recording compliance rate of **83%**. Of the **183** incidents reviewed, **36** unrecorded crimes were identified.
- The Strategic Force Crime & Incident Registrar has worked closely with the Head of Serious Crime, to provide advice and guidance in relation to the requirements of the Home Office Counting Rules and the point at which a suspicious death should be formally recorded as a murder. The advice provided should now prevent suspicious or unexplained deaths being prematurely recorded as homicides and affecting the homicide statistics for the force for a period of time.
- CDA now features as part of the newly launched Virtual Crime Academy. This learning space provides officers and police staff with easy access to learn and develop their knowledge regarding crime recording requirements, outcomes, and emerging trends.
- It is now known that CDA will not be included in the Victim Service Assessment (VSA) as part of the overall PEEL inspection, which Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) commenced on 7th March 2022.

4.0 Introduction/Background

This report provides an overview of the Essex Police CDA strategy and the progress that has been made against the CDA Improvement Plan. It also sets out how the force intends to sustain its compliance rates and our commitment to always put victims at the forefront of crime recording arrangements.

5.0 Current Work and Performance

5.1 Performance

5.2 Internal Audit NCRS Support and Review Team NSRT

The NSRT continue to provide frontline support and a quality assurance (QA) function, to support the Force in improving crime recording accuracy. They continue to review incidents, to ensure that crimes are being recorded in accordance with Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR).

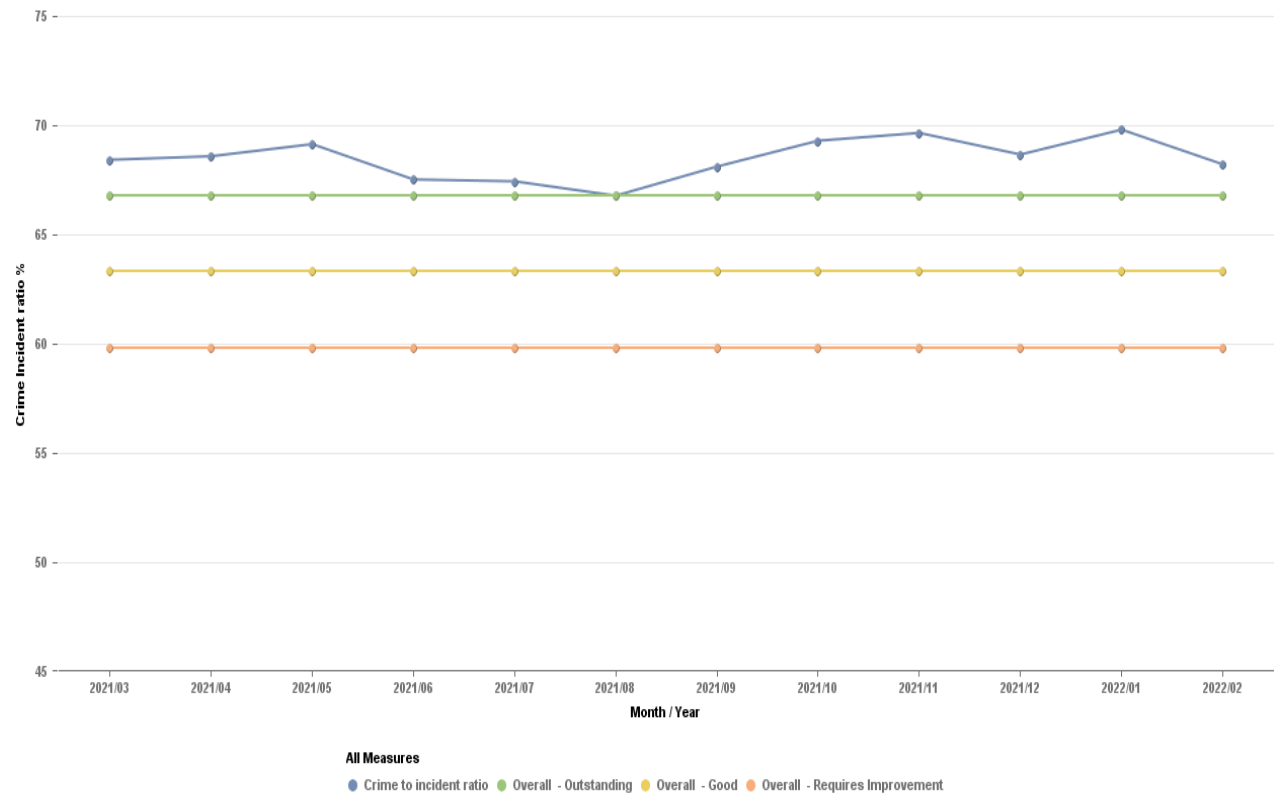
On 2nd December 2021, five additional staff were temporarily seconded on to the team, as part of a pilot scheme for three months. The additional staff allowed the NSRT to clear a backlog of incidents which had accrued because of the six bank holidays over the Christmas period. This has resulted in the force's overall crime recording, when assessed through the proxy measure, to have been maintained at an outstanding level.

Table 1- Breakdown of the percentage of All Crime Incidents subsequently recorded as a crime and represented in the graph above.

Crime Incident to Crime - Overall Rate			
Year Month	All	C Disposal	%
2021/09	7673	5225	68.10%
2021/10	7497	5194	69.28%
2021/11	6864	4780	69.64%
2021/12	7183	4931	68.65%
2022/01	7047	4918	69.79%
2022/02	6701	4570	68.20%

The graph below demonstrates the proxy measure of the overall crime recording compliance rate of the force during this period of reporting.

Crime Incident to Crime % - All Incident Types



5.3 Sexual Audit

A Sexual offence Audit, conducted by the CDA Audit Team, identified that out of the **187** incidents reviewed, **36** unrecorded crimes were identified. This represents an overall crime recording compliance of **83%**.

The learning gleaned from the results of the audit has been communicated to the CDA Learning and Development Team by the Strategic Force Crime & Incident

Registrar. They will ensure that the learning is passed on to those police officers and staff who are involved in the recording of crimes.

5.4 Anti-Social Behaviour

All reports which are closed by the Force Control Room as Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) incidents, are now reviewed daily by the NSRT. This ensures that crimes, which are normally associated to ASB, such as common assaults, harassments, and public order offences (and sometimes missed by front line officers), are now being identified and recorded at the first point of contact. This also means that victims are being identified at the earliest possible juncture and, where necessary, are signposted to the most appropriate support service.

The Strategic Force Crime and Incident Registrar has also ensured that the Virtual Crime Academy forum has been updated, to remind officers and Force Control Room staff of the importance of identifying and recording crimes connected to ASB.

5.5 Outcomes

Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) dictate that all recorded crimes must be assigned an outcome. It is essential that Essex Police follows the national guidance and the rules for deciding which outcome it applies to individual crime reports. There are a whole range of options available, and in deciding the outcome, the force must ensure that they consider the nature of the crime, the offender's history and most importantly, the needs of the victim.

The use and application of outcomes continues to be closely monitored by the three LPA SPOCs. They conduct daily audits to ensure that the 'voice of the victim' has been taken into account when a crime has been finalised. Whilst the standards of the use and application of outcomes has improved throughout the force, in some instances, officers are still failing to ensure that an auditable record is made on exactly *why* the victim decided to withdraw their support from police. In such circumstances a rectification process is undertaken by the respective LPA CDA SPOCs, who continue to provide personal feedback and guidance to individual officers.

The Strategic Force Crime and Incident Registrar has continued to supply each of the LPA Commanders with the results of outcome audits, which are undertaken by the three LPA CDA SPOCs. The results are also presented to the Victim and Witnesses Board which is chaired by ACC Baldwin.

5.6 Advice and Guidance to Major Investigations on Homicide

The Strategic Force Crime & Incident Registrar has now provided clear guidance that Essex Police must always adhere to the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) and the principles of the National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS), when deciding whether to ¹record a crime.

¹ The police will determine whether the circumstances as reported amount to a crime defined by law, based on their knowledge of the law and the counting rules. The test to be applied in respect of recording a crime is that of the balance of probabilities i.e. is the incident more likely than not the

The advice included that in incidents where a deceased person has been discovered in suspicious circumstances, but the cause of death is unknown, it does not necessarily follow that the person has been murdered. Against this backdrop, and based on the balance of probabilities, there is no necessity to record it as a homicide at that point. That decision should sit firmly with the Senior Investigating Officer (SIO), who will be responsible for the initial assessment of the scene, considering all other surrounding factors. The rationale for the guidance given is:

- The decision to record the crime is based on the **Balance of Probability**, as set out in the HOCR, and can only be made once all the facts are known and have been properly assessed.
- A trained SIO will always be best placed to make the decision as a mature and detailed assessment will have been made, taking account of all the facts surrounding the circumstances of the death.
- If the decision is not to record a crime, and having applied the **Balance of Probability** test, it is imperative that the STORM incident is updated through the SIO, setting out in detail exactly why, at that moment in time, a decision has been made not to record it as a crime.
- Any decision to not record the death as a crime, will also be recorded in the SIO's Policy Decision Log.
- Clearly, the circumstances surrounding the death will be under constant review. It is imperative that once the balance of probability test is met, then it **must be recorded as a crime of murder**.

5.5 Learning and Development Team

The delivery of CDA training continues to play a significant role in ensuring that all staff involved in crime recording are aware of the importance and correlation between accurate record keeping, and victim care.

The Strategic Force Crime & Incident Registrar continues to work closely with the Head of Investigative Skills Progression, Learning and Development and his CDA Team. This has led to the development and introduction of the Virtual Crime Academy.

This learning forum, which is built on the Office 365 SharePoint platform, has been designed to provide a readily accessible library, to assist police officers and staff regarding any matters relating to CDA.

It also allows for any current changes in the HOCR to be highlighted and flagged in a simple, but effective way.

result of a criminal act? In most cases, the belief by the victim (or person reasonably assumed to be acting on behalf of the victim) that a crime has occurred is sufficient to justify its recording, although this may not be the case in all circumstances.

The one-day CDA training course is now firmly established. There are **2,646** Officers and Staff who still require training. To date, **1477** individuals have received the training.

6.0 Implications (Issues)

A failure to identify and accurately record all reported crime without delay, leads to an inability to provide an effective service to victims and in turn delays their access to external support services, a loss in public confidence and in our inability to understand the full demand for the service and resources required.

6.1 Links to Police and Crime Plan Priorities

Crime Data Accuracy links directly to the priorities set out in the Police and Crime Plan, ensuring we accurately record crime, identify areas of “under-recording” crime, and ensure victims have access to appropriate support services. The Police and Crime Plan also allows the office of the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner to provide the public with accurate information about crime in Essex.

6.2 Demand

Essex Police will continue to monitor the demand placed upon it; through the strong governance processes it has built. They will also closely monitor the impact that demand may have with regards to crime recording compliance.

The past year has seen an increase in the number of crimes recorded by Essex Police – **an increase of 10.2% in the 12 months to February 2022 (163,284 crimes recorded) compared to the same period last year (148,224 crimes recorded).**

In the three months to February 2022, compared to the same period last year, crime has also increased, and this increase has not been evenly distributed across crime types. Theft Offences have increased by 29.7% and Robbery by 34.6%. Sexual Offences and Violence Against the Person have also seen increases of 45% and 15.1% respectively. Within violence, Stalking and Harassment had decreased by 1.9%, and Violence with Injury increased by 38.0%. State based crime, however, and often generated by police activity, saw an increase of 9.6%.

6.3 Risks/Mitigation

The Essex Police Strategic Risk Register contains a risk relating to Crime Data Accuracy. The risk is kept under constant review.

6.4 Equality and/or Human Rights Implications

There are no equality and Human Rights implications identified in the development of this update paper. However, the force continually monitors the Equality and Human Rights implications, to ensure services are accessible to all and to make it fair and easy to report crimes. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) will always be undertaken when new force policies are developed, or changes are made to the

operating model for public contact and reporting of crime. The force received a grading of outstanding in its most recent Crime Data Integrity Inspection, giving the force confidence in the systems and knowledge it has in place for the accurate recording of crimes, leading to access to support services for all victims of crime to help them cope and recover.

6.5 Health and Safety Implications

None

7.0 Consultation/Engagement

Crime Data Accuracy Board Members and Chief Officers.

8.0 Actions for Improvement

The CDA Board will continue to provide governance for all strands of work that impact on Essex Police's Crime Data Accuracy. The Deputy Chief Constable will chair the CDA board, to provide the strategic direction and ensure the ongoing management and oversight of CDA programs of work.

Areas for development will continue to be identified through the provision of NCRS data and emerging key themes, from both the quality assurance and audit functions within the force.

Against this backdrop, a focused and determined effort will continue to ensure that:

- The force continues to accurately record crimes at the first point of contact, thereby enabling victims to be identified at the earliest possible juncture.
- All incidents of ASB reported to Essex Police are carefully scrutinised to ensure that crimes are accurately recorded, and victims are properly protected.

9.0 Future Work/Development and Expected Outcome

The Strategic Force Crime and Incident Registrar will continue to work closely with the three respective LPA Commanders and Heads of Department throughout the force, to reinforce the importance of accurate crime recording and the inextricable link towards good victim care.

A force wide CDA improvement plan will remain under constant review through the CDA board, to ensure coordinated activity and a comprehensive approach is extended across the force.

The Strategic Force Crime and Incident Registrar will also ensure that any learning emanating from the internal reviews is quickly communicated to the CDA Learning and Development Team. This flexible approach will ensure that any emerging trends can be communicated across the force in an effective and timely fashion.