

## Performance and Resources Scrutiny Programme 2023

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

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Crime Data Accuracy - Update</b>
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<b>Chief Officer:</b>	<b>DCC Prophet</b>
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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**

- The work of the NCRS Support and Review Team (NSRT), continues to ensure that high overall crime recording compliance levels - as set out in the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) - have been maintained during this period of reporting. It is important that the force continues to sustain a high

level of crime recording accuracy. This ensures that victims of crime continue to receive the appropriate support they need and deserve.

- The Deputy Force Crime & Incident Registrar and her team of Dedicated Decision Makers (DDMs) continue with weekly audits to identify the over recording of the three course of conduct/behaviour crimes: Harassment, Stalking and Controlling & Coercive behaviour.
- During this period of reporting the Strategic Force Crime & Incident Registrar has overseen an audit to determine the Force's level of crime recording accuracy in relation to our Contact Event reporting function. A Contact Event is automatically created within Athena following a Single Online Report (SOH)<sup>1</sup> being submitted by a member of the public. The monitoring and processing of Contact Events is managed daily within the Resolution Centre. The results of this audit are illustrated in section 5.
- During this period of reporting the Strategic Force Crime & Incident Registrar has overseen audits to assess the Force's level of crime recording with regard to Violence and Sexual offences. The results of these two audits are illustrated in section 5.
- During this period of reporting Phase 1 of the Home Office Counting Rule changes have been implemented and Phase 2 is now underway. A summary of these changes will be provided in section 5.

#### **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 NCRS Support and Review Team (NSRT)**

The NSRT continues to provide the Force with frontline support and a quality assurance (QA) function, to support the Force in improving and maintaining the best rate of crime recording accuracy. They continue to review those incidents identified as holding the greatest risk to the force, to ensure that crimes are being recorded in accordance with Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR).

Essex Police are continuing to track crime recording performance by closely monitoring and analysing the percentage of crime incidents, which subsequently result in the recording of a crime. This proxy measure tracks those reports received by Essex Police and entered as a crime incident onto the Command-and-Control

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<sup>1</sup> Single Online Home is the portal used by members of the public who wish to report an incident or crime online via the Police website. An SOH report is a copy of the questions and answers given by a member of the public to this online portal including their personal details, detail about what has happened and any evidence to support the incident.

system (STORM), and which subsequently result in the recording of a crime onto Athena. This provides analysis of the crime incident-to-crime conversion rate.

When a crime has been recorded as result of an incident report, the incident will be assigned the C – Crime disposal code upon closure, as demonstrated in Table 1 below. The NSRT examine those incidents which have been closed where no crime has been recorded. It is during this process that in some instances missing crimes are identified.

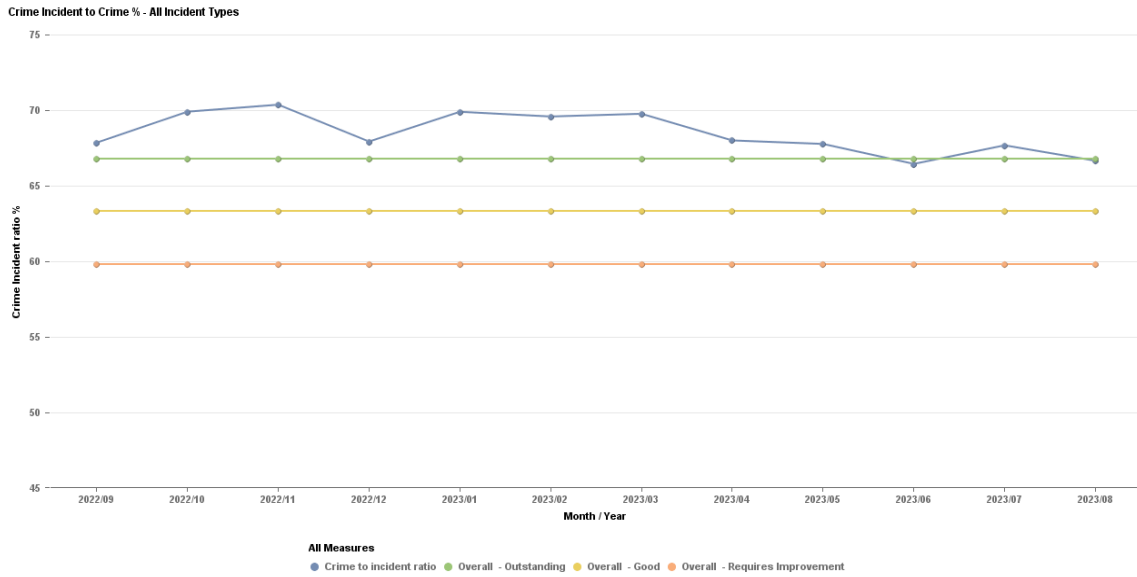
For this reporting period we have remained within the outstanding margins. There was a slight dip in June, and it is likely this is due to the retirement of one member of the team.

A new member of the team has been recruited and will have commenced in post by the time this report is published. This additional team member once fully trained should assist in lifting the measure above the outstanding level.

**Table 1-** Breakdown of the percentage of all crime incidents subsequently recorded as a crime and represented in the graph below.

Crime Incident to Crime - Overall Rate			
Year Month	All	C Disposal	%
2023/03	7111	4960	69.75%
2023/04	6769	4602	67.99%
2023/05	7449	5047	67.75%
2023/06	7409	4922	66.43%
2023/07	7369	4986	67.66%
2023/08	7269	4844	66.64%

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



## 5.2 Stalking, Harassment and Controlling & Coercive Audit

The Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) provide all forces with strict guidance as to how the police are required to record and classify crimes.

In relation to crimes of Stalking, Harassment and Controlling & Coercive behaviour, in “general” the guidance states whilst the conduct is on-going (between the same victim and suspect) a new crime is not required to be recorded every time the victim reports a new incident by the same suspect.

The Deputy Force Crime & Incident registrar and her team of Dedicated Decision Makers (DDM’s) continues to review weekly, all new recorded crimes of Harassment, Stalking and Controlling and coercive behaviour between the same victim and suspect.

Between the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and week ending 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023, 774 crimes of this nature have been reviewed by the team and 176 (22%) were identified as suitable for cancellation. 55 were cancelled at the point of review by the DDM and 121 were tasked back to the OIC for additional work before the cancellation could be approved. Overall 133 (75.5%) of the 176 crimes have now been cancelled. Of the remaining 43, 7 await DDM processing, 16 are pending officer updates and 20 have been assigned an Outcome.

For the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 1892 crimes were reviewed by the DDM team. 660 of these crimes were identified as potentially suitable for cancellation. Of these, 586 crimes have been cancelled

There is an automated process in place that allows the team to monitor all outstanding cancellations to allow for a timelier intervention to ensure no cancellations are overlooked. For instance of the 20 crimes assigned an outcome since April 2023, the Deputy Force Crime & Incident Registrar intends to review each of these to ascertain if the outcome is correct or if the cancellation should still be progressed.

A weekly overview of those crimes identified as being recorded in error continues to be disseminated to the relevant LPA Commanders. This is to assist them to identify any officers who are repeatedly making the same errors. This will ensure learning and feedback is addressed to support accurate crime recording moving forward, and ultimately provide the appropriate level of victim care.

This weekly process has raised awareness of the impact of over recording crimes, not just for victim care and safe guarding but also for police efficacy in saving time and resources and the potential for more successful prosecutions due to having a more focussed and stream lined approach.

As a result of this continued intervention the level of recorded crime for these offences for the rolling 12 months to 1<sup>st</sup> October 2023 has reduced from 15614 to 12835 crimes. This is a reduction of 2779 crimes which have either been cancelled due to intrusive audit, or not recorded at all due to the better understanding of the crime recording rules. The volume of crimes to be reviewed on a weekly basis has dropped to a consistent level of 15-20 records per week, and on average five or six crimes are identified for cancellation.

### **5.3 Contact Event Audit**

Contact Events have been utilised on Athena by Essex Police since 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022. A Contact Event is automatically created within Athena following a Single Online Report (SOH) being submitted by a member of the public. As SOH offers the public another channel by which a crime or incident can be reported to Essex Police, it is vital we ensure any incidents or crimes are accurately recorded in accordance with the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR) and the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR).

Against this backdrop the Strategic Force Crime & Incident Registrar conducted an internal review of this reporting process to determine our levels of crime recording accuracy and to ensure there is nothing to inhibit victims reporting crime through this digital method.

The audit examined 225 Contact Events. The purpose of the audit was two-fold. Firstly, to identify that the correct number of incident reports had been recorded on STORM in line with the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR) and secondly to ensure all crimes that had been reported had been accurately recorded, in line with HOCR.

Of the 225 Contact Events reviewed a “potential” missed crime was identified in 14 cases. All missing incident and crime recording errors were fed back to Contact Management at the time of the audit and have been retrospectively recorded.

Contact Management were provided with details of all Contact Events where an error was identified, and those staff/officers involved; in order that any learning gaps/ suitable support can be provided to prevent the errors recurring.

## 5.4 Sexual Offences Audit

The CDI audit team completed an audit of Sexual offences recorded by Essex Police between 1<sup>st</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023. A sample of 139 incidents and 96 Directly Recorded Crimes (DRC) were reviewed.

Of these it was adjudicated that 156 crimes – 93.4% had been correctly recorded.

The table overleaf illustrates of the 11 missed crimes identified which crime category they were identified within and the respective crime recording compliance rate for each crime category:

Crime recording compliance rates by crime category				
Category	Number of crimes to be recorded	Number of crimes actually recorded	Number of crimes not recorded	Crime Recording Compliance %
Violence	19	17	2	89.5
Rape	31	30	1	96.8
Sexual	103	97	6	94.1
Other	14	12	2	85.7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>93.4</b>

The table below identifies whether the missing crime was identified through the incident or DRC and the respective crime recording compliance rate for Incidents and DRC:

Category	11 missing crimes		Crime Recording Compliance %	
	Incident	DRC	Incident	DRC
Violence	2	0	85.7	100
Rape	0	1	100	95.8
Sexual	2	4	87.5	95.4
Other	2	0	80	100

All missing incident and crime recording errors were fed back to Contact Management at the time of the audit and have been retrospectively recorded.

## 5.5 Violence Offences Audit

The CDI audit team completed an audit of Violence offences recorded by Essex Police between 1<sup>st</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2023. A sample of 207 incidents and 245 Directly Recorded Crimes (DRC) were reviewed.

Of these it was adjudicated that 327 crimes – 92.1% had been correctly recorded.

The table below illustrates of the 28 missed crimes identified, which crime category they were identified within and the respective crime recording compliance rate for each crime category:

Crime recording compliance rates by crime category				
Category	Number of crimes to be recorded	Number of crimes actually recorded	Number of crimes not recorded	Crime Recording Compliance %
Violence	312	295	17	94.6
Rape	0	0	0	100
Sexual	3	2	1	66.7
Other	40	30	10	75
<b>Totals</b>	<b>355</b>	<b>327</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>92.1</b>

The table below identifies whether the missing crime was identified through the incident or DRC and the respective crime recording compliance rate for Incidents and DRC:

Category	28 missing crimes		Crime Recording Compliance %	
	Incident	DRC	Incident	DRC
Violence	6	11	<b>86</b>	<b>95.9</b>
Rape	0	0	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
Sexual	0	1	<b>100</b>	<b>50</b>
Other	7	3	<b>70.8</b>	<b>81.25</b>

All missing incident and crime recording errors were fed back to Contact Management at the time of the audit and have been retrospectively recorded. Essex Police has not had its Crime Recording Accuracy (CDA) tested by HMICFRS since they conducted their 2019 Crime Data Integrity (CDI) inspection.

Forces are no longer subject to a specific CDI inspection by HMICFRS. Instead they include their assessment of a forces CDI as part of every other PEEL/VSA Inspection. Therefore, Essex Police will be subject to a CDI audit conducted by HMICFRS as part of their PEEL/VSA 2023-2025 inspection program.

The evidence window for our 2023-25 PEEL/VSA Inspection is a 12 month period from approximately the end of November 2023 to December 2024. For their CDI assessment, HMICFRS will select a sample of incidents and crimes from a three month window within that 12 month period. Looking at the schedule and other forces it is “anticipated” that our three month window for CDI will be the end of Spring/Summer 2024. However, the caveat to that is, they could select it from any time within the 12 month evidence window.

At the time of writing, to date, only two forces subject of PEEL/VSA 2023-25 have had their reports published - Merseyside and Suffolk. Only Suffolk was subjected to a CDI assessment.

HMICFRS made the following note in the Suffolk report:

***The Home Office Counting Rules, which provide the standard for crime recording in England and Wales, have changed since the last time we inspected the constabulary for crime data integrity. This change mainly relates to the way forces record violent crime. This means we can no longer compare the findings from this audit to those from previous audits.***

There has also been a change to the HMICFRS grading structure since our last CDI Inspection in 2019. In that inspection there were four gradings: Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate. Now there is the addition of “adequate” which falls between Requires Improvement and Good.

In our 2019 HMICFRS CDI Inspection we were given compliance rates for our overall crime recording and then specifically for Sexual and Violence offences.

The results of the 2019 HMICFRS CDI Inspection are illustrated in row 1 of the table below.

Rows 2 and 3 illustrate the results of the two most recent audits of sexual and violence offences completed by the CDI Audit team and where the Strategic Force Crime & Incident Registrar estimates the results for each category: Overall, Violence and Sexual, for each audit, would fall within the new HMICFRS grading structure:

AUDIT	CRIME RECORDING COMPLIANCE RATES		
	OVERALL %	SEXUAL %	VIOLENCE %
HMICFRS 2019	95.8 - Outstanding	95.8 – Outstanding	95.6 - Outstanding
SEXUAL Offences	93.4 – GOOD	94.8 – Outstanding	89.5 - Adequate <sup>2</sup>
VIOLENCE Offences	92.1 – GOOD	66.7 – Inadequate <sup>3</sup>	94.6 – Outstanding

## 5.6 Home Office Counting Rule changes

### PHASE 1 HOCR Review – changes from 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023

The Strategic Force Crime & Incident Registrar requested the Performance Analysis Unit (PAU) to complete a review of the HOCR changes post 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023. Comparison data for the months of May - September 2023 vs the same period in 2022 are provided. The specific areas of focus are Section 5 Public Order, Malicious Communications and Harassment, Stalking and Controlling & Coercive behaviour.

#### Section 5 Public Order

From the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023 there was no longer a requirement for forces to record the offence of Section 5 Public Order<sup>4</sup>. The table below demonstrates the total number of public order crimes recorded for the five month period:

	2022	2023	Diff (Vol)	Diff (%)
May - September	8,095	5,715	-2,380	-29.4%

<sup>2</sup> Nineteen violence offences should have been recorded seventeen were.

<sup>3</sup> Three sexual offences should have been recorded two were.

<sup>4</sup> Racially aggravated Section 5 Public will still be required to be recorded.



### **Malicious Communications**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023, the Home Office issued clarification to forces in respect of the different elements of this offence. The communication must be either: a threat, indecent, false or grossly offensive. In respect of the latter element, the Home Office have suggested the application of the “reasonable person test” to determine if a communication meets the threshold for being grossly offensive. This will be a subjective decision depending on the context of the report and the crime recording decision maker’s interpretation of the test. In all cases we must remain victim focussed and cognisant of any distress/anxiety felt by an individual victim because of the communication when making our crime recording decision.

The figures in the table below illustrate the total number of Malicious Communications offences recorded for the period May – September 2023, compared to the same period last year:

	2022	2023	Diff (Vol)	Diff (%)
May - September	4,004	1,939	-2,065	-51.6%

Furthermore, in conjunction with the principal crime rule change below, if having recorded a course of conduct crime - that involves Malicious Communications - if further instances of Malicious Communications are reported between the same victim and suspect, and it is clear these communications form part of the on-going conduct crime, there is now no longer a requirement to additionally record further reports of Malicious Communications crimes - as was the case pre-1st May 2023.

The exception to this will be where there is a break of 3 months or more between communications, in which case a new Malicious Communication would be required to be recorded.

The figures in the table below illustrate the number of Malicious Communications crimes recorded for the period May – September 2023 compared to the same period last year, whereby the same victim and suspect appears on more than one crime of Malicious Communications:

	2022	2023	Diff (Vol)	Diff (%)
May - September	2,918	1,134	-1,784	-61.1%

### **Principal Crime Rule change for Course of conduct crimes – Harassment, Stalking and Controlling & Coercive behaviour**

Prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023, where one of the three course of conduct crimes were reported, and the conduct included other notifiable crimes e.g an assault, we were required to record two crimes, the conduct crime and the most serious other crime that formed part of that course of conduct, e.g. Harassment and a Malicious Communications or Rape and a Stalking.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2023 forces are now only required to record one crime. In general it is expected that the conduct crime will be the crime to be recorded. However, in

certain cases e.g. where a Rape or Section 18 GBH is reported as part of the course of conduct, the latter crime would be recorded instead of the conduct crime.

If having recorded a Rape or Section 18 GBH, the victim later reports ongoing “conduct” by the same suspect, at that point the police would be required to additionally record the most appropriate course of conduct crime.

e.g. DA victim reports Stalking by her ex-partner and alleges he has previously raped her. 1 crime of Rape recorded. The next week the victim reports the suspect is continuing to attend her property and phone her. 1 crime of Stalking to now be recorded.

The figures in the table below illustrates the number of Malicious Communications crimes recorded whereby a course of conduct crime was additionally recorded at the same time against the same victim and suspect:

	2022	2023	Diff (Vol)	Diff (%)
May - September	1,145	67	-1,078	-94.1%

The figures below illustrate the total number of each course of conduct crime recorded:

Offence	May to Sep 22	May to Sep 23	DIFF (Vol)	DIFF (%)
CONTROLLING OR COERCIVE BEHAVIOUR	498	453	-45	-9.0%
HARASSMENT	4629	4072	-557	-12.0%
STALKING	1389	1328	-61	-4.4%

### **Phase 2 HOCR Review**

Phase 2 of the HOCR review is now underway. There are two aspects forming this part of the review:

- The current Outcome Framework which currently includes 22 different Outcomes by which a crime investigation can be finalised.
- A review of NSIR which has not been undertaken since 2011.

The Strategic Force Crime & Incident Registrar is involved in national meetings to discuss any future changes. She has ensured key internal stakeholders have been consulted on proposals to assess any potential impact these may have for Essex Police. At the time of writing, it is “anticipated” any changes will take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, but to date nothing has been formally agreed.

### **5.7 Learning and Development Team**

The Strategic Force Crime & Incident Registrar continues to work closely with Learning and Development. This ensures that 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 the correlation, between accurate crime recording and victim care.

Using the available HR organisational data, as of the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023 the number of officers and staff within relevant ranks and roles who are required to receive the CDA training, is now 4547. From that number 3001 have now completed that training. This in turn means that there are 1546 left to be trained<sup>5</sup>.

There is currently one CDA Trainer for Essex Police who is able to train three courses of 12 students per week, 36 students in total per week.

There are four on-line CDA training packages completion rates are as follows:

NCRS & HOCR General Rules – 94.88%

Help us Help you – 92.09%

Outcomes, reclassifications and cancel crimes – 82.89%

Rape recording – 95.27%

## **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. This, 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 a decrease in the number of crimes recorded by Essex Police – a decrease of 6.7% in the 12 months to September 2023 (156,389 crimes recorded) compared to the same period last year (167,641 crimes recorded).

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<sup>5</sup> It should be noted these figures fluctuate owing to numbers being recruited against those leaving the organisation and therefore should be treated with caution.

In the three months to September 2023, compared to the same period last year, crime has decreased (by 9.5%) and this decrease has not been evenly distributed across crime types. Theft Offences have increased by 9.3% whereas Robbery offences have decreased by 3.0%. Sexual offences and Violence against the person have also seen decreases of 19.2% and 15.4% respectively. Within violence, Stalking and Harassment have also decreased by 29.2%, and Violence with Injury increased by 12.6%. State based crime, often generated by police activity, saw a decrease of 19.5%.

### **6.3 Risks/Mitigation**

At the April 2022 CDA Board the decision was taken to remove CDA from the Risk Register. This was due to a sustained good level of overall crime recording compliance. The risk will be kept under constant review and if necessary, can be reinstated.

### **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 (EIA) 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.

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.

- Stalking and Harassment crimes are being recorded correctly and in accordance with the Home Office Counting Rules.
- The Strategic Force Crime & Incident Registrar will continue to support Contact Management Command with improving compliance across all reporting routes

## **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 continue to ensure any learning emanating from all internal reviews is quickly communicated to the CDA Learning and Development Team to ensure any emerging trends can be communicated across the force in an effective and timely fashion.

The Strategic Force Crime and Incident Registrar will be closely monitoring any Home Office changes which may emanate from their current review and will ensure key stakeholders are kept apprised of any changes.