

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

Crime Audit 2014: Terms of Reference

Find out more about our work by visiting our website at www.hmics.org.uk

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

HM Inspectorate for Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) is established under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012¹ and has wide ranging powers to look into the '*state, effectiveness and efficiency*' of both the Police Service of Scotland (Police Scotland) and the Scottish Police Authority.

We have a statutory duty to ensure that the Chief Constable and the Authority meet their obligations in terms of best value and continuous improvement. If necessary, we can be directed by Scottish Ministers to look into anything relating to the Authority or Police Scotland as they consider appropriate. We also have an established role in providing professional advice and guidance on policing in Scotland.

- Our powers allow us to do anything we consider necessary or expedient for the purposes of, or in connection with, the carrying out of our functions.
- The Authority and the Chief Constable must provide us with such assistance and co-operation as we may require to enable us to carry out our functions.
- When we publish a report, the Authority and the Chief Constable must also consider what we have found and take such measures, if any, as they think fit.
- Where we make recommendations, we will follow them up and report publicly on progress.
- We will identify good practice that can be applied across Scotland.
- We work with other inspectorates and agencies across the public sector and co-ordinate our activities to reduce the burden of inspection and avoid unnecessary duplication.
- We aim to add value and strengthen public confidence in Scottish policing and will do this through independent scrutiny and objective evidence-led reporting about what we find.

Our approach is to support Police Scotland and the Authority to deliver services that are high quality, continually improving, effective and responsive to local needs.²

This audit will be undertaken by HMICS in terms of the Section 74(2)(a) of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 and will be laid before the Scottish Parliament in terms of Section 79(3) of the Act.

¹ Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, Chapter 11.

² HMICS Corporate Strategy 2014-17.

Our review

Aim

1. The aim of this audit will be **to assess the state, efficiency and effectiveness of crime recording by Police Scotland and the extent to which recording practice complies with the Scottish Crime Recording Standard and Scottish Government Counting Rules.**

Background

2. In 2012-13, recorded crime in Scotland was at its lowest since 1974. At a time when the accuracy of statistics on recorded crime is increasingly being challenged in England and Wales, it is essential that the public in Scotland know whether they should have confidence in their own recorded crime statistics. Accurate crime data is also vital for the police service itself: it allows the service to anticipate, prevent and investigate crime by allocating resources where they are most needed.
3. Crime recording practice is governed by the Scottish Crime Recording Standard (SCRS) and the Scottish Government's Counting Rules. These documents provide a framework for deciding when an incident should be recorded as a crime, what type of crime should be recorded and how many crimes should be counted. Crime recording should also be carried out in accordance with the Police Scotland Code of Ethics.
4. In 2013, HMICS carried out a review of incident and crime recording. This was conducted shortly after the creation of Police Scotland. The timing of our review afforded us the opportunity to consider emerging governance arrangements and to assess compliance with the SCRS since 1 April 2013. The review involved qualitative research with a range of people involved in the crime recording process, including interviews and focus groups with officers and staff. We also examined incident records in each of the 14 local policing divisions and sampled up to 30 records relating to four crime types in each division: domestic abuse, sexual offences, assaults and robberies. The number of records sampled was not sufficiently high to be statistically significant, nor was the sample representative of the incidents recorded by each division. The sample size was chosen so as to be manageable from an HMICS and service perspective and the findings served as an indicator of recording practice across Scotland.
5. Of the 1,501 records examined, 93% complied with the SCRS. Compliance rates varied across crime types and across divisions. While we were disappointed that the total proportion of compliant incidents fell just short of the accepted standard of 95%, the high compliance rate for domestic abuse incidents (99%) illustrates what can be achieved when a focused and robust approach is taken to attending, investigating and recording a particular crime type. We found adherence to the SCRS to be generally good and were impressed by the knowledge and commitment of many officers and staff. We did however identify several areas in which Police Scotland could improve its approach to crime recording and made seven recommendations.

Crime Audit 2014 – Terms of reference

6. Reviews of incident and crime recording have formed a regular part of our scrutiny programme in recent years. In our Scrutiny Plan 2014-15, we stated that we would revisit incident and crime recording in 2014 and seek to provide the public and key

stakeholders with greater information on which to base their assessment of the validity of crime statistics. Our intention to conduct a crime audit has been welcomed by a range of stakeholders following increasing political and media commentary and scrutiny of crime statistics in Scotland in recent months. In addition, in its assessment of police recorded crime statistics published by the Scottish Government, the UK Statistics Authority highlighted the importance of a comprehensive and independent audit of crime data.

7. The aim of our Crime Audit 2014 is to test the accuracy of incident and crime recording in Scotland. The results will:
 - provide the public and key stakeholders with greater information on which to base their assessment of the trustworthiness and validity of crime statistics;
 - highlight to Police Scotland areas of good practice or areas for improvement and/or increased internal audit and scrutiny;
 - assess the extent to which recommendations made in our 2013 review of incident and crime recording have been taken into account; and
 - address the need for a comprehensive, independent audit of crime data as highlighted by the UK Statistics Authority.

Methodology

8. We will test the accuracy of crime recording through an audit of records. We will examine around five times as many records as we did in 2013. Rather than 'dip sampling' records as we did in 2013, we will take a more proportionate and thorough approach to sampling which will allow us to report on statistically significant compliance rates at Scotland-wide level, at divisional level, and by crime type.
9. In deciding what to audit, several factors have been taken into account including areas previously identified as weak, areas of high risk or emerging concern, and national and local policing priorities. We therefore propose to audit records relating to:
 - sexual offences
 - violent crime
 - housebreaking
 - hate crime
 - no-crimes (i.e. incidents that were originally thought to be a crime but were later re-designated as not being a crime following additional investigation)
 - non-crime related incidents (i.e. incidents that were potentially crime-related but which were eventually closed as being non-crime related).
10. In relation to the four crime types (sexual offences, violent crime, housebreaking and hate crime) we will apply Test 1 (whether a crime had been correctly recorded) and Test 2 (whether the crimes recorded were correctly classified and counted). Applying Test 2 will also allow us to consider whether subsuming has been carried out correctly.³ We will apply Test 1 only to no-crimes and non-crime related incidents.
11. Our Crime Audit 2014 will not include a wider assessment of the governance and accountability of crime recording, policy and procedure, systems and processes, people and skills, and audit and performance as was done in our 2013 review. This is because we do not wish to duplicate work only recently carried out and also because we wish to give Police Scotland sufficient time to implement our 2013

³ Subsuming refers to the practice of counting multiple crimes as one crime where, for example, there is a continuity of action and the crimes involve the same complainant and offender. The Counting Rules provide guidance on when it is, and is not, appropriate to subsume crimes.

recommendations. In particular, Police Scotland should be given sufficient time to implement our recommendation that it revisit its arrangements for crime recording one year after their implementation to assess whether they are working effectively. We expect Police Scotland to begin this internal review in October 2014 and will follow up on its findings in our next crime audit.

Publication and reporting timescales

12. A team of four inspectors will begin examining 7,500 incident and crime records in late August. We anticipate publishing a report of our findings in late October 2014. The report will be laid before the Scottish Parliament under section 79(3) of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012. A copy of our report will be provided to the Scottish Police Authority, the Chief Constable and the Cabinet Secretary for Justice. Our report will also be made publicly available on the HMICS website.
13. For further information about the crime audit, please contact Laura Paton, Lead Inspector (Laura.Paton@scotland.gsi.gov.uk).

Derek Penman QPM
HM Inspector of Constabulary in Scotland
August 2014