

Community safety

National report

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WALES AUDIT OFFICE
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POLICE

Crime recording 2005

Improving the quality of crime records in police authorities
and forces in England and Wales

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Summary

Reliable information based on high-quality data is critical for effective police action to reduce crime, to reassure the public and to make people feel safer in their neighbourhoods. It is also essential for stakeholders and policymakers in the criminal justice field, including government, parliament, media and the wider public. Crime information has to be reliable and readily accessible to those who need it. This enables forces to make the right operational decisions and police authorities to properly scrutinise police performance.

But the importance of high-quality data extends beyond this. Crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs) or, in Wales, community safety partnerships (CSPs), place great reliance on police data when addressing crime and anti-social behaviour locally. Above all, if local people are to be able to hold councils and their community safety partners to account, they must be able to trust the information they get about local crime levels.

User confidence takes time to build, but the first step is to ensure that data is fit for purpose. The Home Office, through the Police and Crime Standards Directorate (PCSD), has sponsored a programme of data quality reviews which have been carried out over the last three years by auditors appointed by the Audit Commission and the Auditor General for Wales. These reviews have confirmed that most police authorities and forces are now achieving a good standard of crime data quality.

The National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) has had a positive impact in this area. The NCRS, which was introduced in 2002, requires forces to take a victim-focused approach and to record crimes according to a set of clear principles. It has resulted in a much more consistent approach to the collection of data and recording of crime.

The key messages from our reviews of crime recording in 2005¹ are:

- There has been significant improvement in crime recording performance in the last three years, in terms of both data quality and the arrangements in place to support effective crime recording practices.
- Most authorities and forces now have a right first time approach to crime recording, but there are still some forces undertaking high levels of checking to achieve their improved rating. This does not represent a good use of public resources and cannot be sustainable in the longer term.
- While there has been significant overall improvement in performance, room for further progress remains. A small number of forces have failed to improve performance or to sustain previous levels of performance, and only one force has achieved an excellent rating for its management arrangements.

Since 2003 most police authorities and forces have done a great deal to improve compliance with national standards for crime recording. The most successful have achieved improvements through determined championing of data quality by the authority and at both force and local level. They have integrated their processes and systems for crime recording to ensure that compliance with national data quality standards is built in to all force activity, and not treated as an add-on.

Other forces can learn from the best performers in developing robust accountability mechanisms linking audit to action, in training their frontline and call handling staff, in making intelligent use of customer surveys and in ensuring that activity is linked to outcomes that matter to people. The Policing Performance Assessment Framework (PPAF) links force performance on data quality to overall assessments of achievement and encourages a more consistent approach to crime recording.

In 2003, there were 12 authorities and forces (28 per cent) that achieved a good standard of data quality and only 4 (9 per cent) that had satisfactory management arrangements. Since then there has been a significant improvement, with 35 forces (81 per cent) achieving good or excellent assessments for data quality in 2005 and 29 (67 per cent) with good or excellent

¹ Reviews took place during the financial year 2005/06.

management arrangements. There is now one force that has been assessed as excellent for both data quality and management arrangements (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1
Improvements in data quality and management arrangements
 Since 2003 there has been a significant improvement.



Source: Audit Commission

Authorities and forces have made substantial year-on-year improvements. Data quality has risen steadily each year. While most forces' data quality was rated as poor or fair in 2003 and as good in 2004, in 2005, 20 (47 per cent) were rated as excellent. Management arrangements improved most markedly between 2004 and 2005. Twenty-nine authorities and forces (67 per cent) were rated as good or excellent in 2005 compared with eight (19 per cent) in 2004.

As well as improving overall, data quality no longer shows such wide variations either between forces or within forces at the local police basic command unit (BCU) level. Changed operational practices, more centralised recording of crime through force call centres and better systems and processes have all contributed to this greater consistency. Effective leadership, training and awareness-raising have helped the best-performing forces to deliver sustained improvement across the board.

Across England and Wales we found widespread evidence of better recording of each of the main categories of crime for which records were examined and not just those that are the focus of national crime reduction targets. We found, however, a handful of forces where recording standards were unacceptably low for racial incidents, disturbance and violent crime.

Most authorities and forces have acted on the Commission's previous recommendations and ensured that there is a right first time approach to crime recording, with strong leadership supporting the necessary cultural shift. These include some that were previously over-reliant on expensive internal checking mechanisms focused on getting through audits and other annual reviews. These forces have replaced their central checking teams with more robust arrangements which embed a culture of compliance.

Nevertheless, five forces (12 per cent) continue to undertake high levels of checking. This is a poor use of valuable resources and cannot be sustainable in the longer term. If they are to maximise the benefit of investment in crime recording systems and processes, authorities and forces must secure permanent cultural change.

While the great majority of authorities and forces have improved the quality of both their data and underlying management arrangements, there are four forces (9 per cent) where data quality results were worse in 2005 than in 2004 and three others (7 per cent) where management arrangements have been allowed to deteriorate. These results emphasise the need for a consistent focus on data quality at all levels.

This focus will be all the more important as the police service enters a period of restructuring. There are lessons to learn from the experience of forces that have successfully reduced inconsistencies between BCUs by introducing effective centralised call centres with staff trained in the NCRS. Where forces are merging, plans need to be in place to assess systems, make decisions on supporting processes and identify how to maintain and improve data quality standards for the merged force. This will require firm leadership as well as a willingness to learn from the best practice that exists in the good and excellent forces and in pockets elsewhere.

Efforts to improve data quality will be supported by service-wide performance management processes, particularly through the PPAF. Auditors will also continue to monitor the implementation of authorities' improvement plans. But the responsibility for securing and maintaining high levels of data quality rests with each individual authority and force. Audits have shown that good and excellent forces share a number of characteristics such as:

- keeping a strong emphasis on victim-focused crime recording and ensuring the integrity of the data used to measure performance;
- managing risks to data quality through robust systems and processes and proportionate audit rather than intensive checking;
- using audit results to focus and drive improvement;
- ensuring that data quality issues are addressed through staff and officer development reviews (PDR), and that improvement is supported through a network of local champions;
- being aware of the importance of maintaining a consistent focus on data quality through the restructuring process; and
- improving data quality on a continuous basis and building user confidence by ensuring that data is fit for purpose and accessible to all users.

The improvement over the past three years is not just about compliance with a technical standard. It shows that a better, more victim-focused service is being provided to local people across England and Wales. The challenge now is to improve further as policing enters a period of substantial change with the introduction of strategic authorities and forces.

Introduction

- 1 This report presents the results of the third phase of reviews of crime recording undertaken at police authorities in England and Wales by auditors appointed by the Audit Commission and the Auditor General, sponsored by the Home Office through the PCSD.
- 2 Consistent, reliable and timely information is fundamental not only to local people and to their police authorities and forces, but also to local authorities, primary care trusts (local health boards in Wales), fire authorities and other partners in local crime and disorder reduction partnerships and community safety partnerships (CDRPs / CSPs). The data used and shared by these partners must be of a high quality if the best decisions are to be made and an excellent service provided to local people, especially those who are victims of crime.
- 3 Our work comes at a time of wide debate on the public's confidence in official statistics, and crime statistics in particular. The public requires reliable crime data that it can trust. While overall crime has fallen since 1995, over 60 per cent of people believe that it is rising (**Ref. 1**). This is one of the key issues to be addressed by the Statistics Commission in a report on crime statistics to be published in the summer of 2006. The Statistics Commission report will help to inform the cross-party review set up by the Home Secretary to recommend a means of measuring crime that is transparent, understood and trusted by local people.
- 4 In the meantime, for the crime types that it covers, the British Crime Survey (BCS) provides a consistent measure of national trends because it is unaffected by changes in reporting and recording. And police data on recorded crime remains essential to inform local people on the performance of their police service and the safety of their neighbourhoods.
- 5 The collection and dissemination of performance information is a core task of the PCSD, who work with police forces to support their improvement. In the last few years the development of the PPAF by the PCSD has brought a sharper focus on police performance, requiring more emphasis on consistent data recording. The PPAF presents an overall assessment of performance in each force by drawing together 13 headline indicators for each of the 43 police forces in England and Wales with the baseline assessments prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). The first such assessments, covering the year 2004/05, were published in October 2005.

- 6 The PPAF is currently being reviewed, and its future development will place even greater reliance on the quality of crime recording, supported by effective management arrangements. Compliance with NCRS is a pre-requisite for ensuring that high-quality data is available on a timely basis and is fit for purpose.
- 7 Police performance will be a priority during the present period of restructuring as strategic forces are established. A critical task in the development of the new authorities and forces will be to ensure that a culture of data quality grows to underpin high performance.

The review programme and audit methodology

- 8 In April 2002 the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), with the support of the Home Office and HMIC, introduced the NCRS to provide police forces with a framework for consistent recording of crime. The NCRS promoted greater consistency between forces, by giving a lead on difficult areas of interpretation within the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) and by taking a more victim-orientated approach to recording. It requires all forces to record crimes according to a defined and agreed set of principles. The aim is to produce robust data on police performance for the dual purpose of measuring performance and informing local decision making.
- 9 Following the introduction of NCRS the Home Office, through the PCSD, the Audit Commission and the Wales Audit Office developed a joint initiative to review its implementation by the 43 forces in England and Wales. The first phase of reviews in 2003 gave police authorities and forces an early assessment of where they stood and helped them to identify significant issues. Auditors examined selected data to test compliance with the NCRS and HOCR, and reviewed each authority's and force's management arrangements for crime recording. Each authority received a local report identifying key issues and recommendations for improvement, and a briefing summarising the national picture. Our approach from the start was to place an emphasis on sound management arrangements as they are fundamental to data quality: without them, high levels of compliance simply cannot be sustained.
- 10 In the second phase of reviews, in 2004, auditors found that both data quality and management arrangements had improved – particularly the former. Overall, there was better recording in most areas that auditors looked at, particularly where data was being used to measure progress towards national targets such as those for reducing burglary and vehicle crime. There was also evidence of clear corporate commitment to the national standards, with strong leadership and sound policies in place in the majority of forces.

- 11 At the same time, it was apparent that 60 per cent of authorities and forces had still to achieve the Home Office standard. Progress on some aspects of data quality had been offset by weaknesses emerging elsewhere, and in certain forces, the drive to implement victim-focused crime recording that was evident when the NCRS was introduced appeared to have lost some of its impetus. There remained some significant variations in the quality of crime data not only between forces but also between different BCUs in the same force. And at three forces crime recording performance had deteriorated.
- 12 There were also serious weaknesses in management arrangements at 7 of the 43 forces (16 per cent) and more work was needed at a further 28 (65 per cent). Of these 28, 16 had records which were generally compliant with data quality standards. The existence of 16 forces (37 per cent) with apparently good data but underdeveloped management arrangements called into question the sustainability of the improvements in data quality, and suggested that a much closer focus on management arrangements was required.
- 13 Our 2004 national report *Crime Recording: Improving the Quality of Crime Records in Police Authorities and Forces in England and Wales* (**Ref. 2**) drew attention both to the improvements that had been made and to the challenges that still faced a significant number of authorities and forces. Appointed auditors revisited each authority and force in 2005 to follow up recommendations from previous years and to assess further progress.
- 14 The third phase of reviews in 2005 focused on the approach to crime recording practice in each authority and force and on compliance with national standards, including NCRS and the Home Office good practice benchmark which requires that 90 per cent of crimes are recorded correctly. Work was carried out to assess:
- the compliance of samples of crime recording data with national standards, examining 66,700 records across the 43 authorities and forces in England and Wales; and
 - the breadth and effectiveness of the management arrangements for crime recording and victim-focused policing.

Data testing only provides a snapshot of performance, so arrangements for crime recording are important to provide a greater degree of certainty of data quality.

- 15 The work was tailored to the needs of the police authority and force concerned, with the closest attention paid to areas where the 2004 reviews identified serious problems. The focus remained on crime recording. Auditors did not examine systems for recording crime detections or review the extent to which any aspects of these were compliant with national requirements.

- 16 We have changed the grading system this year from the three-band traffic light model used in the first two years of the review, to the four-band rating system of excellent, good, fair and poor currently used in HMIC Baseline and PPAF assessments. We have also assessed the direction of travel of each authority and force, using the PPAF terminology of improved, sustained and deteriorated. We have made these changes because the results of these reviews contribute to the overall PPAF assessments of the authorities and forces concerned.
- 17 The 2005 assessments can nevertheless be compared to those for 2003 and 2004. An assessment of good or excellent in 2005 equates to green in 2003 and 2004, fair to amber and red to poor (Table 1).

Table 1
Comparison of 2005 assessment system with that used in 2003 and 2004

2005			2003 and 2004	
Data	Management arrangements			
95 per cent or more of the records examined are compliant with the relevant recording standards	Strong performance, with clear evidence of innovation and good practice that can be shared with others	Excellent	Green	A good standard of crime recording has been achieved
90-94 per cent compliance	Consistently above minimum requirements	Good		
80-89 per cent compliance	Meeting minimum requirements	Fair	Amber	Significant progress has been made, but further work is needed in key areas
Less than 80 per cent compliance	Below minimum requirements	Poor	Red	Some serious problems have yet to be resolved

Source: Audit Commission

- 18 Auditors appointed by the Commission carried out the reviews as part of their responsibilities to examine the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of police authorities' use of resources under section 5(1)(e) of the Audit Commission Act 1998 and in accordance with the Commission's *Code of Audit Practice* (**Ref. 3**) and standing guidance for auditors. The 2005 reviews at authorities and forces in Wales were carried out, under section 17(2)(d) of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004, by auditors appointed by the Auditor General and in accordance with the *Code of Audit Practice* issued by the Auditor General (**Ref. 4**).
- 19 Local reports have been reviewed for consistency by the Commission and Wales Audit Office and auditors have presented the results to each authority and force. As in 2003 and 2004, each authority and force is putting in place a local action plan, which responds to the auditor's recommendations. This report presents the national summary of these local reports in three chapters:
- Chapter 1** presents the results of auditors' testing of selected data and reports the progress that authorities and forces have made towards accurate recording of crimes.
- Chapter 2** compares the findings from auditors' reviews of the management arrangements that have been put in place at each authority and force and identifies the remaining obstacles to full compliance with national requirements.
- Chapter 3** summarises the actions that need to be taken to ensure that data quality is sustained and improved against a background of structural change, and outlines the proposals of the Audit Commission, Wales Audit Office and PCSD for future audit work.

Data quality

20 This chapter describes the findings of the data quality element of the reviews. Over the 3 years of the review programme, 26 forces (60 per cent) have improved their rating to meet the 90 per cent Home Office standard but 3 (seven per cent) have seen a deterioration below this level (**Figure 2**).

Figure 2
Changes in data quality 2003 to 2005

Twenty-eight forces have improved their rating since 2003, but three have seen a deterioration.

Category	Number 2003	Movers up	Movers down	Non movers	Number 2005
Excellent (green)	12			9	20
Good (green)					15
Fair (amber)	15			3	8
Poor (red)	16			0	0

Source: Audit Commission

21 Auditors' data quality assessments reflect the extent to which each authority and force has complied with national requirements for recording crimes, set out in the NCRS and the HOCR. For the 2005 reviews, this involved an assessment of the extent to which correct recording practices had been followed in relation to:

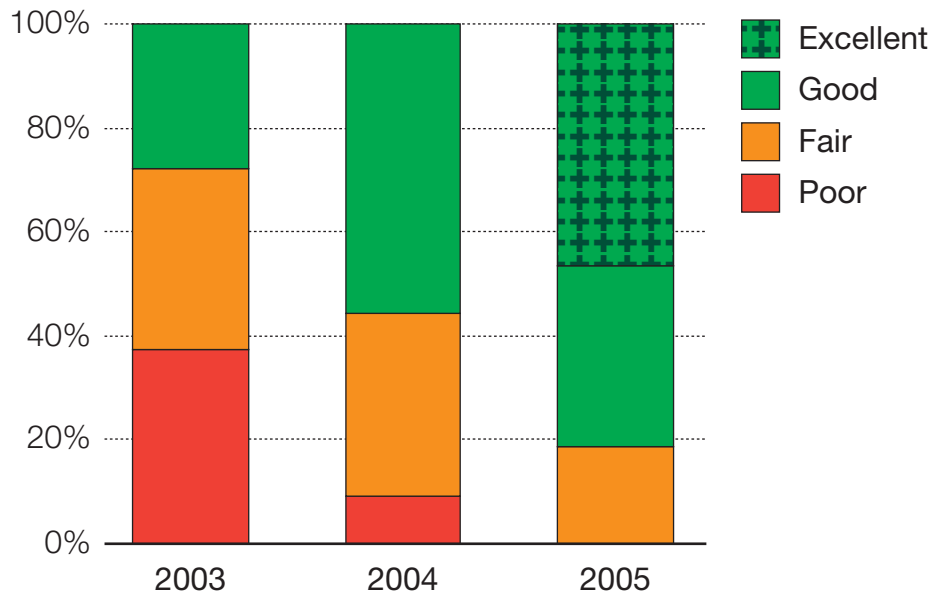
- incidents that had initially been treated as potential crimes (focusing on the same seven selected categories of crime as in 2003 and 2004);
- incidents that had initially been treated as 'not a crime'; and

- cases that had been recorded as crimes and subsequently reclassified from one crime category to another or ‘no crimed’ (removed from the crime recording system).
- 22 During the three years of the reviews, there has been a marked overall improvement in the quality of police data and compliance with crime recording standards (including NCRS) (Figure 3). This year 35 forces (81 per cent) were assessed as either good or excellent for data quality, compared to 24 (56 per cent) last year and 12 (28 per cent) in the first year of the reviews. For the first time, all forces were assessed as fair for data quality, meaning that at least 80 per cent of records examined were found to be in order: in 2004, four forces had been rated poor.

Figure 3
Data quality assessments

There has been a marked improvement in the quality of police data.

Percentage of authorities and forces

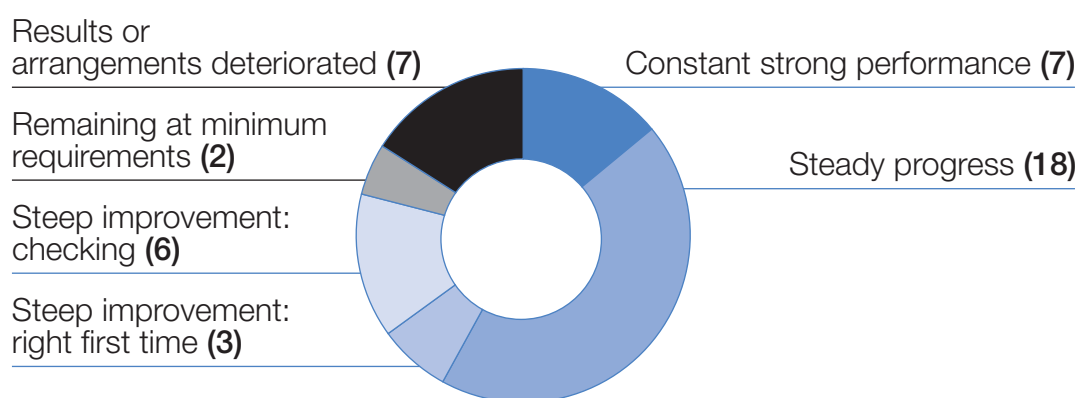


Source: Audit Commission

23 The rate of improvement has not been the same at all authorities and forces (**Figure 4**). Some have travelled further than others: while 7 of the 20 forces assessed as excellent in 2005 were already assessed as good or excellent in 2003, 9 of them had been rated poor. Seven forces started out with good or excellent data and built on their existing culture of data quality across the force when the NCRS standard was introduced, implementing recording systems and processes that enabled a victim-focused approach from the start. For many, however, it has been a steady journey of improvement, with staff awareness rising as training has been rolled out, and improving consistency as centralised call centres with uniform processes have been introduced. In 2005 no force or authority has been rated as poor.

Figure 4
Forces' and authorities' approach to crime recording 2003 to 2005

The rate of improvement has not been the same at all authorities and forces.



Note: Number of authorities and forces in brackets.

Source: Audit Commission

24 For nine forces (21 per cent), improvement between 2003 and 2005 resulted from an intensive push after internal and external audit highlighted weak data quality. Three forces have adopted appropriate measures to drive improvement through a right first time approach, but six (14 per cent) achieved good initial improvements in data results largely through intensive checking of records. This is often a necessary part of the effort to improve data quality, particularly when a new standard such as NCRS is being introduced, but by now all forces should have arrangements in place to ensure that officers normally get it right first time. We have taken account of this factor in assessing these forces' management arrangements.

- 25 In the short term intensive checking where there are known problems can allow forces to target swift responses. The knowledge gained by the central checking team can, when combined with audit information, inform force-wide processes and assist the identification of officers in need of training. But it is essential that intensive checking ceases, as a commitment to data quality begins to permeate the force. Two forces that were intensively checking records in 2004 had phased out this approach by 2005. Currently five forces are still intensively checking records.
- 26 There remain some authorities and forces where data quality still causes concern. Of the eight forces (19 per cent) assessed as fair in 2005, five (12 per cent) had previously achieved a good rating. In all cases, the main reason for the lower assessment was a failure to sustain a previously high level of commitment to crime data quality. Overall 13 forces (30 per cent) have allowed the quality of their data or their arrangements for crime recording to deteriorate at some point since 2003, 7 of which (19 per cent) have not subsequently improved. This underlines the importance of continuous attention to data quality issues for all authorities and forces, including those currently assessed as good or even excellent.
- 27 There are four forces (9 per cent) where data quality has been assessed as fair in 2004 and 2005 and where there has been no real improvement. This means that while they are meeting the minimum requirements, these forces are not showing good prospects for improvement. Radical change is needed if they are to move into the good category and achieve a fully victim-focused approach.

Incident recording systems

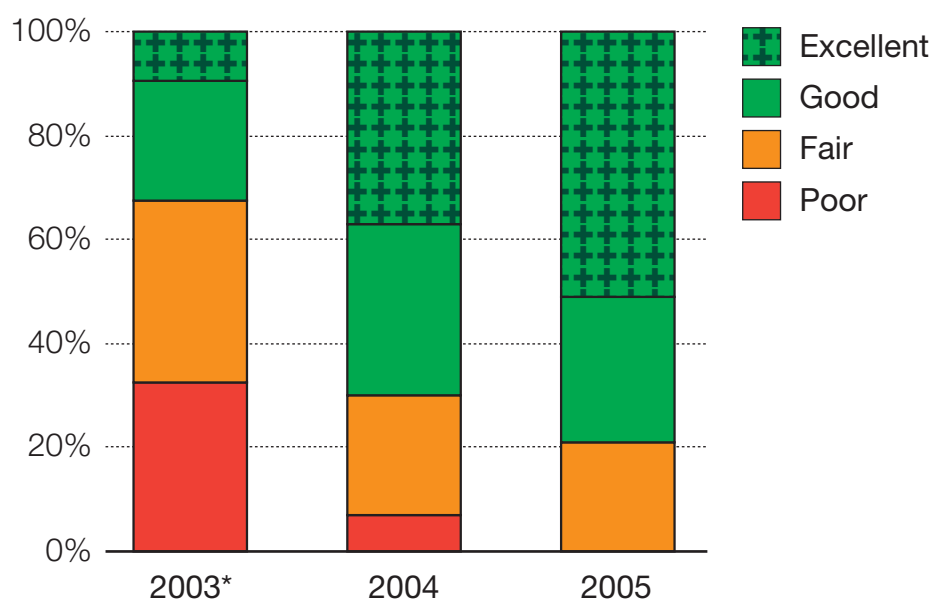
- 28 As in 2004, auditors looked at records of incidents that had initially been treated as potential crimes, to test the extent to which those records had been completed in compliance with the NCRS and HOCR. The range of records examined covered the same seven categories of crime as in the 2003 and 2004 reviews.
- 29 Overall, some 93 per cent of records were found to be compliant, with more forces achieving a good or excellent level of compliance than in earlier years. For the first time, all forces achieved at least an 80 per cent compliance rate and none were assessed as poor (**Figure 5, overleaf**). Where records were found to be non-compliant, this was generally because they contained insufficient information or had not been completed within the 72 hours required by the NCRS.

Figure 5

Correct recording of incidents treated as potential crimes 2003 to 2005

In 2005 all forces achieved at least an 80 per cent compliance rate.

Percentage of authorities and forces



***Note:** 2003 shows correct recording of incidents on the system closed as crimes. 2004 and 2005 include all incidents, however closed.

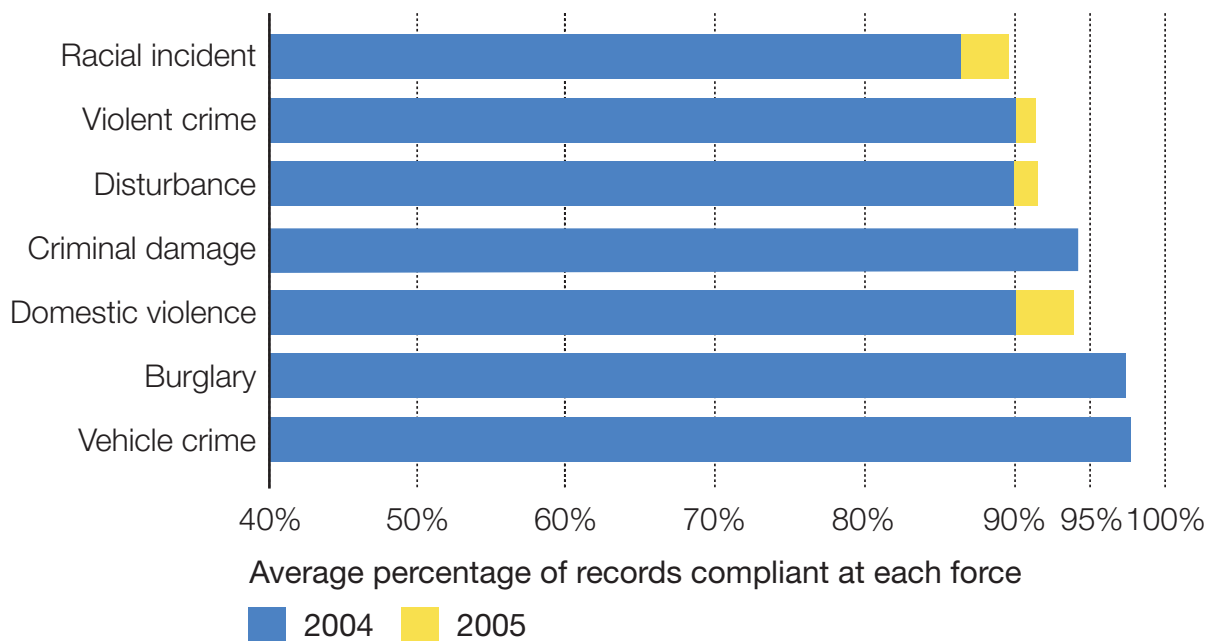
Source: Audit Commission

30 In six of the seven categories of crime reviewed, including the four categories where data quality was below an acceptable level in 2004, auditors found generally good levels of compliance in 2005. Historically, the crimes for which records have been kept to the highest standard have been those that are relatively easy to interpret, some of which are also the focus of national crime reduction targets. This year, also, saw an improvement in the recording of domestic violence and racial incidents (**Figure 6**). However the average level of compliance in recording racial incidents is still below a satisfactory standard. We found a handful of forces where the recording standards were unacceptably low for racial incidents (four forces), disturbance (four forces) and violent crime (three forces).

Figure 6

Quality of incident records by category of crime

There was a marked improvement in the recording of domestic violence and racial incidents.



Source: Audit Commission

- 31 Forces that continue to have difficulty in distinguishing whether a crime needs to be recorded, particularly in categories such as racial incidents, domestic violence or disturbance, may be helped by the introduction of the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR), which is being implemented at the great majority of forces. NSIR introduces a standardised way of recording incidents that are not crimes within the HOCR. Clear rules for classification of incidents which fall outside the HOCR should lead to improvements in recording within it, especially in its more challenging categories. Reviews did not test authorities' and forces' compliance with this new standard, but auditors did find evidence that a systematic approach to some of these more testing categories of crime can pay dividends (**Case study 1, overleaf**).

Case study 1

Northumbria: Racial incidents and domestic violence

Northumbria Police produced a standard set of questions that call handlers must address prior to closing records of domestic violence or racially motivated incidents. This helps to ensure that all appropriate information is gathered as part of the response and that suitable and positive action has been taken. It also acts as a guide to decision making. In 2005 our review found that 99 per cent of this Force's racially motivated crime logs and 100 per cent of domestic violence logs were closed correctly.

Source: Audit Commission

- 32 Auditors also examined records of incidents initially recorded as 'not a crime', to test whether some of these should in fact have been recorded as crimes. Ninety-six per cent of the sampled records nationally were found to be compliant, with no forces rated poor and only two rated fair. This was in line with the results for incidents that were treated as potential crimes.

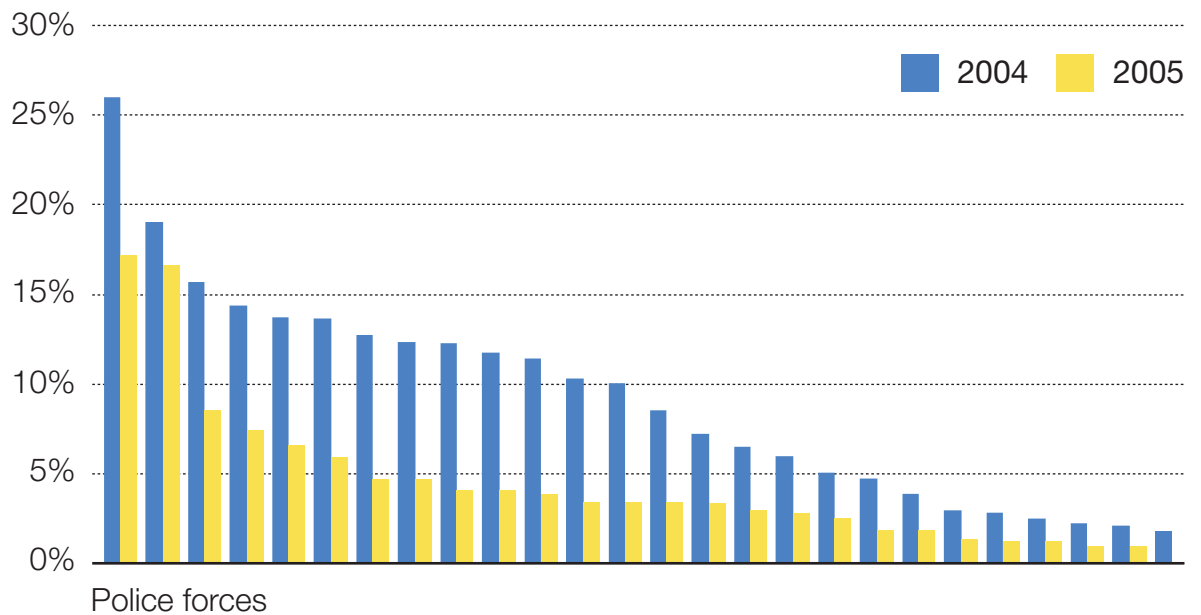
Variations in data quality between BCUs

- 33 While in some categories of crime there are still significant variations between forces in the extent to which they comply with crime recording standards, variations between BCUs within a force are much less evident than in earlier years. In the 26 forces tested this year the average variation reduced from 9 per cent in 2004 to 4 per cent (**Figure 7**).
- 34 Changed operational practices have contributed to much of this improvement. More crime recording is now handled centrally through force call centres, giving less scope for variation between BCUs. This has had the consequence of improving consistency of service to the public as well as the consistency of data.
- 35 In the context of police service restructuring, it will be important for the new strategic forces resulting from merger to review the different operational practices in place in each locality within its boundaries and to identify those that are the most reliable, robust and effective. They will then need to standardise processes and systems to ensure consistency in recording at the local BCU level. Authorities' and forces' transition plans should include a commitment to identifying and drawing upon good practice in crime recording systems and processes.

Figure 7
Variations in data quality between BCUs in 26 forces

Variations are much less evident than in earlier years.

Variance in data quality between a force’s best and worst performing BCU



Source: Audit Commission

Crime recording systems

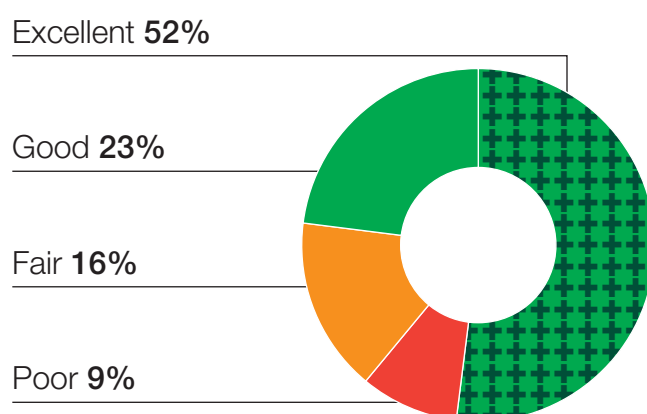
- 36 The 2003 and 2004 reviews demonstrated that forces were performing well in transferring records of crime-related incidents from their incident recording systems to their crime recording systems. In 2004, auditors also found that a majority of forces had achieved compliance rates of 95 per cent or more when removing crime records from their systems (no criming). Where mistakes were made, it was most frequently because insufficient information was recorded to demonstrate that the decision to no crime an incident had been made in accordance with the HO CR.

- 37 In 2005, auditors reviewed crime records that had either been no crimed or reclassified from one category of crime to another. The reclassified records reviewed had all been reclassified in either the violent crime or criminal damage categories. Overall, some 92 per cent of the records examined were found to be compliant, demonstrating that forces generally have effective controls in place in this area (**Figure 8**).

Figure 8

Removal or reclassification of crime records

Forces generally have effective controls in place.



Source: Audit Commission

- 38 With, on average, over 90 per cent of all records checked compliant with the standard, it is clear from our work that data quality is generally high. There remain, however, concerns about the eight authorities and forces that are performing much less well than the majority.
- 39 If data quality is to be improved at these forces and sustained elsewhere it is essential to have robust management arrangements. These are the focus of the next chapter.

2

Management arrangements

- 40 This chapter describes the findings of the reviews of management arrangements at police authorities and forces in England and Wales between 2003 and 2005, with a focus on the year 2005.
- 41 Auditors have reviewed authorities' and forces' arrangements to support data quality, comprising the whole range of systems and processes that they have in place to ensure that data is consistent and reliable and reflects the perceptions of victims and witnesses of crime.
- 42 In 2003 the reviews focused on the corporate arrangements in place to support the implementation of the NCRS. In 2004 the reviews took a wider view to include analysis of the arrangements in place at BCU level to manage crime recording, and in 2005 auditors took a proportionate approach, assessing corporate arrangements against a set of criteria for judgement describing key features of excellent, good, fair and poor performance in relation to nine specific aspects (**Table 2, overleaf**).
- 43 In all three review phases, auditors looked specifically at the nine aspects of management arrangements. It is now three years since auditors embarked on the first phase of reviews (and almost four years since the NCRS was introduced). Since 2003 there have been significant improvements in management arrangements. In total, 29 forces (67 per cent) have shown some improvement, although three have deteriorated (**Figure 9, overleaf**).

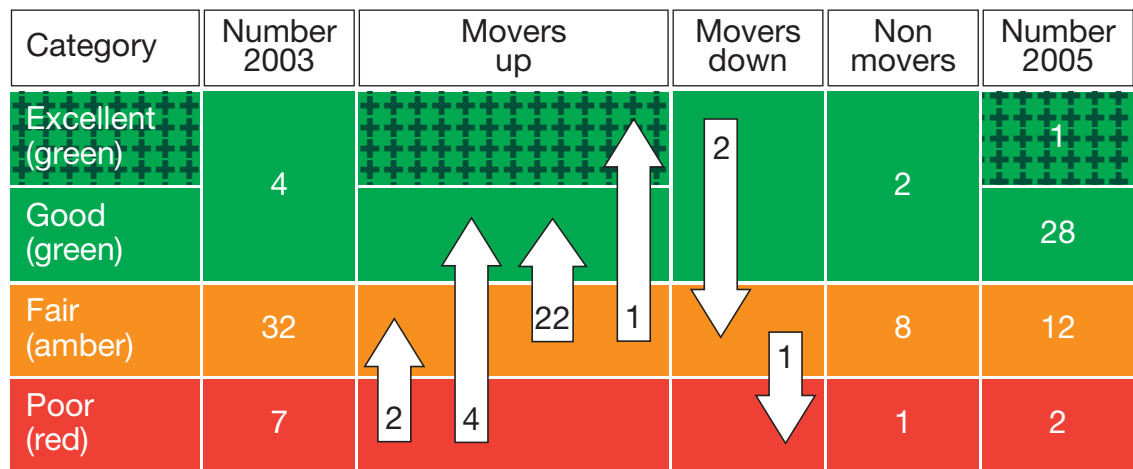
Table 2
Aspects of management arrangements

Aspect	Key issue
The role of the police authority	The police authority is proactive in monitoring force data quality and holds the chief officer to account for ensuring that effective arrangements are in place.
Leadership and accountability	There is a strong framework of accountability for crime recording in the authority and force.
Policy and administration	The force is fully committed at senior level and has policies in place to support that commitment.
Staff training, knowledge and awareness	Staff involved in crime recording have the appropriate level of knowledge and competence for the task.
Resourcing	The crime recording process is adequately resourced to function properly.
Systems for incident and crime recording	The force has in place effective incident and crime recording systems to support crime recording and secure data quality from the outset.
The process for crime recording	The force has in place effective incident and crime recording processes to support crime recording.
Auditing arrangements, scrutiny and integrity	A formal, comprehensive and proportionate internal audit regime for crime recording is in place.
Quality of service	Incident and crime recording processes acknowledge and cater for the diversity of users and their needs, and customer feedback is routinely sought to ensure that crimes reported are handled properly.

Source: Audit Commission

Figure 9
Changes in the quality of management arrangements 2003 to 2005

There has been significant improvement in management arrangements.

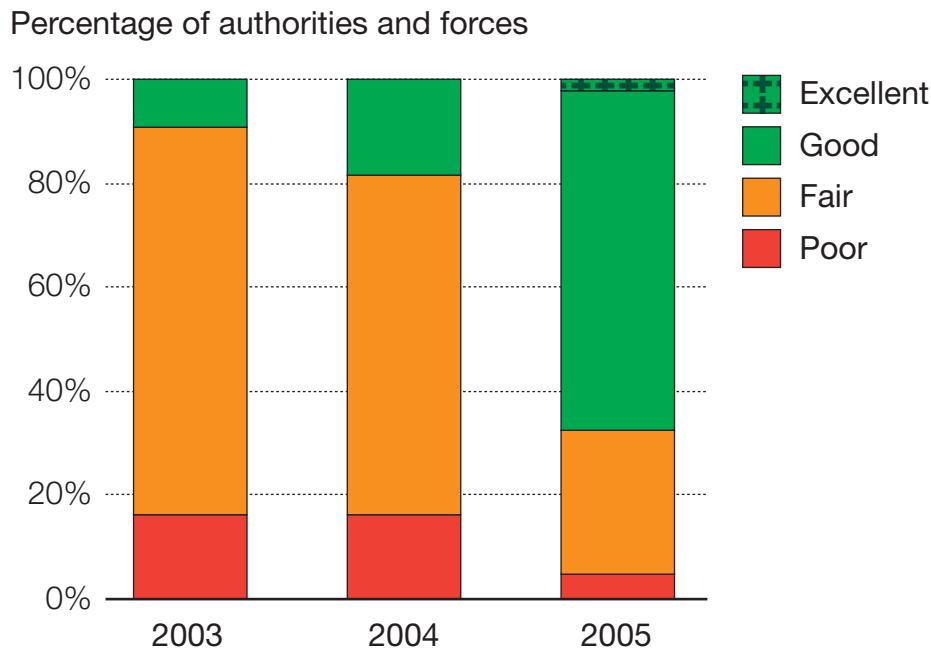


Source: Audit Commission

- 44 There are now 20 forces (47 per cent) assessed as excellent in relation to data quality, only 1 force has excellent management arrangements; 12 (28 per cent) are fair (compared with 8 forces with fair data quality); and at 2 forces (5 per cent) management arrangements have been rated as poor and continue to give cause for concern. There are nine forces (21 per cent) assessed as excellent or good in respect of data quality where the management arrangements are no better than fair, leading to concerns as to the sustainability of the better data quality that has been achieved.
- 45 However, overall the 2005 results show a significant improvement. Twenty-nine forces (67 per cent) have been assessed as good or excellent compared with eight in 2004 (19 per cent) and four in 2003 (9 per cent). The number rated poor has fallen from seven in 2004 to two. One force received an excellent rating this year (**Figure 10, overleaf**).

Figure 10
Management arrangements assessments

The 2005 results show a significant improvement.



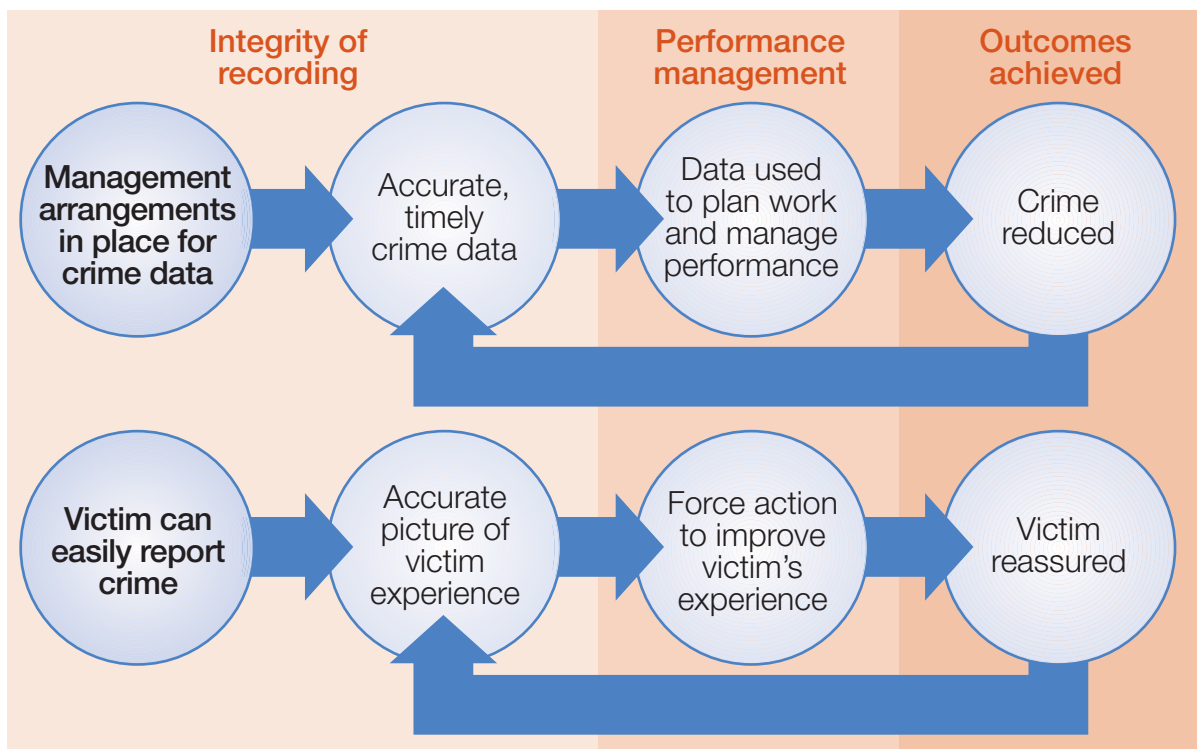
Source: Audit Commission

- 46 The improvement in management arrangements over the last three years is significant because good arrangements for crime recording are fundamental to sustained data quality, and so to effective police action. Good management arrangements guarantee consistent application of the crime recording requirements by staff and lead to consistent levels of quality. Managing sustainable improvements in crime recording is a complex business process. It requires clear leadership, a culture of accurate recording throughout the force and appropriate processes and systems in both the force and authority. Without these elements in place the improvements in data quality that have been achieved to date will not have a lasting impact on police performance or, ultimately, on levels of crime (Figure 11).

Figure 11

The importance of management arrangements

Good management arrangements are fundamental to effective police action.

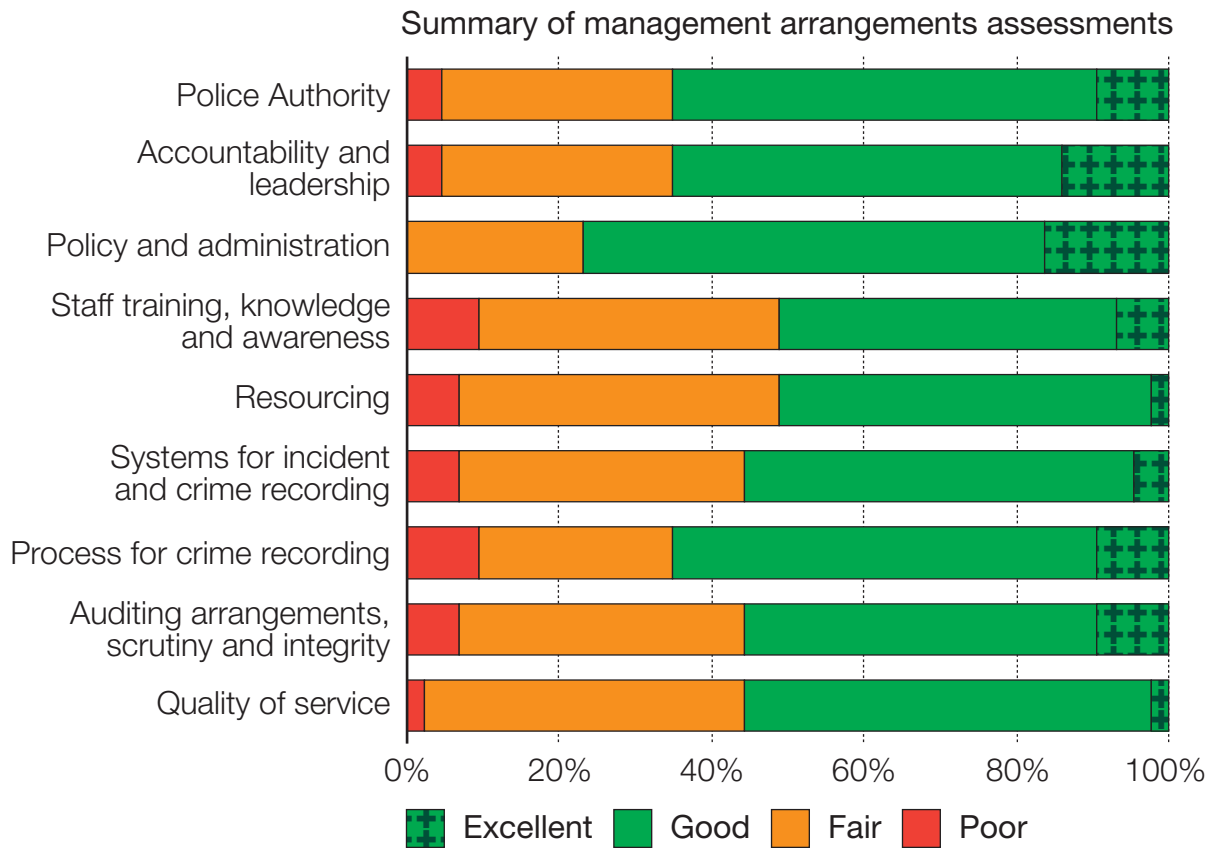


Source: Audit Commission

- 47 This year's reviews show that policy and administration is the strongest aspect of management arrangements, with 33 (77 per cent) forces assessed as good or excellent. However, the greatest number of forces were rated as fair or poor for staff training and knowledge, and resourcing (**Figure 12, overleaf**).

Figure 12
Aspects of management arrangements 2005

Policy and administration is the strongest aspect.



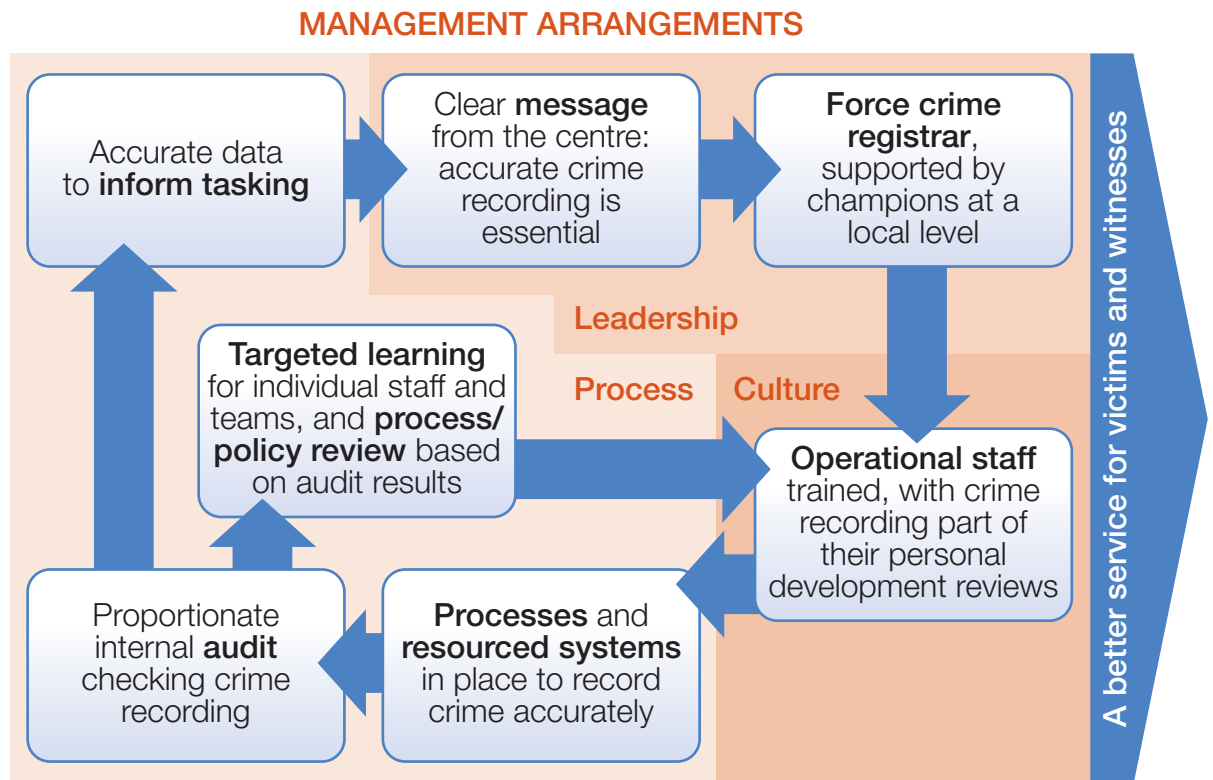
Source: Audit Commission

48 These nine aspects are, in reality, interdependent and inextricable from each other. Good and excellent authorities and forces show leadership on crime recording at the police authority and chief officer level, supported by champions at a local level. They have clear policies in place for crime recording. Leaders hold officers to account for delivering those policies through performance review. Good and excellent forces typically have consistent, centralised call handling with sufficient staffing to match demand. Their audit regimes highlight areas for improvement by individual, by team, by type of crime and by process. The information from audit feeds back in a virtuous circle to create development plans for

individuals and teams, to inform training programmes, and to show where the recording processes need to improve (Figure 13).

Figure 13
Management arrangements

Different aspects of management arrangements are interdependent.



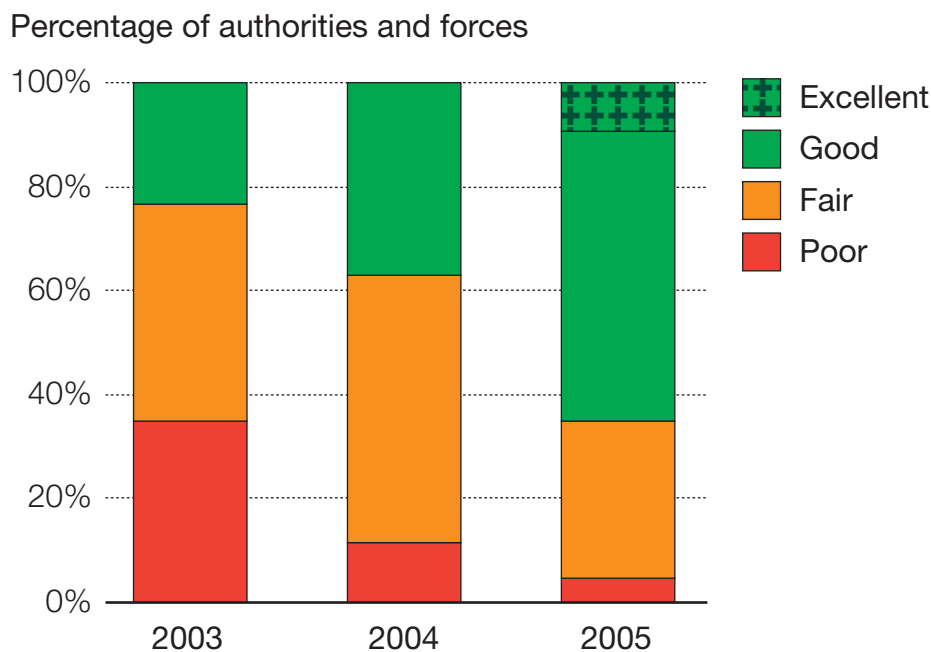
Source: Audit Commission

- 49 This is an ideal model, and in most forces there is at least one weak link in the management arrangements chain. Several forces have difficulties answering calls at times of high demand and require systems upgrades. Some do not take lessons from audit into individual and team training plans and a few are still checking high volumes of crime records to ensure compliance with national standards. The rest of this chapter examines the findings of the reviews this year on the nine aspects of management arrangements and draws attention both to notable good practice and to weaknesses that still need to be addressed.

The role of the police authority

- 50 Good management arrangements start with the role of the police authority. Successful police authorities have understood the importance of data quality and how it impacts on providing a victim-focused quality service to local people. They have ensured that the force develops a data quality culture, by actively monitoring and where necessary challenging the force. Twenty-eight police authorities (65 per cent) have now been assessed as good or excellent (**Figure 14**).

Figure 14
The role of the police authority



Source: Audit Commission

- 51 Good and excellent authorities have made data quality a priority across the authority, they do not see it as a concern of just one member or a small group. These authorities have assessed risks in relation to data quality, and embedded it within risk management arrangements (**Box A**).

Box A**Good and excellent police authorities:**

- hold the force to account for performance on data quality;
- have a lead member for data quality;
- embed data quality in risk management arrangements;
- liaise with the force crime registrar; and
- incorporate data quality as an element of performance monitoring.

Source: Audit Commission

- 52** Typically, these authorities include active champions of data quality who have a clear view of how to implement change and who work with forces to improve their performance. They are very clear that resources devoted to checking to comply with crime recording standards should be reduced and a right first time approach developed.
- 53** A characteristic of successful police authorities is that data quality is a shared concern of the authority as a whole. So, as well as lead role arrangements for crime recording, there is a panel of the authority to deal with compliance issues. Authority members regularly liaise with the force crime registrar (FCR), and follow up on issues from audits with the chief constable and divisional commanders. The authority plays a key role in the development of major projects, for example the implementation of new crime recording systems.
- 54** There are still some authorities that need to challenge their forces more robustly, and to improve their understanding by setting up clear monitoring arrangements for crime recording. These authorities should make full use of their sessions with their auditors to examine how they could improve the effectiveness of their oversight role.

Case study 2

Lancashire: Police Authority role

There is a challenging but constructive relationship between the Authority and the Force based on openness and joint ownership of problems. The Authority's objectives for crime recording include effective use of resources alongside quality data and good customer service, and it provides robust and effective challenge.

Following last year's audit, the Authority has continued to scrutinise the Force's arrangements for crime recording, with a particular focus on efficiency. The Authority has adopted a clear position that resources devoted to checking should be reduced. The two lead members for performance have been closely involved in the development of the new crime recording system. They regularly meet officers and staff involved in different aspects of crime recording and have an excellent grasp of the key issues and barriers to improvement.

The Authority receives and discusses the FCR's internal audit reports. Monitoring of crime recording outcomes is also an integral part of wider quarterly performance management processes.

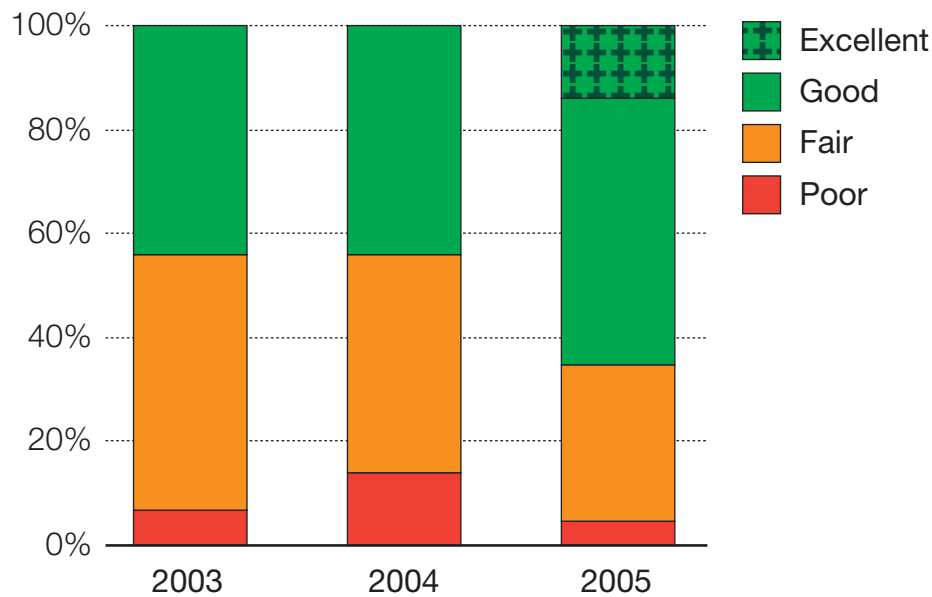
Source: Audit Commission

Leadership and accountability

- 55 The direction set by the police authority should be reflected in the leadership of the force. When the review programme began, this was an area of strength overall, but the 2004 reviews found that there had been a waning of commitment in some forces where other priorities had distracted management attention from data quality. This had an impact on performance where the compliance culture was not fully embedded.
- 56 Many of the issues raised in the 2004 reviews have now been addressed, and 28 forces (65 per cent) now have excellent or good arrangements for leadership and accountability (**Figure 15**). These forces have reinforced their top-level commitment to crime recording through a range of mechanisms including linking crime recording to the personal development review (PDR) process, with local level champions able to promote the approach and coach poor performers. They see good crime recording as a vital information base that enables forces to reduce crime and increase detections, not as a conflicting priority.

Figure 15
Leadership and accountability

Percentage of authorities and forces



Source: Audit Commission

57 Authorities and forces that reach high standards in this area value high-quality data and use it to manage force performance. Values are driven from the top through firm leadership. Accountability does not just involve senior managers and the FCR reporting to the chief constable. All officers and staff with crime recording roles need to be held accountable for their performance through the PDR system, based on evidence from corporate audit and line management (**Box B, overleaf**).

Box B**In good and excellent police authorities and forces:**

- leaders value high quality data and communicate this to officers and staff;
- all officers are held to account for data quality;
- there is a proactive FCR to drive forward data quality;
- there is a strong framework of accountability for data quality;
- data quality is championed by a senior officer; and
- results of previous data quality reviews have been addressed.

Source: Audit Commission

- 58** A proactive FCR with the right resources can drive forward good-quality crime recording. Developing this role has led to significant shifts in performance in some forces over a short time. The FCR need not be a police officer; but he or she does need strategic seniority, independence from operational work and visible support from the highest levels of the force for the promotion of good crime recording as part of the drive for improved performance.
- 59** All forces need good mechanisms for passing on clear messages about the importance of crime recording. Examples include shift briefings; performance monitoring meetings; daily telephone conference meetings between the chief constable and local commanders; champions at a local level disseminating information; and active participation in training courses by senior managers.
- 60** There are a minority of forces (15, or 35 per cent) where leadership is not proving effective, so that:
- the drive for good-quality data stays at the top and middle layers of the organisation, or the drive is dissipated because the FCR gets side-tracked by a heavy burden of operational work, or lacks authority;
 - where frontline staff are not held accountable for data quality, unsustainably high levels of central checking are needed;

- officers and staff receive mixed messages from senior staff. The impetus to reduce the number of priority crimes and to increase their rate of detection (often reinforced through the PDR process) is seen as conflicting with the need to comply with crime recording standards; and
 - force performance targets are focused on crime reduction and detection to the exclusion of data quality.
- 61 It is also the case that forces that do not have data quality as part of the PDR process are less likely to perform well, especially for officers whose core role is crime recording, such as service desk staff.
- 62 In year three of the programme forces have needed to maintain momentum, continuing to emphasise the importance of high-quality data and a right first time approach (Case study 3).

Case study 3

Merseyside: Leadership

The previous year's review concluded that compliance in Merseyside was, in part, achieved through intensive checking and correction of incident logs by a central team rather than addressing underlying cultural issues. The Authority formed a clear view of what it wanted to achieve for crime recording and developed a stronger partnership with the Force through a nominated NCRS lead. A firm commitment was made at chief officer and area commander level to embed quality crime recording into the operating culture of the Force, reflected in the local strategy and policing plan. A Force-wide marketing campaign promoted the benefits of data quality, supported by a positive approach from the FCR and audit team. The checking team was phased out.

Improved performance is now achieved through officer awareness rather than intensive, post-event compliance checking. Accountability is achieved through an identified NCRS champion at chief inspector/inspector level in each BCU, nominated to change the culture, and able to take a strategic view of the process. Crime recording also features as part of some of the officers' PDRs, including the NCRS champions and officers within the crime recording bureau.

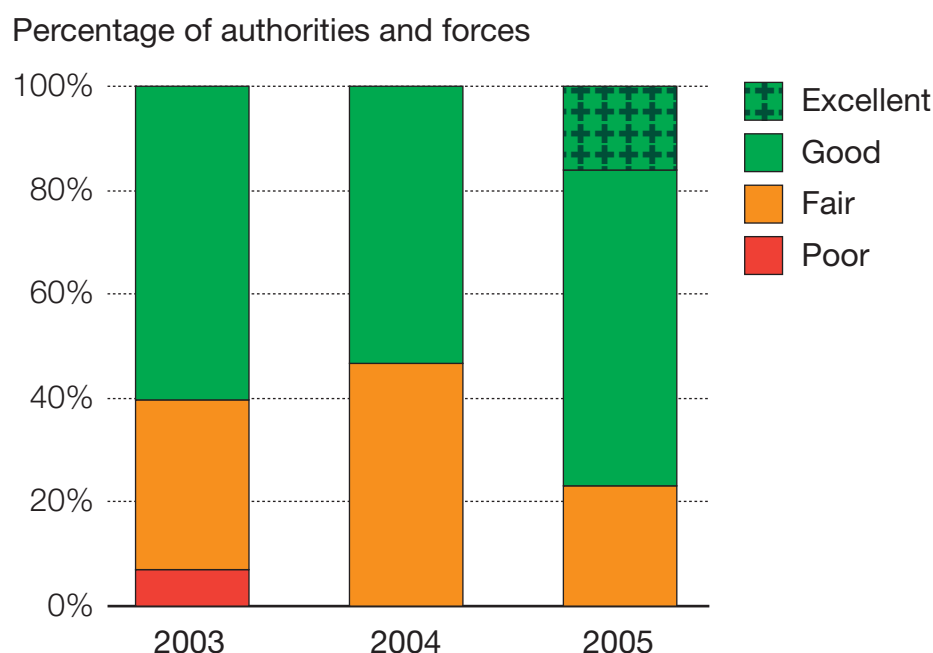
Merseyside has maintained a good standard of data quality, and frontline officers no longer see crime recording as a 'box-ticking' chore.

Source: Audit Commission

Policy and administration

- 63 This has always been an area of relative strength, and the great majority of forces now have clear and comprehensive sets of crime recording policies (**Figure 16**).

Figure 16
Policy and administration



Source: Audit Commission

- 64 Well-managed forces regularly update their policies, using and sharing best practice and linking them with other force-wide policies. They review the detail of policy in the light of challenges faced in practice, for example by changing the recording policy for specific crimes when audits have shown problems with the recording of harassment, or racist and homophobic crimes (**Box C**).

Box C**Good and excellent police authorities and forces:**

- link crime recording policies to other force-wide policies;
- review policies in the light of practice and national changes;
- communicate policies to officers and staff; and
- ensure practice follows policy.

Source: Audit Commission

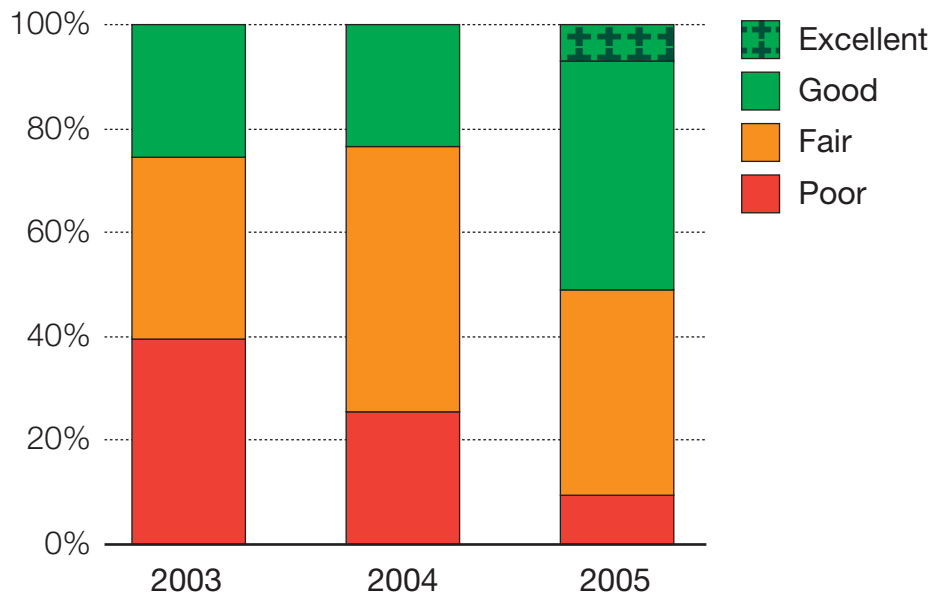
- 65 In these forces policies are easily accessible and well communicated to staff, who understand what they need to do to comply, and where to get help. The FCR leads compliance with policies through the audit process, and poor performance is addressed.
- 66 Where policy and administration arrangements require improvement it is normally because:
- there are no policies in place for certain aspects of work, for example removing records of incidents or reclassifying crimes; or
 - units involved in compliance have developed without terms of reference within the force policy; or
 - a lack of internal audit or monitoring arrangements leads to inconsistent interpretation of policy across the force area.

Staff training, knowledge and awareness

67 Appropriate training enables officers and staff to comply with recording standards and supports a right first time ethos. It removes the need for intensive checking by central units. Over the last three years, this is the aspect of management arrangements where there has been the greatest improvement (**Figure 17**).

Figure 17
Staff training, knowledge and awareness

Percentage of authorities and forces



Source: Audit Commission

68 More than half of all forces have good or excellent staff training and awareness. They give their staff the knowledge they need:

- by raising awareness through briefings for all staff and specialist training for the staff most affected;
- by identifying needs through appraisal or training needs analysis, taking account of the results of audit, and providing the staff concerned with targeted training or coaching; and
- by making certain training programmes mandatory for key groups of staff (**Box D**).

Box D

Good and excellent police authorities and forces:

- raise awareness for different staff in tailored ways;
- run specialist training for staff most affected;
- identify the learning needs of individuals and teams through audit;
- evaluate training and learn lessons;
- keep staff up to date with refresher sessions; and
- make training mandatory.

Source: Audit Commission

69 There are many good and excellent forces (over 50 per cent) where:

- staff demonstrate a good knowledge of NCRS and why it matters;
- learning involves more than formal courses. There are update briefings at team meetings and refresher sessions and arrangements for operational staff who are struggling with crime recording to shadow staff on the crime desk;
- crime recording is built into organisational processes like PDR, probationer training, promotion panels and staff briefings;
- training is targeted at specific problems of underperformance by officers and teams based on training needs assessments, rather than generic courses; and
- there is a range of different approaches to training, including distance learning packages followed by face-to-face workshops, roadshow presentations for area staff in relation to specific crimes, knowledge checks and crime recording videos and information packs (**Case study 4, overleaf**).

70 Despite these improvements, staff knowledge and awareness remains one of the weakest aspects of management arrangements with many forces assessed as fair and four as poor. Forces with low staff awareness of crime recording often communicate on these issues with specialist staff only and they provide little information for officers in general. Many forces have yet to use their audit findings to inform officers' personal training plans. This poses a risk to the sustainability of crime recording. A cultural shift that makes data quality a priority requires high levels of staff awareness.

Case study 4

Greater Manchester Police: Training

Last year our national crime recording report highlighted Greater Manchester Police's 'ask the audience' training equipment, which enabled each participant to push a button in response to a multiple choice question, immediately displaying all results on a screen at the front. This year we focus on their wider training approach.

This Force takes a proactive approach to improving data quality, including a risk assessment and training needs analysis to identify which staff should have data quality included in their appraisals, and what training they require. The initial drive concentrated on those in critical posts, such as crime input staff and crime evaluators, but this has been expanded to include operational control room staff and operational supervisors.

Training includes:

- 'Ask the Audience' technology which is still available to all BCUs;
- central provision of force-wide NCRS training by the FCR's office with each session, where possible, introduced by a member of the senior command team to emphasise its importance;
- a video covering basic NCRS issues and another professionally produced video, which is now being used by other forces, which concentrates on key areas such as domestic violence, public order, robbery and self-defence;
- robbery and burglary packs, including guidance on crime recording and plans to develop further packs on rape and murder; and
- crime recording included in new-starter, sergeant and inspector's training.

Greater Manchester has successfully used feedback from audit results to inform the design of staff training. Where audits or 'dip samples' highlight that officers are not consistently complying with the policy, they complete a crime recording knowledge check, used as a training aid. The check includes case studies of incidents and requires the participant to work through and record them appropriately. The checks are marked by the officer's sergeant to enable support to improve performance. The knowledge check was used as the base for the Centrex National Training Product.

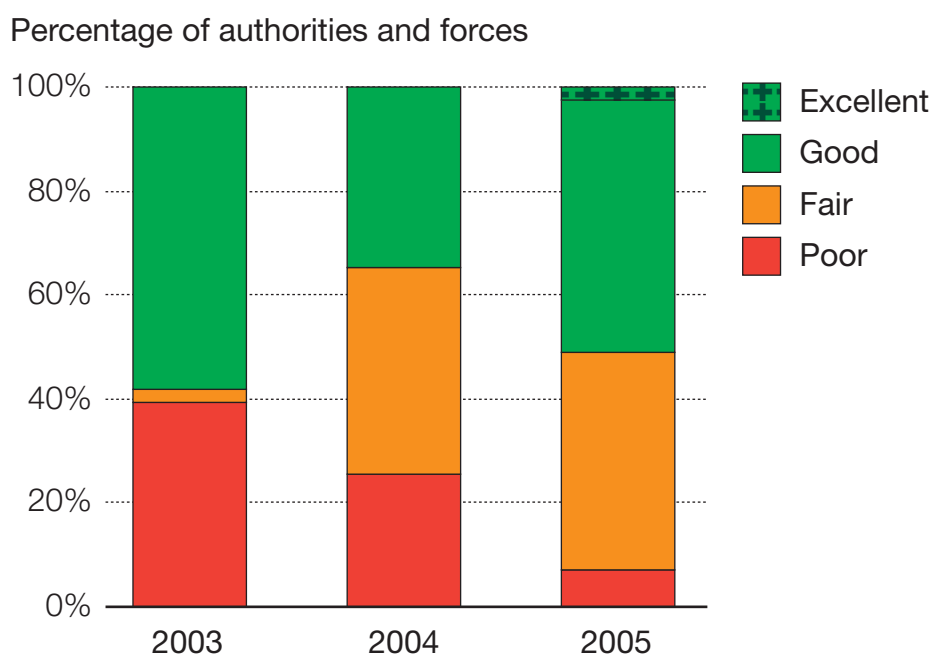
Source: Audit Commission

- 71 Other initiatives taken by forces to improve staff knowledge and awareness have included a ten-point plan to guide officers dealing with domestic violence (which has led to improvements in decision making and log entries), and ensuring attendance at training by reducing access to the force crime recording system for those who do not attend.
- 72 The main problems found at fair and poor forces were:
- an exclusive focus on the training of call handling staff without accompanying efforts to raise awareness of crime recording among operational officers across the force. This leads to a lack of support for the process outside the call handling centre. Even where training has been offered more widely, forces have not always ensured that staff attend;
 - forces failing to make the connection between learning from the audit process and the development of training, and so missing the opportunity to target guidance where it is most needed. Evaluating the effectiveness of training, both on the day and subsequently through audit, enables trainers to improve their work and assess the value of the force's investment in training; and
 - relying on updates and information by email, which, while inexpensive, has much less impact than face-to-face training or coaching.

Resourcing

73 While a minority of forces still place over reliance on central checking, many forces have moved towards the right first time approach, embedding a culture of quality crime recording. The best performers have well-trained, well-motivated call handling staff in numbers sufficient for the level of call demand, and FCRs with enough support to champion crime recording across the force. There are, however, many forces that need to use resources more effectively. Just under half of all forces are rated better than fair (**Figure 18**).

Figure 18
Resourcing



Source: Audit Commission

74 Forces need robust computerised crime recording systems matched by flexible human resource planning so that there are enough people to answer the telephones at times of peak demand for calls (**Box E**). In one force with effective human resource planning, our review found no callers hanging up before they were answered or being asked to wait for a call back. Another force interviewed and trained a pool of recruits so as to be able to keep the crime recording unit fully staffed and so maintain business continuity.

Box E**Good and excellent police authorities and forces:**

- ensure staff are available to answer the volume of calls;
- adequately resource the FCR's role;
- resource systems which are fit for purpose; and
- match staffing to demand.

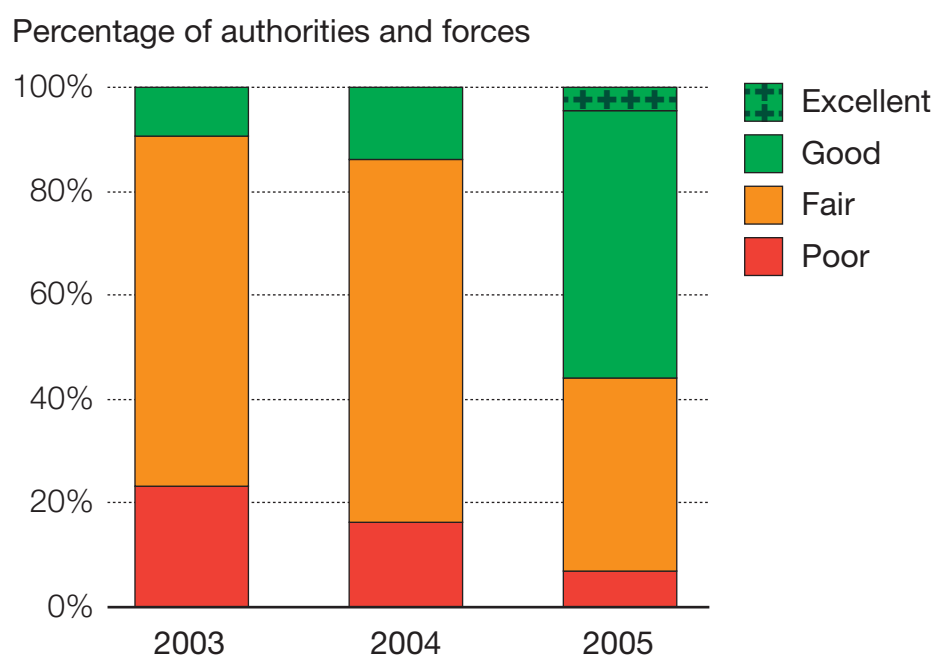
Source: Audit Commission

- 75** The FCR is critical to the implementation of crime recording. Forces need to resource this role adequately by ensuring that the FCR is free of operational constraints. There are also benefits in having championing officers throughout the force to implement policy. In one force, compliance officers, independent from operational pressure, are able to link the FCR and local policing units, develop targeted training solutions and act as sources of advice for frontline officers. Another force uses customer surveys to target resources on areas of dissatisfaction. These surveys also provide the force with a means of measuring improvements in outcomes.
- 76** Where resource management is ineffective it is most often because:
- forces have not matched their staffing to the volume of calls, leading to delays for victims contacting the police at peak periods, and lost calls. A number of forces have call handling centres characterised by high sickness levels, excessive amounts of overtime and high staff turnover; or
 - new responsibilities (such as NSIR) falling on FCRs have reduced their capacity to sustain a sufficient level of training and audit work to maintain good crime recording.

Systems for incident and crime recording

- 77 The majority of forces now have systems that comply with NCRS and HOCR, link crime and incident recording, and make it difficult to enter non-compliant data. But there are several forces where systems are no longer fit for purpose and require a total upgrade. There are others where the technology needs development, for example because the system is slow-running (**Figure 19**).

Figure 19
Systems for crime recording



Source: Audit Commission

- 78 In good and excellent forces the crime and incident recording systems link through the automatic recording of crime reference numbers from one system to the other (**Box F**). Systems can be easily queried to facilitate audit, and upgrading systems to meet changes in policies and operational practice is simple. The information technology supporting crime recording makes it straightforward for staff to close incidents complying with crime recording standards, offering prompts where necessary for more complicated crimes and ensuring matters are resolved in good time (**Case study 5**).

Box F

Good and excellent police authorities' and forces' systems:

- are integrated effectively across the force;
- offer prompts to ensure accurate and timely resolution of incidents;
- are easy to interrogate for audit and performance information; and
- are efficient and fast.

Source: Audit Commission

Case study 5

North Wales: Systems

As part of a Force-wide systems upgrade the Force introduced an audit module which tracks the time taken for an officer to crime or dispose of any incident from its initial reporting time. The system operates by sending out daily lists of non-disposed incidents to all personnel, naming the officer and the elapsed time since the report was logged. The list colour codes the incidents from green to red, the latter indicating an urgent resolution is required. The new system has also been designed to prevent officer and support staff from closing logs and crime records inaccurately. The system helps crimes to be input in a timely manner and also identifies any incident which has not been crimed to reinforce a learning culture.

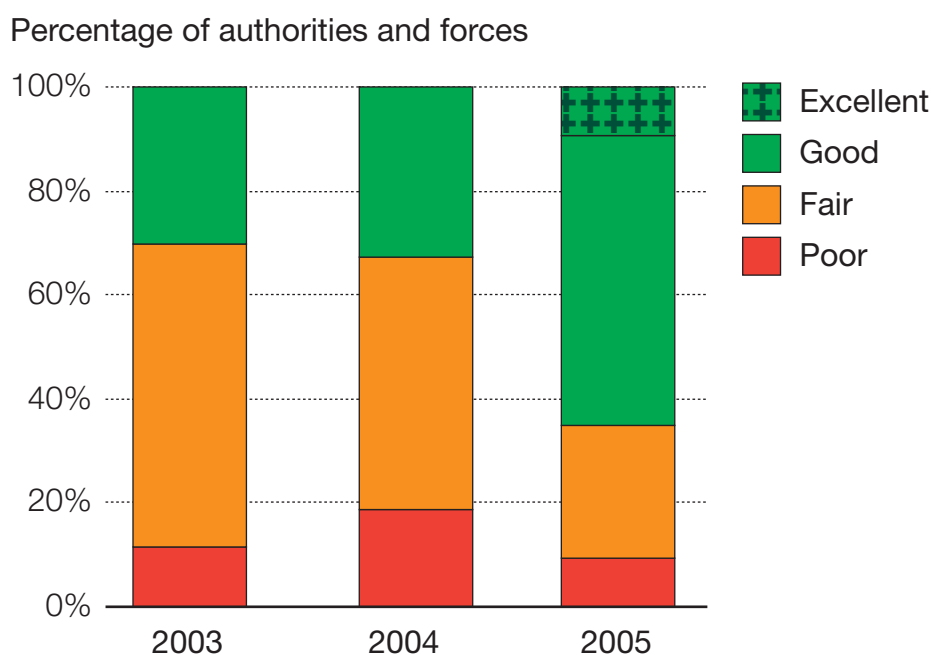
Source: Wales Audit Office

- 79 Some forces are awaiting the outcome of police force restructuring to press ahead with system upgrades. This should not prevent them from making short-term improvements while assessing wider developments. The criteria for decisions on which systems a new strategic force will adopt should include the extent to which they support data quality and good practice in crime and incident recording.
- 80 Where improved systems are introduced there are short-term challenges as processes are aligned to the new information technology. The risks of introducing a large new system need to be adequately managed and planned for by both force and police authority. Forces planning to merge will need clear criteria to decide which of the current crime systems to use in the restructured force, once a force-wide policy is in place.

The process for crime recording

- 81 There is an increase in the right first time approach, with only four forces now having poor processes (**Figure 20**). Improvements in process have been a significant factor in producing better data quality this year.

Figure 20
Process for crime recording



Source: Audit Commission

- 82 In general, good and excellent authorities demonstrate a right first time approach in their processes as in other management arrangements (**Box G**). This means they can take a risk-based approach to audit rather than having teams checking every record.

Box G

Good and excellent police authorities and forces:

- take a right first time approach to crime recording;
- adopt a risk-based approach to validating records;
- build in checks to processes to validate decision making;
- focus their process outward; and
- have processes supported by good systems.

Source: Audit Commission

- 83 Across England and Wales, different forces strike the balance between direct crime recording and officer attendance in different ways. Most forces directly record crime where an offence does not require an officer to attend. In the main this is through specially trained teams within the call handling centre, and some have identified units to deal with specific categories of crime, avoiding possible backlogs. For incidents and crimes that are more complex to record, such as domestic violence and racial incidents, fixed questions are used to ensure all appropriate information is gathered (**Case study 6**).
-

Case study 6

Lincolnshire: Process

Lincolnshire held a crime process review in 2005. As a result of the review the Force introduced a number of process improvements including:

- establishment of the Incident Resolution Team to investigate crimes over the telephone and record crimes directly onto the system while in contact with the victims, releasing patrol officer time to attend more urgent crimes;
- greater use of direct crime recording by the main central call handling unit;
- introduction of electronic crime reports that allow officers to complete and transmit forms to the central unit from any network computer; and
- the policies for crime and detection recording and crime screening and allocation were reviewed and simplified to improve allocation of resources.

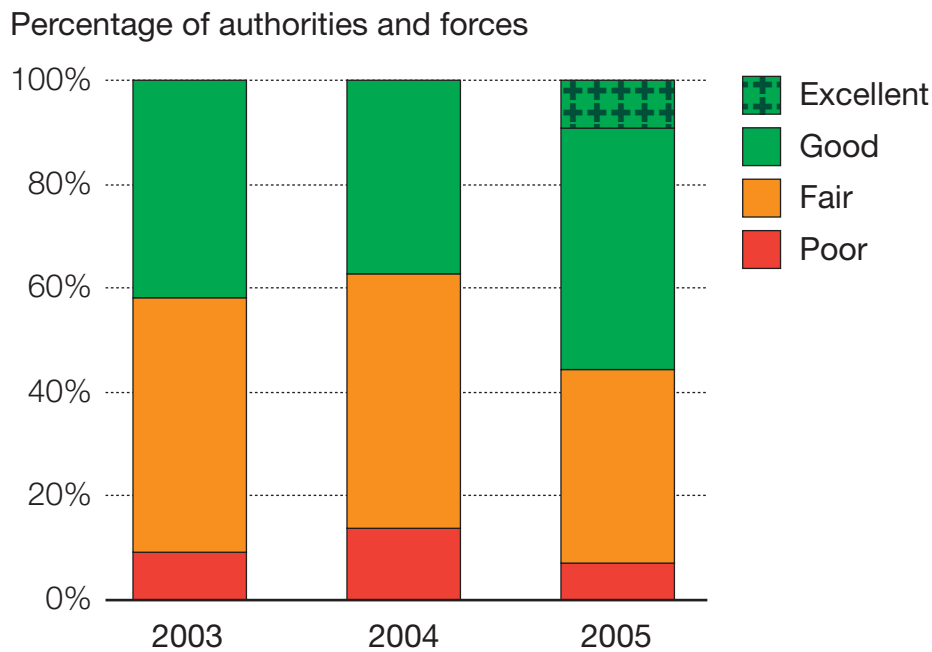
Source: Audit Commission

- 84 Weaker forces lack consistency of process across local police areas, sometimes as the result of the implementation of the introduction of new systems without adequate process planning. In a limited number of cases there are perverse incentives within processes; for example, targets to answer calls quickly are met at the expense of the quality of incident recording.
- 85 Weak systems can have consequences for processes, either leading to excessive checking or unnecessary delays in recording, for example calls put on hold from a central answering system to local control rooms.

Auditing arrangements, scrutiny and integrity

- 86 Proportionate audit and scrutiny are essential to enable a force and authority to know whether they record crime well, and where to target improvements in their processes and the capacity of their staff. Without a robust audit regime it is not possible to implement crime recording effectively. Audit programmes should be:
- comprehensive, covering all aspects of crime recording, all units and local areas;
 - proportionate to the evidence of performance on crime recording; and
 - focused on the key risks identified through corporate risk assessment processes.
- 87 In 2004 the audit and scrutiny arrangements at some forces seemed to have deteriorated. There was a lack of follow-up in some forces, and a few were concentrating audit work almost exclusively on data expected to be subject to external review. Our work this year, however, has shown that a majority of forces now have excellent or good arrangements in this area, although there are still three forces assessed as poor (**Figure 21**).
- 88 At good and excellent authorities and forces, the audit regime is risk-based and proportionate (**Box H**). Audit work is targeted at specific types of crime and police areas where the risk of error is high. Audit work adds value by creating training needs assessments for individual officers and staff, as well as reporting on team and unit performance (**Case study 7, overleaf**).

Figure 21
Auditing arrangements, scrutiny and integrity



Source: Audit Commission

Box H

Good and excellent police authorities and forces have:

- a proportionate, risk-based audit regime;
- audit that informs training plans for teams and individual officers;
- systems that facilitate audit, even in ‘real time’; and
- audit regimes that cover all aspects of crime recording, not just areas subject to Audit Commission review.

Source: Audit Commission

Case study 7

Sussex: Audit arrangements, scrutiny and integrity

Sussex aimed to improve the public's contact with the police and ensure high performance to victims of crime underpinned by excellent data quality. To meet these objectives the Force and Authority introduced a new centralised crime recording and investigation bureau (CRIB) to handle calls.

The Force managed the risks associated with this major change with appropriate scrutiny of crime recording. The Force set up crime management units staffed by crime recording and investigation assessors (CRIAs) to:

- improve the quality of investigations;
- improve the service to victims of crime; and
- improve the timeliness of reports being received by the investigating officer from victims.

The CRIAs, who are generally more experienced and knowledgeable than the call handling staff, can:

- electronically review crime files at any time to prevent delay in the investigation and avoid a loss of evidence;
- carry out risk-based dip checks of records to check compliance; and
- identify further lines of enquiry to ensure that all required action is complete and crime files are received for filing.

Audit processes, along with the success of the new crime bureau and information technology systems, are continuously reviewed to secure value for money for the Authority and Force.

The scrutiny process enabled Sussex to improve its data score from 2004 to 2005 while carrying out a major organisational change.

Source: Audit Commission

- 89 Audits are sensitive to the level of an individual user of the system, and can monitor how each meets his or her crime recording responsibilities. One review highlighted a force audit process integrated into its recording system. It enabled auditors to track the time taken by a named officer to record an incident as a crime or dispose of it. Both the

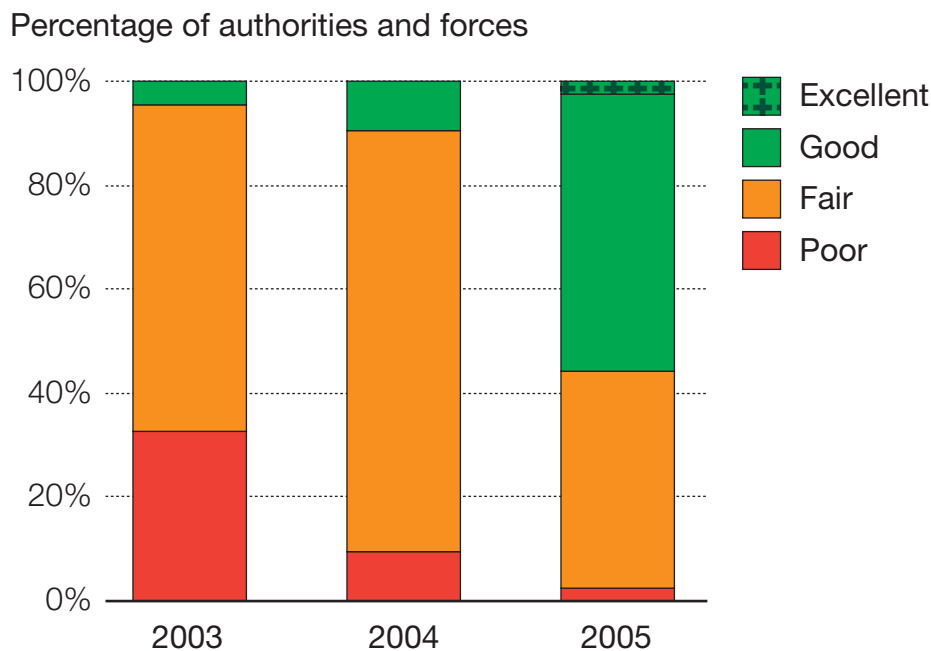
accuracy of recording and the contents of the calls are monitored by supervisors and peers to improve customer satisfaction.

- 90 In forces where compliance has slipped or not improved, one cause is a lack of audit to retain the focus on the importance of data quality and accurate crime recording. There is a risk to all forces that if demands are placed on the FCR or audit teams that divert attention away from undertaking risk-based reviews of crime recording, there may be an impact on accuracy.

Quality of service

- 91 The fundamental principle of the NCRS is that victims and witnesses should receive a consistent, fair standard of service, and that promises made by call handling staff are kept by officers. This is an aspect of crime recording that has improved very substantially over the last three years, although good practice is still not found everywhere (**Figure 22**).

Figure 22
Quality of service



Source: Audit Commission

92 In good and excellent forces (**Box I**):

- leaders emphasise the importance of victim focus within crime recording and this message is clearly heard by officers;
- contacting the police is simple for all potential callers; languages other than English are available, or Language Line is used, and Minicom systems are available for callers with hearing impairments (**Case study 8**); there is a policy of contacting the victims with updates before finalising a crime; and
- the diverse needs of people contacting the police are assessed through the results of user satisfaction surveys, complaint patterns and matching service user profiles to the demographics of the wider population, to understand potential areas of under-reporting.

Box I

In good and excellent police authorities and forces:

- leaders emphasise the importance of a victim focus;
- it is simple for all members of the public to contact the police; and
- action is taken on the basis of evidence from surveys to improve public satisfaction.

Source: Audit Commission

- 93** Satisfaction surveys give forces information about the experience of victims and witnesses contacting the police, including whether they have been dissuaded from reporting an incident. Good forces act on this information to rectify areas of weakness, taking into account the needs of those contacting the force.
- 94** Keeping in contact with the victim or witness is a key element in customer service. A number of forces that scored highly in this area contacted victims of crime, either by telephone or face-to-face, prior to closing an incident.

Case study 8

Cumbria: Quality of service and diversity

Leaders in Cumbria emphasise the importance of victim focus within NCRS compliance and this message is clearly heard by officers.

Cumbria sees diversity and equality as an important element of offering a quality service to victims and witnesses. Some of the Force's initiatives include anonymous reporting of incidents through the Cumbria gay website; use is made of Language Line for citizens whose first language is not English; and sign language training is being developed for enquiry office staff. The Force has a dedicated diversity officer and each BCU has an identified hate crime investigator within the child adult protection unit (CAPU) structure.

The percentage of victims of racist incidents satisfied with the service overall in 2003/04 stood at 90.5 per cent, placing Cumbria at the top of its MSF group (the group of forces facing demands broadly similar to those in Cumbria). Satisfaction levels across all customer service areas are above the MSF group average, and among the highest in England.

Source: Audit Commission

95 In weaker forces:

- officers fail to return calls, provide information or make follow-up visits as promised;
- the necessary systems, staff resources or processes are not in place to ensure that victims and witnesses can contact the police when they need to and receive an appropriate response, particularly at times of peak call demand; or
- required surveys are carried out, but the learning from them is neither fed into force or authority actions, nor into a database of the local demography of callers compared to crime to highlight the barriers to contacting the police.

96 Overall, forces need to balance the quality of service given to the public by officers attending incidents, with the potential delays experienced by victims if officer attendance at low-level crimes spreads their availability too thinly, so that they take a long time to arrive.

- 97 To offer a good quality of service to local people and to be successful in crime recording police authorities and forces do not need to focus on just one aspect, but rather bring together all their arrangements for crime recording into a coherent whole (**Case study 9**).

Case study 9

Northumbria: Building a culture of data quality

Northumbria has achieved high standards of ethical data quality that give confidence in the accuracy of its information to the public and operational officers. This high level of performance has not been achieved through single initiatives or by treating NCRS compliance as a separate objective. From the outset, the Force and Authority gave a strong commitment to good-quality data at a senior level. The FCR and his team attended to the detail of data quality and offered consistent messages to officers and staff. Consequently the Force provides a quality service to members of the public, especially the victims of crime.

Senior officers have ensured that systems and processes work well for crime recording and can be rapidly updated in line with new requirements. Commanders are held accountable for the quality of crime recording at BCU level where officers remain personally responsible for correctly closing incidents. The computer system gives numerous prompts for officers and supervisors which ensure the management of timely ethical crime recording. Non-compliant reports are returned to officers to correct so they get it right first time. The FCR's team link audit findings to individual officers' closure of incidents, so that training, performance management and support from NCRS champions are targeted accurately and effectively. Swift and effective crime recording means officers benefit from operational intelligence that is always up to date.

Very few incidents do not receive a prompt service both from call takers and uniformed officers and consequently the Force receives positive results from satisfaction surveys for incidents.

Officers demonstrate the discipline and rigour that is expected of them in Northumbria. They expressed the view in Commission focus groups that NCRS, rather than increasing their workload, allows them to demonstrate their performance.

Source: Audit Commission

- 98 Sound management arrangements for crime recording rest on the same foundations as other aspects of effective performance management which ensures the delivery of high-quality police services to local people. The most successful performers know this and are promoting these approaches within their CDRPs and CSPs to drive up the overall performance of all local community safety partners in order to build safer and stronger communities.

3

Next steps

- 99** High-quality data and accurate crime recording are the basis of good police performance management. Getting it right first time and in a way that puts the victim at the centre of the process is vital. It is essential that the activities and systems involved in the collection and analysis of data are straightforward and use a minimum of resource. The way to do this effectively is to ensure that underlying management arrangements work well to support a cost-effective approach to crime recording that not only complies with NCRS but is well understood by officers and staff.
- 100** Most authorities and forces have now largely adopted a right first time approach to crime recording, but there are still some forces undertaking high levels of checking to achieve their improved rating. This does not represent good use of resources and cannot be sustainable in the longer term. To maximise the benefit of investment in crime recording systems and processes, forces must secure long-term cultural change.
- 101** While there has been significant overall improvement in crime recording practices and the quality of crime data, room for further improvement remains. Police authorities can do more to provide leadership and support improvement within forces. By learning from the best performers and working together with forces, authorities can demonstrate to local people, to whom they are accountable, that they are placing a strong emphasis on high-quality crime recording.
- 102** This report comes at a time of potentially significant restructuring and modernisation across the police service. This should not be seen as a barrier to short-term improvement, but as a real opportunity to ensure that new and effective arrangements are in place as new strategic forces and authorities come on stream in 2008. The attention paid to public services at a neighbourhood level is increasing and for the citizen or user of public services, it is what matters most. During this period of change, the challenge for police authorities and forces will be to provide effective leadership, ensuring that there is a sustained focus and priority given to data quality.
- 103** The new strategic authorities and forces will need to draw upon the good practice of forces assessed as excellent and good and to draw lessons for improvement across force boundaries. In the longer term, the importance of accurate, reliable and timely crime recording data will continue to be critical to the success of any strategic authority in













































meeting central government targets, particularly on measuring the effectiveness of neighbourhood policing.











































- 104 A number of other developments are also likely to give data quality greater prominence. One of these is the further development of the PPAF. PPAF assessments already take account of the results of data quality reviews. In future it may be more difficult for a force that fails to achieve minimum data quality standards to receive a satisfactory assessment overall.
- 105 Consideration is also being given to the future of incident recording, which should be complementary to crime recording. Those authorities and forces that can sustain a good standard of crime recording should be well placed to record non-crime incidents and benefit from the greater clarity over boundaries between crimes and non-crimes that NSIR should bring.
- 106 The development of NSIR responds to a demand for information on incidents that impact on people without necessarily being crimes. It is important that information on incidents is captured because how safe people feel is not determined by the actual incidence of crime, but by other factors such as the prevalence of anti-social behaviour. The Audit Commission report *Neighbourhood Crime and Anti-social Behaviour* published in May 2006 (**Ref. 5**) draws attention to the growing demand for robust, accurate information accessible at a very local level. It highlights the need for agencies to share data covering areas smaller than a ward to plan and deliver targeted solutions.
- 107 The Statistics Commission report on crime statistics to be published in July 2006 will consider the scope for much more local use of available and potentially available data. CDRPs in England and CSPs in Wales are the key partnerships that will be using crime and incident data to address anti-social behaviour problems before they escalate into much more serious situations.
- 108 Local services are changing and public expectations are rising. Local partners are increasingly working together to meet complex needs, particularly in respect of community safety. In the future it is likely that a new area-based approach to performance of local public services will require a sharper focus on local priorities and on citizens' and service users' interests and will give local service providers more responsibility for managing their own performance.

- 109** Delivering neighbourhood policing and community safety well requires reliable, timely and accurate information to be brought together from police, councils, housing and health services and then shared to underpin local decision making about priorities and resources. This means that the same management arrangements and principles need to be in place to enable community safety outcomes to be assessed at a local level in future as are required now to ensure compliance with NCRS within police authorities and forces.
- 110** Under a potential future performance framework, rather than relying on routine annual assessment activity, auditors could place greater reliance on individual service providers' organisational accountability framework. This could be accompanied by specific programmes of audit activity focused on key service providers, including CDRPs and CSPs, which would be applied flexibly as needed according to the strength of local arrangements for ensuring high-quality information.
- 111** In the future, police performance in relation to community safety may no longer be assessed in isolation from the performance of other local bodies contributing to community safety. Although this may be some way off, the Commission and the Wales Audit Office are supporting public services now by helping them to develop data quality standards, based on recognised good practice, which could underpin arrangements to secure high-quality, reliable and timely data across all public services. This is critical if CDRP / CSP performance and outcomes are to be monitored and inspected in an effective and proportionate fashion in the future.
- 112** Over the last three years we have been encouraged to see the overall improvements in data quality in police authorities and forces. This advance has been made against a backdrop of significant change in the police service. As change continues, authorities and forces need to keep a strong focus on data quality secured by effective management arrangements. This will give them the accurate information needed to deliver community safety to local people in their neighbourhoods.
- 113** We would like to thank the police authorities and forces in England and Wales for their assistance to us and our auditors in carrying out this review. We hope that our findings help them to build further on the improvements made since 2003.

Appendix 1

Individual police authorities' results for data and management arrangements

Police authority	MA score	Data score
Avon and Somerset		
Bedfordshire		
Cambridgeshire		
Cheshire		
City of London		
Cleveland		
Cumbria		
Derbyshire		
Devon and Cornwall		
Dorset		
Durham		
Dyfed Powys		
Essex		
Gloucestershire		
Greater Manchester		
Gwent		
Hampshire		
Hertfordshire		
Humberside		
Kent County		
Lancashire		
Leicestershire		

Police authority	MA score	Data score
Lincolnshire		
Merseyside		
Metropolitan		
Norfolk		
North Wales		
North Yorkshire		
Northamptonshire		
Northumbria		
Nottinghamshire		
South Wales		
South Yorkshire		
Staffordshire		
Suffolk		
Surrey		
Sussex		
Thames Valley		
Warwickshire		
West Mercia		
West Midlands		
West Yorkshire		
Wiltshire		

Key

 Excellent  Good  Fair  Poor

Appendix 2

Individual police authorities' results for data

Police authority	2005 data score	Burglary	Criminal damage	Vehicle crime	Violent crime	Domestic violence	Racial incidents	Disturbance	Not a crime	Violent crime	Criminal damage	No crime
Avon and Somerset	F	E	P	F	F	F	F	F	G	P	P	P
Bedfordshire	E	E	E	E	G	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Cambridgeshire	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Cheshire	E	E	E	E	E	E	F	G	E	E	G	G
City of London	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	G	E	E	E	G
Cleveland	E	E	E	E	G	G	E	E	E	G	G	E
Cumbria	E	E	E	E	G	E	G	E	E	E	G	E
Derbyshire	E	E	E	E	F	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Devon and Cornwall	G	E	E	E	E	E	E	E		F	P	E
Dorset	G	E	G	E	G	E	F	E	G	E	F	G
Durham	G	E	G	E	F	F	F	G	G	E	E	E
Dyfed Powys	G	E	E	E	G	F	F	G	E	E	E	E
Essex	G	G	F	E	F	G	F	G	G	E	E	F
Gloucestershire	F	E	G	E	F	G	P	F	E	F	G	F
Greater Manchester	G	G	F	E	F	G	G	F	G	G	G	E
Gwent	F	E	G	G	F	F	F	P	G	E	E	F
Hampshire	F	G	F	G	P	P	P	P	G	P	P	P
Hertfordshire	E	E	E	E	E	G	G	E	G	F	G	P
Humberside	E	E	G	E	E	E	F	E	E	E	E	F
Kent County	E	E	E	E	G	E	G	G	E	E	E	E
Lancashire	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	G	E	E	E	E
Leicestershire	F	E	P	E	P	G	F	P	E	E	G	G

Police authority	2005 data score	Burglary	Criminal damage	Vehicle crime	Violent crime	Domestic violence	Racial incidents	Disturbance	Not a crime	Violent crime	Criminal damage	No crime
Lincolnshire	E	E	E	E	G	G	F	E	E	E	E	E
Merseyside	G	G	E	E	G	E	G	G	G	E	E	G
Metropolitan	G	G	F	G	F	G	F	F	E	E	G	G
Norfolk	G	E	E	E	F	G	G	G	E	F	E	F
North Wales	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	F	E	E	E	E
North Yorkshire	E	E	E	E	E	E	G	G	E	E	G	E
Northamptonshire	E	E	E	E	E	E	G	E	E	E	G	G
Northumbria	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Nottinghamshire	G	E	E	E	G	G	P	F	F	E	E	E
South Wales	G	G	F	E	F	F	F	P	G	E	E	E
South Yorkshire	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Staffordshire	F	E	E	E	G	G	E	G	F	P	P	P
Suffolk	E	E	G	E	G	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Surrey	F	E	F	G	G	E	E	G	E	P	F	P
Sussex	E	E	E	E	G	E	G	E	E	E	E	E
Thames Valley	F	G	E	E	P	F	P	F	G	F	F	G
Warwickshire	G	E	F	E	G	F	G	E	E	E	E	E
West Mercia	G	G	F	E	F	E	F	F	E	E	E	E
West Midlands	G	E	E	E	G	G	G	E	E	E	G	P
West Yorkshire	G	E	G	E	F	G	G	F	E	E	G	F
Wiltshire	E	E	E	E	E	E	F	E	E	E	E	E

Quality of incident records
by category of crime

Removal or
reclassification
of crime records

Appendix 3

Individual police authorities' results for management arrangements

Police authority	2005 MA score	MA category								
		Police authority	Leadership	Policy	Training	Resourcing	Systems	Process	Auditing	Quality of service
Avon and Somerset	P	F	P	F	P	F	P	P	P	F
Bedfordshire	G	F	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	F
Cambridgeshire	G	G	G	E	G	G	G	G	G	F
Cheshire	G	E	G	G	G	G	E	G	F	G
City of London	G	G	G	E	G	G	G	E	G	G
Cleveland	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
Cumbria	F	G	F	G	F	P	F	F	F	G
Derbyshire	G	G	G	G	G	G	F	G	G	G
Devon and Cornwall	G	G	G	G	F	F	G	G	G	G
Dorset	F	P	G	G	F	P	G	G	F	G
Durham	F	F	G	G	F	F	F	F	G	F
Dyfed Powys	G	G	G	G	G	F	G	G	F	G
Essex	F	F	F	F	F	F	P	F	P	F
Gloucestershire	F	F	F	F	P	G	F	F	F	F
Greater Manchester	G	E	E	G	E	F	G	G	E	F
Gwent	G	G	G	G	G	F	G	G	G	F
Hampshire	P	P	P	F	P	F	P	P	P	F
Hertfordshire	G	G	F	G	G	G	G	G	F	G
Humberside	G	E	F	G	F	F	G	G	F	F
Kent County	G	G	G	E	G	F	G	E	G	G
Lancashire	G	E	F	E	F	G	G	F	F	G
Leicestershire	F	F	F	G	F	G	F	F	G	G

Police authority	2005 MA score	MA category								
		Police authority	Leadership	Policy	Training	Resourcing	Systems	Process	Auditing	Quality of service
Lincolnshire	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G
Merseyside	G	G	E	G	G	G	F	G	G	G
Metropolitan	F	F	F	F	G	F	F	P	F	F
Norfolk	G	F	G	F	F	G	F	G	G	G
North Wales	G	G	G	E	G	G	G	E	E	G
North Yorkshire	G	G	E	G	G	G	G	G	F	G
Northamptonshire	F	F	F	G	F	F	F	F	F	P
Northumbria	E	G	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Nottinghamshire	F	G	G	F	F	F	F	F	G	F
South Wales	F	F	F	F	F	F	G	F	F	F
South Yorkshire	F	G	F	F	P	P	G	G	F	G
Staffordshire	G	G	G	G	G	G	F	G	F	G
Suffolk	G	F	G	G	G	G	F	G	G	F
Surrey	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	P	F	F
Sussex	G	G	E	G	F	F	F	F	E	F
Thames Valley	G	G	G	G	F	G	F	F	G	F
Warwickshire	G	G	G	G	G	F	F	G	G	G
West Mercia	G	G	F	G	G	G	G	G	F	G
West Midlands	G	F	G	G	F	F	G	G	G	G
West Yorkshire	G	G	E	E	E	G	G	G	G	G
Wiltshire	G	G	G	G	F	G	G	G	G	F

Appendix 4

Individual police authorities' direction of travel 2004 to 2005

Police authority	Management arrangements			Data quality				
	Direction of travel	2005	2004	2003	Direction of travel	2005	2004	2003
Avon and Somerset	↓	P	F	F	↔	F	F	P
Bedfordshire	↑	G	F	F	↑	E	G	F
Cambridgeshire	↑	G	F	F	↔	E	G	G
Cheshire	↑	G	F	F	↑	E	F	P
City of London	↔	G	G	F	↑	E	G	G
Cleveland	↑	G	P	F	↑	E	P	P
Cumbria	↑	F	P	F	↑	E	P	F
Derbyshire	↔	G	G	F	↔	E	G	G
Devon and Cornwall	↑	G	F	F	↔	G	G	G
Dorset	↓	F	G	F	↔	G	G	F
Durham	↑	F	P	P	↑	G	F	F
Dyfed Powys	↑	G	F	P	↑	G	F	P
Essex	↔	F	F	F	↔	G	G	F
Gloucestershire	↔	F	F	G	↔	F	F	G
Greater Manchester	↑	G	F	F	↑	G	F	P
Gwent	↑	G	F	F	↔	F	F	F
Hampshire	↓	P	F	P	↔	F	F	P
Hertfordshire	↑	G	F	F	↑	E	G	P
Humberside	↑	G	F	F	↔	E	G	F
Kent County	↑	G	F	F	↑	E	G	G
Lancashire	↑	G	F	F	↔	E	G	P
Leicestershire	↔	F	F	F	↓	F	G	G

Police authority	Management arrangements			Data quality				
	Direction of travel	2005	2004	2003	Direction of travel	2005	2004	2003
Lincolnshire	↔	G	G	F	↔	E	G	G
Merseyside	↑	G	F	F	↔	G	G	P
Metropolitan	↑	F	P	F	↑	G	P	F
Norfolk	↑	G	F	F	↑	G	F	P
North Wales	↔	G	G	G	↔	E	G	G
North Yorkshire	↔	G	G	P	↔	E	G	P
Northamptonshire	↔	F	F	F	↑	E	F	F
Northumbria	↑	E	G	F	↔	E	G	G
Nottinghamshire	↑	F	P	F	↑	G	F	F
South Wales	↑	F	P	G	↑	G	F	F
South Yorkshire	↑	F	P	P	↑	E	P	P
Staffordshire	↑	G	F	G	↓	F	G	G
Suffolk	↑	G	F	F	↑	E	G	P
Surrey	↔	F	F	F	↓	F	G	F
Sussex	↑	G	F	P	↑	E	F	P
Thames Valley	↑	G	F	F	↓	F	G	F
Warwickshire	↑	G	F	P	↔	G	G	F
West Mercia	↑	G	G	F	↔	G	G	G
West Midlands	↑	G	F	F	↑	G	F	F
West Yorkshire	↑	G	F	F	↑	G	F	P
Wiltshire	↑	G	F	F	↑	E	G	P

Note: Authorities with 95 per cent compliant records or above in 2004 and 2005 have a direction of travel statement of sustained.

Glossary

ACPO

The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) develops policy on behalf of all police forces. ACPO's members include chief constables, deputy chief constables, assistant chief constables or their equivalents in the 43 police forces of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, national police agencies and certain other forces in the UK, Isle of Man and Channel Islands plus senior non-police staff.

(www.acpo.police.uk)

BCS

The British Crime Survey measures the amount of crime in England and Wales by asking people about crimes they have experienced in the previous year. The BCS includes crimes that are not reported to the police, so it is an important alternative to police records.

(www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/bcs1.html)

BCU

Basic command units cover over 300 geographically defined areas in England and Wales, variously named as districts, areas, operational command units and divisions. Varying in size between 100 to 1,000 officers and covering densely populated, ethnically diverse inner cities or vast tracts of sparsely populated countryside.

(HMIC, *Going Local – the BCU Inspection Handbook*, Home Office – <http://inspectors.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/docs/going-local/going-local-3-handbook.pdf>)

CDRP / CSP

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 created 376 crime and disorder reduction partnerships to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in every council area. The Act requires local agencies to work together, and states that councils and the police shoulder the prime responsibility to deliver improvements. The Local Government Act 2000 extended this responsibility by requiring councils to provide for the social, economic and environmental well-being of communities. The CDRPs in Wales are named community safety partnerships.

(Audit Commission, *Community Safety Partnerships – Learning from Audit, Inspection and Research*, Audit Commission)

HMIC

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary is charged with examining and improving the efficiency of the Police Service in England and Wales, through inspection of police organisations and functions to ensure that:

- agreed standards are achieved and maintained;
- good practice is spread; and
- performance is improved.

HMIC also provides advice and support to the Home Secretary, police authorities and forces, and plays an important role in the development of future leaders.

(inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/)

HOCR

The Home Office Counting Rules for the counting and classifying of notifiable offences recorded by the 43 police forces of England and Wales. The rules incorporate the National Crime Recording Standard.

(www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/countrules.html)

MSF (most similar forces)

The Home Office compares forces which are similar to each other (peer comparison). This means that for each force a list of other forces that are the most similar to it has been identified. Decisions on which forces are the most similar to each other are made using a range of geographic, demographic, and socio-economic information. As a result, there are 43 'most similar groups': one for each force.

In most cases, where assessments are made on delivery, this is achieved by comparing the performance of a force to the average performance of its most similar group.

(<http://police.homeoffice.gov.uk/performance-and-measurement/performance-assessment/faqs/>)

NCRS

The National Crime Recording Standard aims to:

- promote greater consistency between police forces in the recording of crime; and
- take a more victim-oriented approach to crime recording.

(www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/countrules.html)

‘No crimes’

A crime once recorded should be classified as a ‘no crime’ if one of the following criteria are satisfied:

- The crime was committed outside the jurisdiction of the police force in which it was recorded (crimes committed within the jurisdiction of another police force area should be referred to the respective force).
- Where, following the report of an incident which has subsequently been recorded as a crime, additional verifiable information is available which determines that no notifiable crime has been committed.
- If the crime, as alleged, constitutes part of a crime already recorded.
- If the reported incident was recorded as a crime in error.

No crimes relate to crimes already recorded, and are therefore distinct from incident reports that are not crimed.

(www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/countrules.html)

NSIR

The principal aim of the National Standard for Incident Recording is to ensure that all appropriate incidents, be they crime or non-crime, are recorded by police in a consistent and accurate manner, so as to allow resulting data to be used at a local and national level to meet the management and performance information needs of all stakeholders.

(Police and Crime Standards Directorate, Home Office – www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

PCSD

The Police and Crime Standards Directorate of the Home Office, formally the Police Standards Unit, focuses on measuring and comparing BCU and CDRP performance, understanding the underlying causes of performance variations, identifying and disseminating good practice and supporting forces needing assistance.

(www.homeoffice.gov.uk)

PPAF

The police performance assessment framework is an effective and fair way of measuring, comparing and assessing strategic performance in policing across the full range of policing responsibilities for all forces in England and Wales. PPAF focuses on force and BCU performance.

(police.homeoffice.gov.uk/performance-and-measurement/performance-assessment)

Recorded crimes

All incident reports whether from victims, witnesses or third parties and whether crime-related or not, will result in the registration of an incident report by the police. Following initial registration, an incident will be recorded as a crime (a notifiable offence) if on the balance of probability:

- the circumstances as reported amount to a crime defined by law (the police will determine this, based on their knowledge of the law and counting rules); and
- there is no credible evidence to the contrary.

(www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/countrules.html)

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