

From: Ann Barnes, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner
To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel
Subject: Violent Crime
Item & Date: Item B4 14 April 2015

Executive summary: Under the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, Commissioners are required to hold their Chief Constable to account for performance on behalf of local people, but must not fetter their operational independence.

In Kent, formal accountability is through the Commissioner's Governance Board, regular reviews of performance data and senior PCC staff attending Force performance meetings. However, this is complemented by weekly meetings between the Commissioner and Chief Constable, regular liaison between senior PCC staff and chief officers and bespoke briefings by the Force. The Commissioner also receives regular objective performance assessments from HMIC.

Recently published crime figures showed a 31% increase in violence against the person offences in Kent (16% nationally). Analysis indicates a large proportion of this is because the time periods used represent different stages in the Forces journey to improve crime recording accuracy following a critical inspection. HMIC acknowledge that a true performance comparison will not be available until the comparison is like for like in terms of recording accuracy.

The first HMIC national inspection of crime recording accuracy was conducted in 2014. For Kent, this was actually the third inspection and found a 96% accuracy rate, with HMIC concluding that the people of Kent could have confidence in the crime figures. However, HMIC found varying degrees of accuracy ranging from 60% upwards and estimated one in five offences that should have been recorded as crimes were not. For a number of forces therefore, the journey to improve crime recording accuracy has just begun.

Holding Kent Police to account:

1. The governance for policing is set out in the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011. Police and Crime Commissioners are required to hold their Chief Constable to account for the effectiveness and efficiency of their force, including performance against the priorities within the Police and Crime Plan.
2. However, Commissioners must also not fetter the operational independence of the police force or Chief Constable. Therefore, holding to account requires Commissioners to develop proportionate, balanced and sustainable structures/processes.
3. Kent Police is clear that success is a reduction in recorded crime levels, and as outlined above, on behalf of the public the Commissioner holds the Chief Constable to account for delivery.
4. The Commissioner achieves this through both formal governance structures and informal processes, such as ad-hoc discussions with the Chief Constable and/or other senior officers.

5. In terms of formal accountability, the Governance Board enables the Commissioner to shine a light on areas of policing that she has concerns about and to hold the Chief Constable to account in a public forum.
6. Force performance, including levels of recorded crime, has been a standing agenda item since the inception of the Governance Board. Supported by a paper from the Chief Constable, this item provides an overview of latest performance and enables the Commissioner to challenge and probe issues of concern, but equally acknowledge and celebrate success.
7. Importantly, whilst performance is a standing agenda item, this does not prevent the Commissioner also requesting specific performance related items or receiving updates from thematic reviews. It also does not prevent the Commissioner reviewing performance via an alternative format – for example, at the last Governance Board (25 February 2015) the Force gave an in-depth presentation.
8. The Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner receives and reviews performance data on a regular basis and senior PCC staff attend a range of Force performance meetings. This includes the two-monthly Performance Management Committee which is chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable, has senior representation from across the Force and focuses on understanding and improving performance.
9. All of this is complemented by weekly meetings between the Commissioner and Chief Constable to discuss policing issues as well as regular liaison between senior PCC staff and chief officers on general and specific matters. The Commissioner can also request bespoke briefings from the Force; recent examples include Serious and Organised Crime and Integrated Offender Management.
10. In addition, the Commissioner receives regular objective performance assessments from HMIC, and where necessary, the Commissioner can commission HMIC to conduct inspections into any aspect of Force performance. This happened in relation to Kent's crime recording accuracy, leading to significant improvements locally and also precipitating the national HMIC inspection into recording practices (see below).

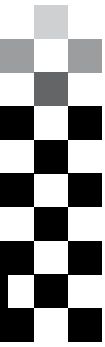
Violent crime in Kent:

11. The Crime in England and Wales quarterly publication is produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in partnership with the Home Office. The most recent publication was released on 22 January 2015 and compared recorded crime figures for the 12 month period to September 2014 with the 12 month period to September 2013.
12. As stated by the Vice Chair of the Panel at the last meeting, this publication showed a 31% increase in violence against the person offences in Kent compared to a 16% increase nationally.
13. At face value, this of course appears to be of concern. However, whilst the Force is not complacent, it is agreed and accepted that the majority of the increase is due to improved crime recording practices, underpinned by a significant change in organisational culture.

14. Following Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) initial inspection into crime recording accuracy in Kent commissioned by the PCC (published June 2013), the Force implemented a comprehensive action plan to ensure the public of Kent could have greater confidence in the crime figures.
15. In addition to restructuring the crime recording process, the Chief Constable supported by the Commissioner commenced a significant culture change programme – from an organisation numerically based to one focused on 'doing the right thing'.
16. A subsequent follow up interim HMIC inspection of Kent Police (published January 2014) found the accuracy rate had increased by 6 percentage points (90-96%).
17. Analysis indicates a large proportion of the 31% increase in violence against the person offences is due to the two time periods not being comparable. The 12 month period to September 2013 was largely prior to changes being implemented to improve crime recording accuracy. The 12 month period to September 2014 includes a number of months post restructuring of the crime recording process and commencement of the culture change programme – as a result, the force recorded more offences.
18. Corroborating this, projections based on provisional data indicate the next ONS publication will show a smaller increase. HMIC also recently stated that Force performance is improving and acknowledged that a true performance comparison will not be available until the 12 month period to June 2015 data, when year on year comparison will be like for like in terms of recording accuracy.
19. However, other factors contributing to the increase include a 9% rise in domestic abuse incidents due to a campaign encouraging victims to come forward and police officers actively seeking and recording historic offences. Both the Commissioner and Chief Constable welcome this as it indicates victims feel more confident to report incidents and officers are 'doing the right thing'.
20. There is no complacency though. Kent Police continues to work tirelessly with partners to reduce crime, protect the public from harm and provide a first class service to the communities of Kent.

Crime recording accuracy – national picture:

21. During 2014, as part of an inquiry by the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) into crime statistics, allegations of under recording of crime by the police were made. As a result, HMIC carried out their first national inspection of crime data integrity.
22. HMIC concluded that across England and Wales an estimated one in five offences that should have been recorded as crimes were not. They also found that the greatest levels of under recording were in violence against the person offences (33%) and sexual offences (26%) – although there were considerable variations across different offence types.
23. For Kent Police, the national inspection was the third in relation to crime recording and was intended to provide both HMIC and the Commissioner with reassurance that improvements had been sustained since the initial and interim reports. HMIC found the Force had maintained a 96% accuracy rate and concluded that the people of Kent could have confidence in the crime figures.



24. However, the same could not be said for a number of other forces - HMIC found varying degrees of accuracy ranging from 60% upwards. It should therefore be recognised that there isn't a level playing field in terms of crime recording accuracy and this will be reflected in published crime figures for many months to come.
25. In addition to Kent, the most recent ONS publication showed 40 other forces had experienced an increase in violence against the person, with the highest being 38%. For a number of these forces, the journey to improve crime recording accuracy has just begun.
26. HMIC will continue to monitor the accuracy of crime recording through their annual all-force inspection programme known as PEEL (Police Efficiency, Effectiveness and Legitimacy).

