

From: Ann Barnes, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner
To: Kent and Medway Police and Crime Panel
Subject: Overall crime performance (including violent crime): July 2014 – June 2015
Item & Date: Item B1 22 September 2015

Executive summary: Performance is not about data, it's about providing a quality service to victims and to deliver this the police must record crime accurately in the first place. At the request of the Commissioner, HMIC conducted an in-depth inspection of crime recording accuracy and found that only 90% of crimes were being recorded. Subsequently, the Force reviewed its processes and embarked on a culture change programme. As a result, the rate increased to 96% - a level that has continued to be maintained to this day.

Improving recording accuracy resulted in the Force seeing an increase in recorded crime and rendered comparisons with previous years unreliable. Therefore, the period July 2014 to June 2015 is significant in that when compared to the same period in 2013/14 it represents the first like for like comparison at 96% accuracy. Importantly, it shows total victims in the county have fallen by more than 1,500 and there were 1,000 fewer victims of burglary dwelling.

The increase in recorded crime experienced by the Force resulted in it being an outlier nationally. Importantly though, a subsequent national HMIC inspection of recording accuracy found that across England and Wales only 81% of crimes were being recorded accurately, with forces ranging from 60% upwards. As a result, HMIC made several significant recommendations and many forces have started on the journey to improve recording accuracy – something that is likely to lead to them also seeing increases in crime for many months, if not years to come. Having achieved and maintained 96% accuracy, Kent's performance is now steadily improving nationally.

The Force is still not complacent though and continues to work tirelessly to reduce crime and provide a quality service to victims and communities across Kent. Nationally, the difficulty facing HMIC is that it is practically impossible to compare the performance of forces without having first established consistent crime recording standards and levels of accuracy.

Introduction:

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 Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan.
2. However, Commissioners must not fetter the operational independence of the police force or the Chief Constable. Therefore, holding to account requires Commissioners to develop proportionate, balanced and sustainable structures/processes.
3. The Home Secretary has stated that the police have only one target, to reduce crime. However, performance is not about data, it's about victims. The only way to ensure a victim receives a quality service is by making sure their crime is recorded accurately and subsequently investigated appropriately.

Holding Kent Police to account:

4. On behalf of the public, the Commissioner holds the Chief Constable to account for Force performance through both formal and informal governance structures and processes.
5. In terms of formal accountability, the Governance Board enables the Commissioner to hold the Chief Constable to account in a public forum and to shine a light on aspects of policing, or areas where the Commissioner feels the public has a right to be informed.
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 (e.g. victim focused policing at the June 2015 Governance Board) or receiving updates from both internal and external thematic reviews – for example from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC). It also does not prevent the Commissioner reviewing performance via alternative formats, including in-depth presentations such as that provided by the Force at the February 2015 Governance Board.
8. On a regular basis, the Office of the Commissioner receives and reviews a range of performance information that assists in identifying areas the Commissioner may wish to explore further, either directly with the Chief Constable or at a future Governance Board. In addition, on behalf of the Commissioner, senior PCC staff attend a range of Force performance meetings including the two-monthly Performance Management Committee which is chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable, is entirely focused on understanding and improving performance and has senior representation from across the Force.
9. All of this is complemented by formal 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 Restorative Justice and stop and search.
10. In addition, the Commissioner receives regular objective assessments from HMIC, with recommendations being recorded and acted upon with the Deputy Chief Constable's oversight. Where necessary, the Commissioner can also ask HMIC to conduct inspections into any aspect of performance, as happened in relation to Kent's crime recording accuracy, leading to significant improvements locally and precipitating a national inspection into recording practices (see below).

Crime recording accuracy:

11. In 2013, concerns were raised regarding the accuracy of crime recording in Kent and the Commissioner asked HMIC to conduct an inspection. The resulting report, published in June 2013, highlighted that 90% of crimes were being recorded; or put another way, one in ten crimes were not being recorded.

12. Subsequently, from July 2013 Kent Police implemented a comprehensive action plan to ensure the public could have greater confidence in crime recording. In addition to restructuring the crime recording process, with the Commissioner's support the Chief Constable commenced a significant culture change programme – from an organisation focused on targets and 'red and green' numbers to an organisation focused on victims and 'doing the right thing'. HMIC's follow-up inspection found that crime recording accuracy had increased to around 96%.
13. However, the improvement from 90% to 96% accuracy resulted in the Force seeing an increase in the number of crimes being recorded from July 2013. It also meant that any comparison with data from previous years was unreliable due to the change in accuracy level. For example, recorded crime peaked at an 11.3% increase when 12 months data to June 2013 (at 90%) was compared with 12 months data to June 2014 (at 96%). The first true performance comparison would not therefore be available until July 2014 onwards.
14. As a result of the lack of comparable data, the Force Analysts were tasked with projecting the levels of crime. They accurately predicted that the change in recorded crime would be +/-1% based on the first true comparison of 12 months data – July 2013 to June 2014 compared with July 2014 to June 2015.
15. Subsequently, this projection was endorsed by HMIC who also stated that a true comparison of crime levels would not be available until 12 month period to June 2015, when the year on year comparison would be like for like in terms of recording accuracy.

July 2014 to June 2015 performance:

16. The relevance of this period, as outlined above, is that it represents the first true comparison in terms of recording accuracy. As a result it provides the first reliable indication of Force performance following improvements to crime recording and embarking on the culture change programme.
17. The table below compares July 2014 to June 2015 recorded crime with July 2013 to June 2014 for recorded crime and the sub-categories of violence against the person, sexual offences, burglary dwelling, vehicle crime and criminal damage.

	Total offences: July 2013 - June 2014	Total offences: July 2014 - June 2015	Number change	% Change
Recorded crime	103,178	101,665	-1,513	-1.5%
• Violence against the person	27,747	29,327	+1,580	+5.7%
• Sexual offences	2,447	2,730	+283	+11.6%
• Burglary dwelling	6,011	4,992	-1,019	-17.0%
• Vehicle crime	9,509	8,820	-689	-7.2%
• Criminal damage	18,285	17,900	-385	-2.1

18. As can be seen in the table, total recorded crime has reduced by 1.5%, meaning there were actually 1,513 fewer victims of crime in the county. Also of note is that:
- burglary dwelling fell by 17.0% (1,019 fewer victims);
 - vehicle crime fell by 7.2% (689 fewer victims); and
 - criminal damage fell by 2.1% (385 fewer victims).
19. Whilst there has been an increase in violence against the person (+5.7%) and sexual offences (+11.6%), the rate of increase in these two crime types has continued to fall (see paragraph 21).
20. Within violence against the person, the Force experienced an increase in low level violence involving no injury and also in the reporting of historical domestic abuse. Similarly, the increase in sexual offences is also linked to an increase in reports of domestic abuse which are often sexual in nature, as well as media coverage around child sexual exploitation, including Operation Yewtree and the so-called 'Savile' effect. The Commissioner and Chief Constable welcome this as it indicates victims of domestic abuse and sexual offences feel more confident to report incidents to Kent Police and that officers are recording accurately and 'doing the right thing' for victims.
21. Members were informed at the April 2015 Panel meeting that violence against the person in Kent was showing an increase of 31%, primarily due to the two time periods not being comparable in terms of recording accuracy (October 2012 to September 2013 compared with October 2013 to September 2014). Clearly, the true data comparison above shows that the increase is now just 5.7% - a significant improvement.

Crime recording accuracy – national picture:

22. During 2014, as part of an inquiry by the Public Administration Select Committee (PASC) into crime statistics, at which the Commissioner and Chief Constable both gave evidence, 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.
23. HMIC concluded that across England and Wales 81% of crimes were being recorded - an estimated one in five offences (19%) were not. This finding should be considered in the context of Kent's first HMIC inspection, when a crime recording accuracy rate of 90% was widely considered unacceptable.
24. HMIC 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. The final HMIC report outlined several recommendations to strengthen recording practices including improved training for those involved in crime recording, better auditing and tightening of recording processes.
25. Subsequently, HMIC inspected the crime recording process in each force. For Kent Police, this was the third inspection within eighteen months and was intended to provide the Commissioner and HMIC with reassurance that the improvements had been sustained. HMIC found the Force had maintained a 96% accuracy rate – one of the highest nationally - and concluded that the people of Kent could continue to have confidence in the crime figures.

26. However, HMIC found varying degrees of accuracy ranging from 60% upwards – four out of every ten crimes nationally not being recorded. It should therefore be recognised that in terms of recording accuracy, there isn't a level playing field and this will continue to impact on published crime figures for many months, if not years to come.
27. This issue resulted in crime data published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) no longer meeting the required standard and its designation as a National Statistic being removed. It is also acknowledged by the ONS in their Crime in England and Wales publication which states 'apparent increases in police force area data may reflect a number of factors including tightening of recording practice, increases in reporting by victims and also genuine increases in the levels of crime'.
28. The most recent Crime in England and Wales publication released on 16 July 2015 compares recorded crime data for April 2013 to March 2014 with April 2014 to March 2015. The following table illustrates how Kent's performance has improved in the national context, as the data has become more comparable and other forces have started on the journey to improve their crime recording accuracy.

	April 2013 – March 2014			April 2014 – March 2015		
	Kent		England & Wales: average % change	Kent		England & Wales: average % change
	% change compared to previous year	National ranking based on % change ¹		% change compared to previous year	National ranking based on % change ¹	
Recorded crime	10%	43/43	-1%	3%	23/43	2%
<i>Violence against the person</i>	36%	43/43	6%	11%	8/43	23%
<i>Sexual offences</i>	56%	41/43	20%	18%	6/43	37%
<i>Burglary dwelling</i>	-1%	30/43	-7%	-14%	7/43	-7%

¹ National ranking based on % change: 1 = Best performer 43 = Worst performer

29. Due to the difficulties in comparing national data, it is impossible to comment on whether those forces perceived as performing better than Kent in the period April 2014 to March 2015 have adopted the same rigid approach to data accuracy.
30. For presentational purposes, the graphs attached at Appendix A evidence the journey that Kent Police has been on. They clearly illustrate that as at July 2014, the Force is on the far right (second highest increase in recorded crime nationally) and as at July 2015, the Force is on the far left (third lowest increase nationally).

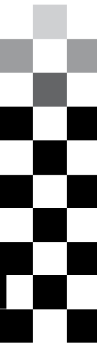
31. Whilst recognising that it falls outside the parameters of this report, data for the most recent period (September 2013 to August 2014 compared with September 2014 to August 2015) shows:

- **total recorded crime has reduced by 1.5% (1,500 fewer victims);**
- **burglary dwelling has reduced by 17.6% (1,041 fewer victims);**
- **vehicle crime has reduced by 8.2% (779 fewer victims); and**
- **criminal damage has reduced by 1.7% (307 fewer victims).**

It also shows that violence against the person has increased by 7.3% (+2,055) and sexual offences by 16.9% (+412). However, as outlined at paragraph 20, primarily this is due to increases in low level violence and increased reporting of domestic abuse and sexual offences – the latter two indicating that victims feel more confident to report incidents and officers are 'doing the right thing'.

32. There is no complacency though and the Force continues to work tirelessly with partners to reduce crime, protect the public from harm and provide a quality service to victims and communities across Kent. Coupled with an appeals process for victims, the Commissioner also continues to ensure the Force maintains a high level of accuracy (96%+) through on-going review and challenge of internal audits.

33. The accuracy of crime recording throws up a fundamental challenge for HMIC and the way it compares performance across forces, since it relies on recorded crime data as its starting point. The difficulty currently facing HMIC is that it is practically impossible to compare like for like performance without having first established consistent crime recording standards and levels of accuracy.



Appendix A

