

Audit	Volume Crime Investigations
Assurance Opinion	Limited Assurance
Overall Risk	High Risk

Introduction

In March 2017, The HMIC (now HMICFRS) reported their findings in respect of the PEEL: Police Effectiveness inspection.

The conclusion noted that Humberside Police requires improvement in how it keeps people safe and reduces crime. This was the same conclusion as the previous inspection which also judged the force to require improvement. The report went on to say: 'The force does not consistently identify vulnerable people and its response to victims needing urgent help is sometime unacceptably delayed. Its investigation of crime also requires improvement. Victims receive a good service from specialist investigators, but other investigations are inconsistent. In contrast, the force works well with other organisations to prevent crime, tackles serious and organised crime effectively and it is well prepared to address nationally identified threats.

DCC Rowley commissioned Internal Audit to provide assurance regarding progress against improvement actions, particularly in relation to vulnerability and the investigation of volume crime. As some of the areas within the scope of the audit were considered to require policing expertise, DCC Rowley also commissioned the support of the regional team to provide assistance to the auditor.

The audit was scoped into two specific areas, with the vulnerability aspect covered and reported earlier in 2018. As noted below, improvement actions were ongoing at the time the audit was commissioned and the coverage of volume crime has recently been completed and the findings and conclusions covered later in this report.

Main Findings

Improvement Action Plan

An Improving Investigations and Offender Management Working Group was developed which was designed to identify and implement improvement actions across investigations and offender management, particularly to address the weaknesses raised during the HMICFRS inspections.

The action plan includes improvements across key areas such as:

- Investigative resource, including deployment of 50 additional investigators and additional supervision.
- Training, including a Training Needs Assessment and liaison with College of Policing regarding current training and development approach
- Allocation process, review of current approach to develop more effective allocation
- Supervision, review of arrangements to effect improved supervision of investigations
- Suspect/offender management (this is covered in more detail by separate review being undertaken by Internal Audit)
- Communications/briefings, particularly in relation to effective use of intelligence
- Technology, improved capability and utilisation of technology to impact on more efficient and effective investigation process
- Crime Data Integrity, particularly in relation to crime recording, use of CONNECT and data quality aspects
- Audit/assurance process, including commissioning of internal review team as well as ongoing supervisory 'dip-sampling' process

Each improvement action has a relevant action owner and though no specific due dates are noted, regular updates are provided in advance of the bi-monthly meetings and there is evidence of clear progress against the agreed actions. Though comprehensive, the action plan does not currently benefit from clarity regarding the priority of agreed actions, any recognition of interdependence of other ongoing or agreed actions.

Force Management Statement

The FMS drafted earlier in 2018 outlined Humberside Police commitment to making the necessary improvements to system and processes to provide the highest possible standards of investigation. Various sections within the FMS set out the significant amount of change and the measures in place to evaluate the impact of those changes.

Internal Improvement Assurance Processes

Monthly Inspector Dip-samples

To provide assurance that the improvement actions implemented across the force as a result of working group activity are achieving the desired results, inspectors are required to undertake monthly dip-samples and test for compliance against key criteria including: Home Office Crime Recording (HOCR), Victim Code, Up to date investigation & safeguarding plans, correct suspect status, up to date supervisor reviews & indicators in respect of child victim or witness.

Business Change – Internal Review Team

Additionally, the Force internal review team had also been commissioned to undertake audits in key thematic areas which cut across investigations. Some of these thematic areas include Domestic Abuse and Violent Crime, both reported in June 2018.

Internal Audit testing

The auditor, assisted by two Regional Officers (DCI Ops Lead – UCOL & T/DCI Director of Intelligence) undertook sample testing of 30 crimes opened and completed since April 2018. Testing included assessment of the following:

- Evidence of bespoke investigation plan, including consideration of vulnerability
- Timeliness of investigation plan
- Evidence that golden hour principle was considered
- Evidence of regular, meaningful updates on CONNECT
- Bespoke VCC
- Evidence that CONNECT victim was used
- Regular victim updates and victim informed of outcome
- Appropriate supervisor reviews

In summary, there were some good examples of good quality, timely and well supervised investigations with appropriate victim contact and communication. However, it is a matter of concern that in the majority of the cases where there were apparent weaknesses, such as delay or lack of investigation plan, lack of effective supervision and/or poor victim contact, these failures occurred in cases which involved vulnerable victims and/or witnesses. Some of the better examples related to apparently less complex, standard investigations such as shoplifting.

Use of technology – securing of evidence

HMICFRS particularly expressed concerns regarding the use of technology at the force in relation to investigations, particularly in supporting the securing of evidence. As a result, Internal Audit considered the arrangements in place at the force to enhance digital capabilities, particularly where these developments might impact on investigations and victim care. Generally, the auditor is satisfied that the Force is making good progress in respect of enhancement of digital capabilities. The Digital Board, chaired by the DCC, provides good assurance that key activities in this area will be appropriately governed and necessary improvements are implemented.

Conclusion

As a result of the audit findings, whilst recognising that there is evidence of improvement, there is limited assurance at this time that the Force has effective processes in place to ensure that investigations are managed effectively, particularly where vulnerabilities are identified. It is acknowledged that the availability of detective resource is a national issue, combined with a consistent increase in demand, which is impacting on the quality and timeliness of investigations across all Forces. However, following two previous critical HMICFRS inspection opinions in this area, it is vital that the Force continues to make progress in order to demonstrate significant improvement.

Recommendations and Management Action

Nine recommendations were made, eight of which were significant, including:

- Regular 'dip-sampling' should continue with reports provided to D/Supt to demonstrate relevant and timely improvement. Where relevant, findings should be presented with context, identifying any particular areas of concern (for example, geographical area, crime type, victim type, etc).
- Where relevant, the 'dip-sampling' results should be supported by a summary identifying what remedial action is being implemented locally to improve the quality and timeliness of investigations.
- There should be an agreed escalation process/senior management intervention where agreed improvement levels are not being achieved.
- The internal review team might consider opportunities to develop the reporting and presentation of their findings, including an agreed Terms of Reference (including audit sponsor), where relevant, findings should be presented with context, setting out any particular areas of concern (for example, geographical area, crime type, victim type, etc), inclusion of overall opinion or direction of travel to enhance the impact of the report and the inclusion of a formal agreed action plan which incorporates recommendations from the audit review, user/management responses and agreed action owner/implementation date.
- Along with the findings and outcomes of the ongoing monthly Inspector dip-sampling and the recent internal reviews, senior management should consider the findings of this audit to better align and prioritise actions to further support improvements in investigations. Particularly, the Force should consider the process for allocation and investigation to ensure the process is timely, appropriately triaged and ongoing THRIVE assessment and that vulnerabilities are appropriately considered throughout the course of any subsequent investigation.
- Along with the findings and outcomes of the ongoing monthly Inspector dip-sampling and the recent internal reviews, senior management should consider the findings of this audit to better align and prioritise actions to further support improvements in investigations. This should include, but not be limited to the evidencing of effective and timely supervision, the completion of quality, effective and timely investigation plans and the evidencing of appropriate victim contact.
- The Force should continue to identify and address the reasons for being an outlier in the use of Outcome 16. This should include consideration of the findings of the inspector 'dip-sampling', internal reviews and other assurance processes, to ensure that the risk of victim disengagement as a result of poor investigation, HP inactivity or lack of appropriate victim contact/care is minimised.
- The Force should have effective processes in place to ensure that the implementation of technological capabilities are having the desired impact and that efficiencies and effectiveness are being achieved.

A management response has been agreed for all recommendations made.