

Candidate enquiry – January 2021

The placing of Greater Manchester Police into special measures following failures to record and investigate crime, in particular crimes of violence and sexual offences, was not as surprising as it should have been.

In my many years prosecuting and defending serious cases in the Bristol and Taunton Crown Courts I frequently encountered complaints by both victims and witnesses that they “had not been listened to” by the police or that complaints of criminal behaviour had not been properly investigated.

Given what has happened in Manchester could you please ask the Police and Crime Commissioner (and or her deputy) what investigations she has conducted into the recording of crimes by the Avon and Somerset Constabulary and what assurances the Commissioner is able to give to members of the public based upon those investigations?

PCC election board response

I recognise the national concern raised by the crime recording failures identified within Greater Manchester Police. During my 9 years as Police and Crime Commissioner for Avon and Somerset, I too have received many contacts from our communities about the way that their crime reports have been handled, some positive and others highlighting complaint or dissatisfaction with the actions of the police, all of which I take very seriously.

You would like to understand what assurances I have sought from the Constabulary in this area. Firstly, I understand that one of the contributory factors in Greater Manchester related to the implementation of a new crime recording system. Thankfully, Avon and Somerset have been working with their system NICHE for nearly 6 years. The system is embedded within the organisation and all relevant staff are proficient in how to record a crime in Niche.

Crime recording is an area for which the Constabulary are inspected nationally by HMICFRS. I would like to direct you to my response to the most recent HMICFRS inspection on Crime Data Integrity (CDI) which is [here](#) and will provide more detail.

Locally, I hold the Chief Constable to account through the Police and Crime Board, the most strategic governance meeting in the OPCC infrastructure which is attended by senior leads from across the Constabulary and OPCC. Crime recording was discussed as a performance topic in October 2020 and again last week. It is covered as part of the OPCC Risks and Issues paper and referenced in the performance report provided by the Constabulary.

There is a Constabulary led internal CDI Strategic Group which seeks to implement strategies to address the areas identified for improvement. A representative from my team attends this meeting as well as the Force Crime and Incident Registrar.

Currently there are two main areas in which the Constabulary are seeking improvement:

- **Hidden Crime** – Where disclosure occurs outside of normal reporting channels (online/101/999) and is not formally recorded as a crime.

- **Additional Crime** – For example, coercion and control, which sits outside of the more primary crime types.

Both areas rely on individuals to recognise the need to record a separate crime within the system and as such it's important that people continue to understand and refresh their responsibilities in this area. In order to generate improvement relevant business leads have organised the most comprehensive CDI training provided to Avon and Somerset in years. This has been delayed due to COVID-19 but is due to be rolled out in the spring. It is also worth noting that the Constabulary have also invested in supporting resources for the Force Crime and Incident Registrar (addition of a Deputy and 4 x Outcomes Officers) to assist with thematic auditing which is scheduled throughout the year.

I hope that this demonstrates that crime recording scrutiny is a continual theme and an area of business that has regular focus in order to drive improvement and ensure compliance. There are areas where the Constabulary need to seek improvement but I am assured that there are strategies and infrastructure in place to deliver these improvements and hold the organisation to account both internally and externally.