

Report to the Commissioner's Performance and Delivery Board

Date: 27 September 2017

Title: Crime Data Integrity

From: Chief Constable



INTRODUCTION

1. On the 30th January 2017 the HMIC announced to the force that they would conduct a Crime Data Integrity (CDI) Inspection commencing on the 6th March 2017. This inspection duly took place, and the HMIC published their report on 15th June 2017. Kent Police were graded 'inadequate'. HMIC made seven recommendations and highlighted one area for improvement. In anticipation of a CDI Inspection the force had already conducted its own inspection based on their knowledge and understanding of how these inspections were undertaken. This knowledge was derived from three sources:
 - The experience and knowledge of the Deputy Force Crime and Incident Registrar who had been seconded to the HMIC to undertake these audits in other forces.
 - A review of published inspection findings from other forces already subject of CDI Inspections.
 - A review of the methodology published by the HMIC as to how these inspections were undertaken.
2. The internal force inspection commenced mid October 2016 and was formulated in line with the three points above, thus seeking to mirror the HMIC inspection. The internal inspection involved the review of 752 incident records and audited the period between the 1st April 2016 and the 20th August 2016.
3. The HMIC audit initially focused on a similar number of incidents (albeit the number of incidents increased as a result of the findings) and covered the period between the 1st June 2016 and the 30th November 2016.
4. The difference in the National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS) compliance in respect of the audits is set out in the table below.

	HMIC Findings	Force Findings	Difference
Violent Crime	79.2%	90%	-10.8%
All Other Crime	86.2%	91%	-4.8%
Sexual Offences	89.8%	94%	-4.2%
Overall Crime Accuracy	83.6%	92%	-8.4%

5. In aligning the force internal inspection findings to that of HMIC's, what was clear was the disparity between the two sets of violent crime findings with a difference of 10.8%. As violent crime accounts for 46% of the total HMIC inspection sample this had a significant influence on the overall crime data accuracy levels. Although there is a disparity with the findings of both 'All Other Crime' and 'Sexual Offences' the difference is significantly less, and though not acceptable, is below 5%.
6. In seeking to determine why the force didn't identify earlier the issues subsequently identified in the HMIC CDI, a deep dive analysis was conducted by the Force. As a result of this analysis, six clear areas of weakness were identified, all of which seem to have contributed to the position:

The makeup of the forces self-inspection violent crime sample – The omission of domestic abuse resulted in the HMIC sample and the force sample being significantly different. If domestic abuse had been included in the forces self-inspection sample to the extent that it was in the HMICs, it is likely that the forces self-inspection sample accuracy would have been more aligned to HMICs.

Audit Capability – At the commencement of the forces self-inspection three of the five Kent auditors involved in the internal inspection had been in post less than two months and one of the auditors less than eight months. This is compared to nine HMIC auditors who are all nationally accredited Force Crime and Incident Registrars (FCIR) and have built up significant knowledge and understanding of audit having been involved in a number of these processes.

Audit Capacity – The extent of the forces audit capacity through the crucial period that HMIC audited was limited, reducing the chances of identifying the crime recording issues and correcting them.

Application of the Deputy FCIR knowledge gained from working with the HMIC – The ability of the Deputy FCIR to pass on his knowledge to the force auditors conducting the force self-inspection, in a short period of time was not achievable, resulting in a position where the force auditors were not able to replicate HMICs approach.

Some working practices within the Force Control Room (FCR), Investigation Management Unit (IMU) and Public Protection Unit (PPU) – A number of working practices were identified within the FCR, IMU and PPU which resulted in shortcomings in the identification and recording of crime. It became apparent that there was a skills/knowledge deficit in many areas across the Force in respect of National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS) and Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR), and a full Training Needs Analysis was commissioned. Furthermore, aide memoires were distributed to PPU, IMU and FCR and the content immediately briefed to all staff.

Co-ordination of activity – It is now clear that better co-ordination/governance arrangements are required to oversee/direct activity in respect of NCRS and HOCR compliance. A ‘silver’ group in respect of CDI has been established, and is working well in respect of directing recovery activity. A detailed tactical recovery plan has been formulated, and activity is being taken forward.

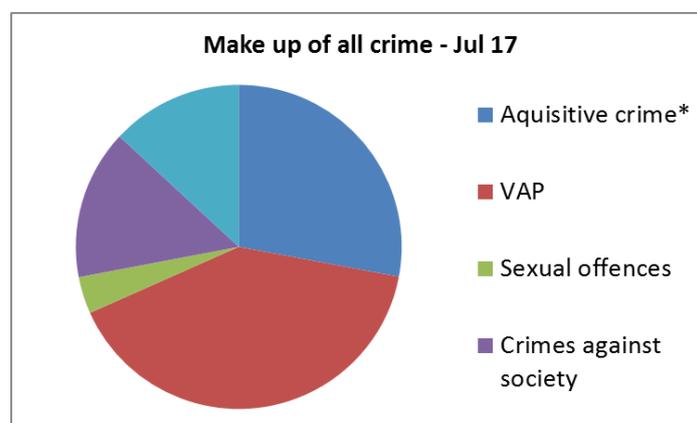
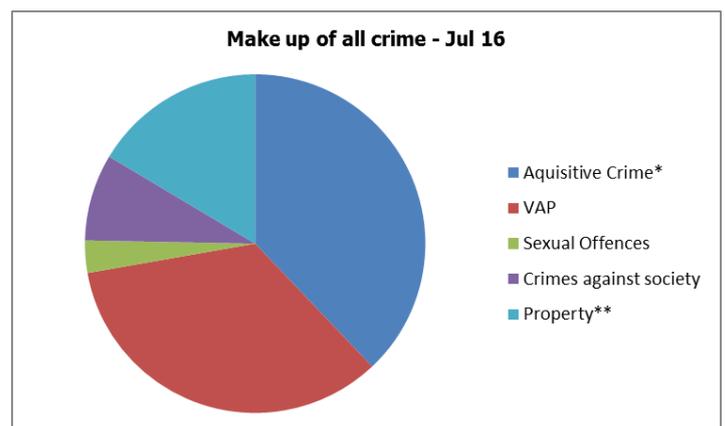
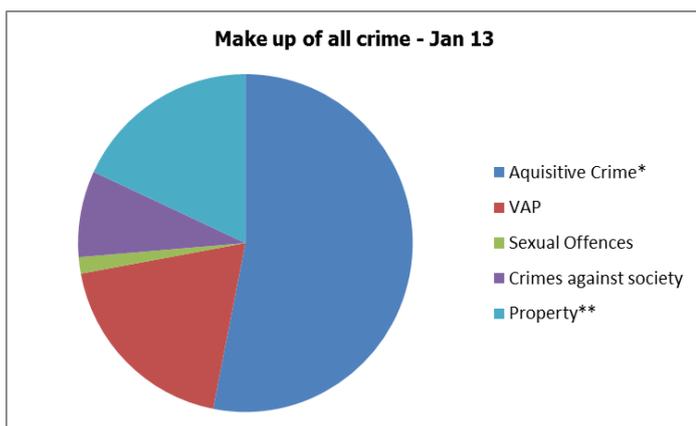
7. It is difficult to surmise the extent to which each one of the above six identified weaknesses contributed to the force being unsighted on the crime recording issues. However, each one in either isolation or in combination with another would have had an impact on the forces understanding to some degree or another. However, all have had a cumulative effect resulting in the force having a false impression of the crime recording position. A number of positive areas of performance were also identified during the course of the inspection, and these can be summarised as follows:

- **Force Leadership:** The HMIC commented that the messages from the Chief Officer Team were clear and there was no confusion with officers fully understanding their responsibilities. HMIC noted that the culture of the force is positive from the Chief Officer Team right down to the front line. HMIC were impressed with the senior officers they interviewed in terms of their messages that improvements will be made.
- **Crime Recording Model:** HMIC commented that our crime recording model in principle is the model that they would advocate as best practice – however the decision making within these arrangements is not at the level that it should be.
- **Timeliness of Crime Recording:** HMIC commented that the timeliness of crime recording, i.e. recording crime within 24 hours of receipt of report was good and indeed one of the best they have seen. HMIC noted this as an important point for the force to consider as it is clear that the crime recording model delivers quick crime recording combined with quick referral to support for victims.
- **Modern Day Slavery (MDS):** HMIC noted good practices in place in respect of MDS in terms of recognising the crime type as a priority, the crime recording processes, the MDS knowledge that staff and officers from across the organisation have and the intelligence collection plans that are in place.
- **Rape Cancellations:** Of the crimes of rape that were ‘cancelled’ the HMIC found that all had been cancelled correctly.
- **FCR Call Handling:** HMIC were impressed with the high standard of call handling displayed. HMIC witnessed victim encounters within the FCR which were professional and where the victim received a good service.

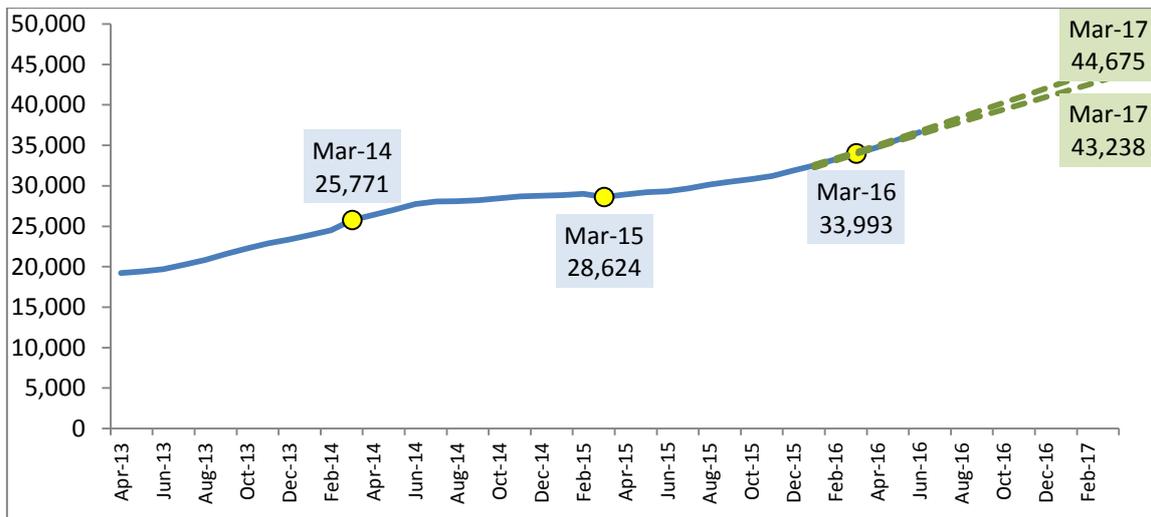
- Force Culture: The HMIC survey was completed by 597 officers and staff – the second highest response thus far. HMIC noted that the response was overwhelmingly positive with clear evidence that accurate crime recording is non-negotiable. During fieldwork HMIC found that officers were positive and victim focused and were positive about their relationship with the IMU.
 - Victim Care Arrangements: HMIC were impressed with the victim care arrangements in the force and the level of service that it delivers in terms of benefits to the victim.
8. A comprehensive improvement plan has been authorised by the Chief Officers Strategic Meeting (COSM) and reports on progress are provided weekly to the Deputy Chief Constable and monthly to the Chief Constable.
 9. Since the improvement plan has been put in place, significant improvements in crime data integrity have been made, and an upward trajectory is being maintained. Recent internal audits have reported an accuracy rate of above 90%. In addition, the Force has been successful in negotiating with HMIC for some of their auditors to visit Kent Police for one week to train our own Data Accuracy Team in the methodology used by them. This training has now been completed.

IMPACT OF CDI ON CRIME PROFILE

10. The Force Performance Committee identified and addressed changes to the County’s crime profile in August 2016. It highlighted the rapid growth in Violence Against the Person (VAP) reports as a proportion of the investigative workload, and the relative decline of acquisitive and property crime, as set out in the charts below.

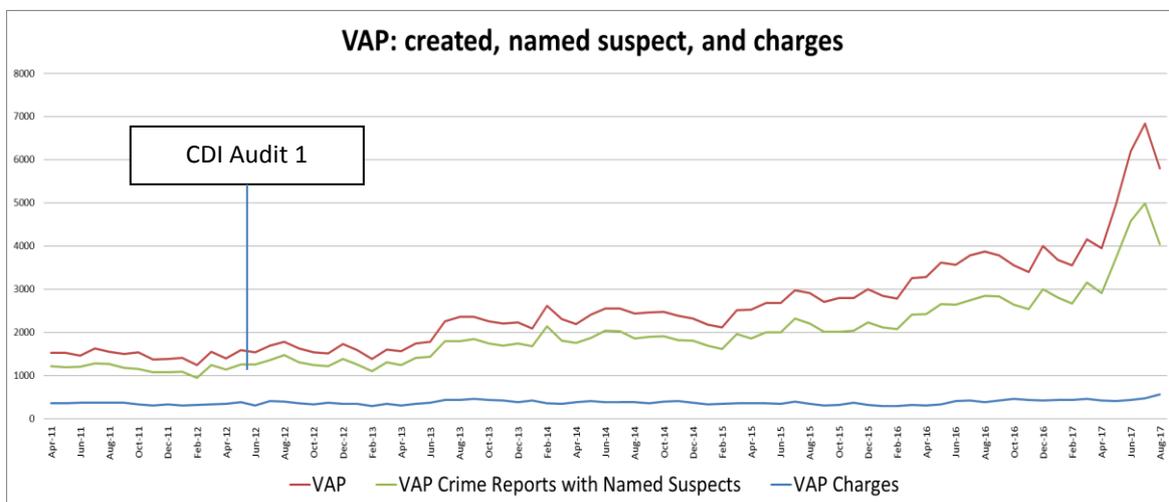


11. The August 2016 presentation also included a projection of future violent crime demand based on the extrapolation of current trends, overlaid with seasonal patterns (see below). This anticipated a rolling year total of around 44,000 recorded offences by March 2017, which proved more or less accurate.



12. The consequence of the shift in crime profile was identified as a disproportionate growth in the number of named offenders. This stems from the divergent rates at which suspects are identified across different crime categories. Critically, whereas suspects have historically been named in under a quarter of acquisitive offences, more than three quarters of assaults involve a known alleged assailant. These ratios have been consistent over time.

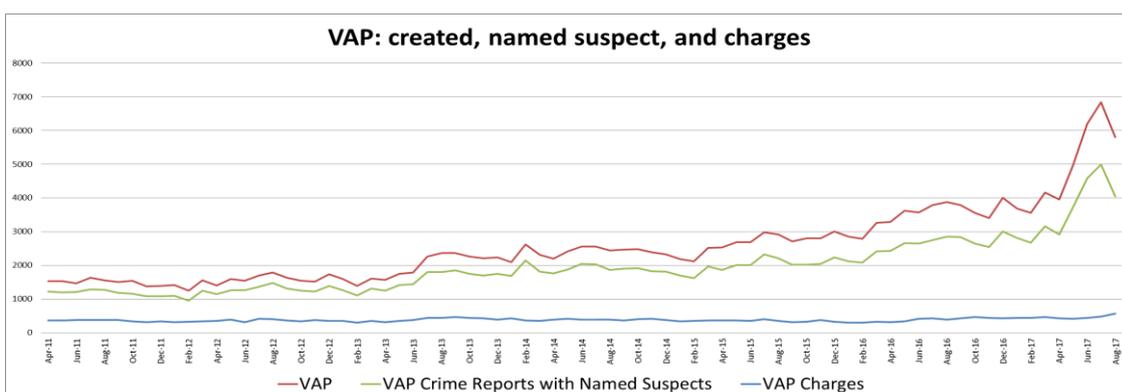
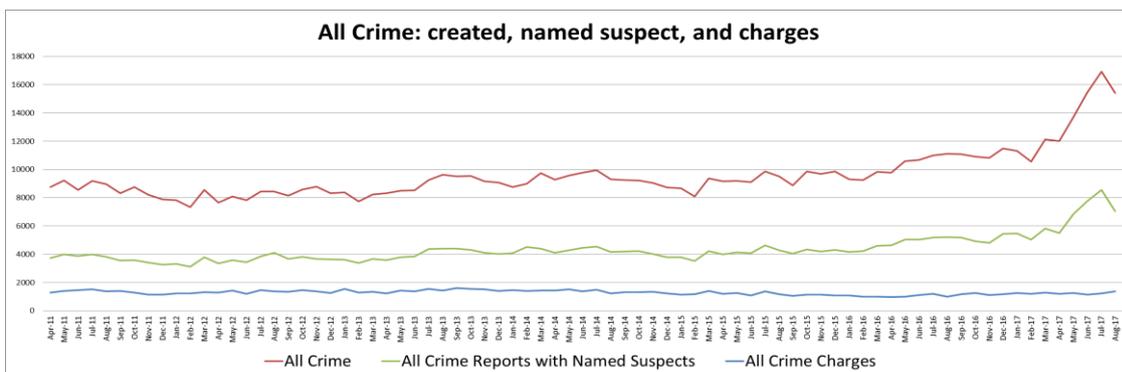
13. Thus in the period from May 2013 to May 2016, despite significant efforts to reduce demand, mainly through the wider use of the desktop investigation process, the number of allocated investigations involving named suspects actually grew by around 30% (May 2013 4692 cases; May 2016 6113 cases). The conclusion of the presentation given at the August 2016 meeting was that, whilst excellent work had been undertaken to manage and reduce demand, its effect had been more than cancelled out by the growing volume of assaults.



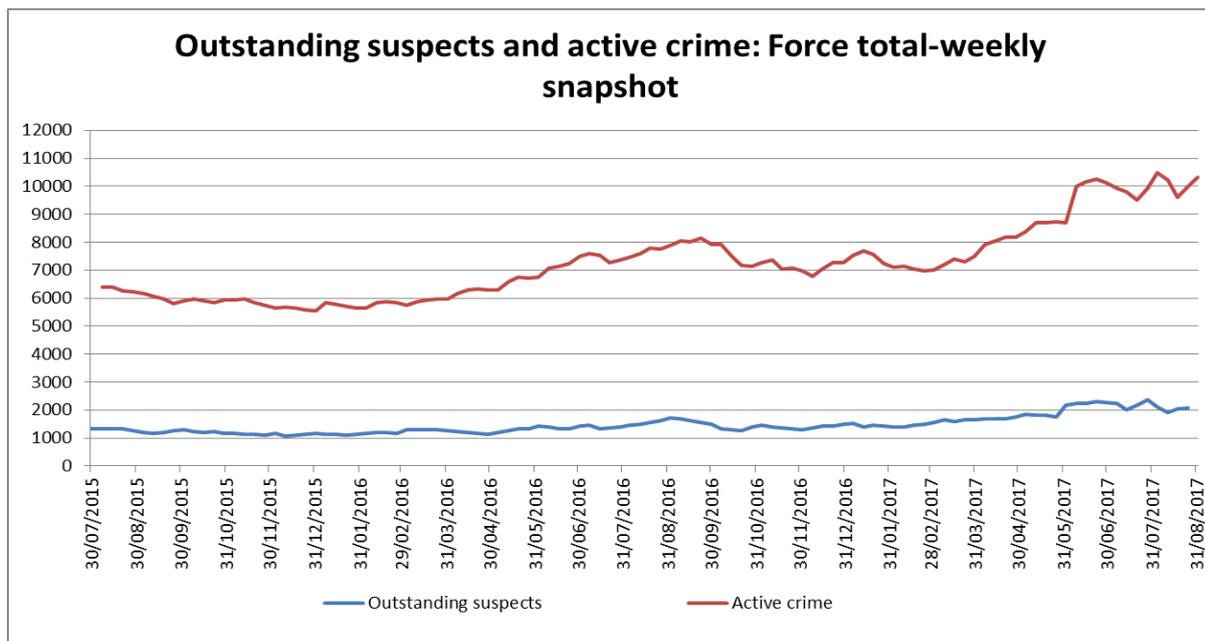
14. Whilst all crime has increased by 25%, VAP has nearly tripled. In March 2011 VAP suspects accounted for roughly 25% of identified suspects across the force. By March 2017, VAP suspects were 60% of the total.

15. The increase in the volume of VAP suspects has not translated into any significant increase in the number of offenders charged. In 2011 around one suspect in three was charged. By 2017, the ratio had dropped below one in six. This decline cannot be explained by a drop in arrest rates. These have declined, but not by the same proportion. Arrest/interview markers indicate that the force now undertakes a greater number of PACE compliant interviews with assault suspects than at any previous time. However, there is no evidence that the investigative process to which the additional recorded crime gives rise has any positive outcome in terms of prosecutions.

16. Economists use the term “external shock” to denote any outside factor which impacts on the functioning of a market. The evidence of the call analysis and the British Crime Survey clearly suggests that the increase in recorded violence up to the middle of 2016 was not driven by an upsurge in the real incidence of violence. When we review the graph below the significance of Crime Data Integrity audits becomes clear. The first CDI inspection immediately preceded a step change in the level of recorded violence with a sudden shift from around 1500 offences per month to nearly 2500 offences. There followed a period of gradual increase for more than a year (against normal seasonal trends) until totals reached nearly 3000 offences per month in the spring of 2016.
17. During 2016, in anticipation of another HMIC visit, the IMU began to make further process changes, based on recent inspection results from other forces. This significantly increased the proportion of multiple reports arising from a single incident. In tandem with seasonal trends this pushed VAP to new peak of around 3700 offences per month in the late summer of 2016. In the absence of any other known cause or correlation, we may reasonably conclude that the full effect of the change to recording practices triggered by the first CDI audit had by that stage been fully felt. Contrary to HMIC projections, the recording of violence offences had more than doubled by then. This pattern has been replicated elsewhere, notably Greater Manchester.
18. During the period of rapid growth in VAP the force began to experience serious performance difficulties, especially in relation to live crime volumes and outstanding offenders, triggering an operation in summer 2016. This certainly had some impact on the problem, though it should also be noted that there was a brief decline in VAP recording during the autumn in line with seasonal expectations which may also have relieved a degree of pressure.
19. During the first quarter of 2017 monthly VAP levels were consistently within the range 3000-3500. With relatively low levels of staff absence and other crime levels stable, performance stabilised.
20. HMIC conducted their Crime Data Integrity audit in March/April 2017. Early feedback indicated a negative grade and steps were immediately taken to tighten recording rules still further. It was anticipated that the most recent changes would lead to yet further increases in multiple reports linked to single incidents; reports of a historic nature arising from other complaints; and public order offences not witnessed by police. The latest performance figures suggest that the second CDI round will have a short term impact as serious as the first on crime recording and performance. The graphs below extend the previous charts to include crime figures for May and a projection for the month of June extrapolated from the first 22 days.



21. As these graphs make plain, the impact of the latest CDI audit on recorded crime volumes can only be described as severe. It is in this context that the example of Greater Manchester Police (GMP) becomes highly relevant. GMP received a similar adverse inspection grade in autumn 2016. Assaults without injury have since tripled, and force performance, measured by reference to offenders charged has plunged. GMP replicates the pattern whereby additional recorded violence offences find no translation into additional prosecutions for assault. Worse, in GMP there is strong evidence that the task of processing the additional assault investigations involving named suspects has led to a sharp reduction in the number of offenders brought to justice across every other crime category.
22. Live crime and outstanding offender numbers may be regarded as reliable indicators of the gap between investigative demand and capacity. Unfortunately the Genesis system does not make it possible to capture this information retrospectively. However, the Analytical Department has maintained a log of weekly totals for the last two years. Regrettably, no statistics are preserved for the period before and immediately after the first CDI audit. The graph below presents all available data:



23. Through 2015 live crime and outstanding offenders were broadly stable, following the all crime trend. Live crime began to increase markedly in April 2016, coinciding with the sharp increase in recorded violence and named suspects already noted. Live crime peaked in late summer 2016 then fell back slightly through the autumn months. Outstanding offender numbers, however, continued to grow, following the trend of named suspect reports. By April 2017 outstanding offender numbers for the county were running close to 2000, 70% higher than a year before. Most recently, coinciding with the initial impact of the last CDI audit, suspect numbers and live crime adjusted sharply upwards once more. Current live crime levels exceed 10000 reports. This represents a 75% increase on summer 2015. Outstanding suspect numbers have doubled in the same interval. Critically, though, they have increased by 25% in the short period since the CDI audit.

CURRENT FORCE PERFORMANCE

Volume and Acquisitive Crime

24. The force is recording a 22.7% increase across all types of victim based crime on rolling year data driven primarily by much larger rises in the categories of violence against the person (up 40.6%) and public order offences (up 62.9%). In both cases, the increase is not gradual but rather the sudden and immediate consequence of changes to recording processes instituted following the inspection of “crime data integrity” in spring. The rolling year increase statistic is likely to increase gradually over the months to come, then stabilise as we approach a year of data compiled under consistent rules. It is important to note that in neither case is the increase in recorded crime linked to change in the underlying incident profile, which is actually stable. Force data also shows much smaller increases across other categories of volume crime from theft to damage.

25. Overall positive outcomes, expressed as a charge “rate” are declining in all sectors of volume crime, though it is important to note that the actual number of offenders charged is increasing. In August 2017 294 offenders were charged with assault without injury compared to 160 in August 2015. In acquisitive crime categories, there has also been a slight drop in charge rates, though in this case linked to a small reduction in the number of offenders charged with offences such as shoplifting. The change is small, and is driven in part by deliberate decisions taken around the efficient management of demand and allocation of resource to force priorities.
26. The surge in recorded crime linked to CDI led to a sharp increase in the overall number of live crime reports and outstanding suspects during the late spring early summer. The task of managing demand was made more difficult because the categories of crime which showed the largest increase (assault & public order offences) are also those in which it is most likely that the victim will know the identity of the suspect. An operation was commissioned to address the underlying gap between demand and investigative capacity over the summer months, and succeeded in stabilising both key indicators.

Domestic Abuse

27. Rolling year figures to July 2017 show a 31% rise in domestic abuse crime; a 13% fall in secondary incident reports and a 1% reduction in Storm incidents on the previous rolling year period. In other words, fewer incidents are producing more recorded crimes. This also means each incident consumes, on average, greater resource. Consequently the force faced significant challenges handling call volume during the late spring/early summer.
28. Monthly arrest rates have reduced slowly since April though the actual number of suspects detained has steadily increased. Once again, the increase in action taken by police has not kept pace with the increase in recorded crime driven by the CDI changes. The charge statistics follow the same pattern. Prior to the CDI inspection, the charge rate had stabilised in the region of 15%. It has now declined to 11% at the margin, though the actual number of offenders charged and sent to court has continued to climb slowly. The proportion of cases refused charge by CPS is returning to previous rolling year averages following significant increase in October during an operation. The number refused charge on the grounds of evidential difficulties is increasing in volume for both CPS and police.

Serious Violence & Serious Sexual Offences

29. Most serious violence and serious sexual offences present two contrasting pictures. Changes in recording linked to CDI have had a negligible impact on the recording of assaults with grave injury and homicide, which are both stable, but have been linked to a very rapid increase in the volume of rape investigations.
30. It is important to note that historic offences comprise around a third of all the serious sexual offences currently recorded, with many investigations relating to offences committed more than twenty years ago. These cases present a number of challenges, and in many cases a charge is not possible because key witnesses, and often suspects, are deceased. In the short term, the charge rate for rape has fallen sharply, which follows the national trend. It is important to note, however, that stranger attacks remain exceptionally rare. The great bulk of recorded cases involve parties known to each other, often parties with a pre-existing sexual history, and the investigative challenge is usually to prove whether valid consent was given. There is also a significant challenge arising from reports of serious sexual offences by persons with serious mental health problems. The force has identified a number of “repeat victims” linked to multiple reports whose allegations are believed to be a symptom of their illness. Tackling the underlying problems in these cases will be one of the objectives of an operation, which aims to improve performance around serious sexual offences.