

**LINCOLNSHIRE POLICE AUTHORITY
 SCRUTINY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE
 31 JULY 2008**

SUBJECT		SCRUTINY OF VOLUME CRIME: FILE QUALITY	
REPORT BY	SCRUTINY PANEL		
CONTACT OFFICER	MISS GINNY MASON RESEARCH AND PERFORMANCE OFFICER TELEPHONE: (01522) 558016		
SUMMARY AND PURPOSE OF REPORT			
To consider the current position, level of performance, efficiency and effectiveness of the Force with regard to Volume Crime: File Quality.			
RECOMMENDATIONS	<p><i>That:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 The Panel recommends that the Force carry out additional analysis to identify any trends, themes or patterns that are linked to poor file quality in order that improvements can be made to reduce the number of files that are submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service and are subsequently returned for further work. 2 The Panel recommends that the Force consider sharing the good practice identified in the South where appropriate in the East and West Divisions. 3 The Panel recommends that the Force consider delivering training for call takers to Professionalising the Investigation Programme (PIP) level 1 or equivalent. 4 The Panel recommend that the Force consider sharing and implementing good practice regarding the electronic updating of crime information on the Crime Information System (CIS) across the Divisions. 5 The Panel support that the review of Prosecution Team Performance Management (PTPM) performance information and recommend that the number of crimes and the number of offenders are included as part of the analysis. 6 The Panel recommend that the Force introduce a corporate approach to managing volume crime that is commensurate with the outcome of the sustainable funding decision. 		

	<p>7 The Panel suggest that the Authority monitors the Force plans to deliver additional training related to volume crime.</p> <p>8 The Panel recommend that further work is undertaken to improve the Force's approach to supervision and that the opportunity to implement change is accepted, to a lesser or greater extent relative to the sustainable funding bid.</p>
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A. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 1.1 At the meeting on 5 March 2008, the Scrutiny and Audit Committee approved the subject of 'Volume Crime' for scrutiny on 31 July 2008.
- 1.2 The Scrutiny of Volume Crime: File Quality aimed to address the following key areas:
- Examine the ability of the Force to:
 - quality assure crime files (including the quality of file being prepared, the quality of investigation and the quality of prosecution file)
 - monitor progress of investigations and
 - build files to arrest standards.
 - Identify any areas of improvement that would reduce the number of files submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) that are subsequently rejected¹ (due to poor file quality).
 - Carry out process mapping across the three Division of the volume crime investigation process, from report to detection and finalisation. Highlight any good practice, gaps in services, weaknesses in processes or any particular areas for development.
 - Consider the role of partner organisations in tackling volume crime (e.g. the CPS) and make any appropriate suggestions for improvement.
 - Identify evidence based good practice.
 - Ascertain through consideration of activity analysis of Crime Management Units and Volume Crime Units if any recommendations relating to efficiency or productivity can be made.
- 1.3 The Panel was mindful not to duplicate any work detailed in the Sustainable Funding Project (SFP), but draw on any relevant information contained within this report. The SFP contains a comprehensive assessment of the risks relating to volume crime if no remedial action is taken.
- 1.4 The Scrutiny Report on Volume Crime: File Quality is attached at **Appendix A**.
- 1.5 As Members will be aware, on 25 January 2008, the Police Authority approved the introduction of a revised methodology to select and conduct scrutiny work that included the introduction of a Scrutiny Panel.

¹ During the period October 2006 – October 2007, 380 crime files were submitted to the CPS, of these 171 (45%) were returned as there was insufficient evidence to charge the person.

- 1.6 The Scrutiny Panel for the Volume Crime scrutiny comprised: Mr Przyszlak (Panel Lead), Dr Wookey, Mr Sumner, Mr Must, Deborah McGovern and Ginny Mason.
- 1.7 The scrutiny was carried out during the period April to June 2008 using the following methodology:
- Undertake a literature review and conduct desk research.
 - Carry out any relevant analysis and assessment of Force performance information and compare performance against peers through Most Similar Forces (MSF) data.
 - Research any good practice and take advice from HMIC.
 - Identify the processes, issues and areas for improvement through engagement with appropriate Force staff (face-to-face meetings, telephone discussions, email).
 - Gather data and consider evidence-based research from Force staff/officers and carry out reality checking in order to produce a report that outlines suggestions for improvement.
 - Produce a draft scrutiny report to the Scrutiny and Audit Committee on 31 July 2008. Consider the findings and recommendations from the Panel at the meeting, which will include questions to relevant Force staff (maximum one hour time slot within Committee agenda).
 - If necessary, arrange a follow up meeting 6 – 8 weeks following the Scrutiny and Audit Committee to assimilate and rationalise information following the Committee's consideration of the scrutiny report.
- 1.8 The Scrutiny Panel has met on the following occasions with Force representatives as indicated below:
- **10 April 2008 - Scoping the Scrutiny**
 - Andrew Hodder (Prolific and Priority Offender Scheme Manager)
 - Dawn Jackson (Acting CJIU Manager)
 - Ronnie Millar and Julie Hogan (MIDU specialising in Customer Satisfaction)
 - D/I Clive McCormack (Head of the Professionalising the Investigation Programme).
 - **16 April 2008 - Scoping the Scrutiny**
 - Panel meeting (no Force representatives).
 - **6 May 2008 – Conducting Fieldwork**
 - Andrew Hodder (Prolific and Priority Offender Scheme Manager)
 - Insp Steve Taylor South Division Crime Investigation Unit (CIU)
 - Sgt Paul Atherton South Division Crime Investigation Unit (CIU).
 - **9 May 2008 - Conducting Fieldwork**
 - DCI Stuart Morrison (West Division CID)
 - DS Sean Baxter (contributor to Sustainable Funding Project Volume Crime section).

- **22 May 2008 - Conducting Fieldwork**
 - DCI Andrew West (East Division CID)
- **16 June 2008 - Conducting Fieldwork**
 - DCS Dave Hayward (Head of Crime Support)
- **25 June 2008 - Conducting Fieldwork**
 - Gina Bowers (Head of Criminal Justice Unit)
 - Helen Jones (Head of Unit, Crime Prosecution Service).

1.9 The Panel have been impressed with the commitment and calibre of Force officers, and have appreciated the full and frank engagement with staff. In addition, the Panel have identified aspects of good practice from division that could be shared across the Force.

1.10 In the period April 2007 – March 2008, 53% (1,923 out of 3,631) of crime files submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service were of an inadequate standard and were considered ‘insufficient to charge’ (this includes files that were returned for further work and those categorised as ‘no further action’ due to insufficient evidence to charge or not being in the public’s interest). The impact of poor file quality is significant; it leads to the continual waste and poor use of police, CPS and court time, effort and resources.

1.11 There are a number of key issues that the scrutiny has confirmed. These relate to:

a) Corporate approach

At present, there is a lack of a corporate approach to managing volume crime over the three Divisions e.g. differences in the implementation of local gatekeepers, structures of Crime Management Information Units, supervision policy and job role/job descriptions/salaries. This may be due to the variation in levels of criminal activity and the geography/demography of each division, but the inconsistent approach makes strategic management and continuous improvement difficult to implement.

b) Training

The lack of crime training can lead to poor investigation, poor file preparation and poor levels of confidence in staff which has a clear impact on the overall quality of files. An investment in training of existing and new staff is required if improvements are to be realised.

c) Supervision

There are currently low levels of supervision in the Force, which means that files are not being routinely checked for quality.

d) CPS Capacity

The CPS is facing significant capacity issues and is struggling to cope with the volume of demand from the Force, which is compounded by the poor file quality issue. In addition, the East Division is disadvantaged as there are no centrally provided CPS resources in the East and the East has not received the same levels of investment as the other divisions.

1.12 Conclusion

The Panel recognise the severe resource constraints that the Force has faced in recent years. In addition, it has been acknowledged that the outcome of the Sustainable Funding Project will have a great impact on how the Force manages volume crime in the future.

1.13 The Panel are also aware of the national issues that face both the Police Service and Crown Prosecution Service with regard to file quality.

1.14 However, given the common problems highlighted nationally and the funding limitations locally, overall, the Panel has been reassured that the Force are aware of the current weaknesses in the processes and management of volume crime and believe that there is a commitment to address these areas to drive improvement. It is hoped that this scrutiny has gone some way to confirming the critical issues that relate to file quality aspects of volume crime.

2. FORCE COMMENT

2.1 The Force has welcomed the opportunity to comment on the Lincolnshire Police Authority's Volume Crime Scrutiny document and its 8 recommendations.

2.2 The Force is mindful of the current funding situation and how this impacts not only on the growth, but need for corporacy in respect of volume crime highlighted within Option 4 – sustainable funding and commented on within recommendation 6. Options and structures around crime management are now being considered and where possible will be implemented based on existing resources. The Safer Detention project and its recommendations will influence any decisions concerning crime management; geographically based custody centres will assist in the drive for corporacy.

2.3 Predicted changes to Code F of PACE – Digital Recording of interviews will also have an influence on the location our custody facilities and where our Crime Management and interview teams are based.

2.4 All Divisions are now compliant with recommendation 4 with crimes being updated on CIS. This has assisted with a degree of corporacy and better audit and supervision of crime.

2.5 The Force has identified a gap in the delivery of crime training, this is commented on within recommendation 3. However PIP training in the circumstances suggested is not appropriate. The Head of Crime now chairs a Crime Training Group looking at identified gaps in crime training that are not presently dealt with by the PIP. It is anticipated that this will impact on the crime process as a whole.

2.6 Prosecution Team Performance Management (PTPM) meetings are seen both by the CPS and the Force as the structure that can take file quality performance forward. Reviewing current statistics (recommendation 5) and their presentation are seen as key to improved performance and in influencing Divisional Commanders in their approach to volume crime management.

2.7 It is accepted that Supervision is the key to better investigations and file quality (referred to within recommendation 8). Within PIP, uniformed sergeants are now

required to evidence their skills in the supervision of investigations in order to achieve their PIP Level 1 accreditation.

- 2.8 The Chief Command Group is now considering the high risk areas identified within option 4 some of which includes supervision and either make changes based on existing resources or recommend growth in line with available funding.
- 2.9 The management of Volume Crime from first contact to the conclusion of the investigation have a considerable influence on Force performance including customer satisfaction.
- 2.10 Improved corporacy and Supervision will provide a service to the victims of crime in Lincolnshire that the Force and public as a whole will have total confidence in.
- 2.11 The Police Authority Scrutiny Panel will assist with this process, appropriately challenging the Force in its management of volume crime and file quality.
- 2.12 The Force acknowledges comments supplied by the following officers/members of staff who are presently involved in the management of volume crime:
- DCI Morrison – Crime Manager (West Division). *See below.*
 - Inspector Taylor – CIU Manager South Division. *See below.*
 - Andrew Hodder – LCJB
 - D/ Inspector Baxter – Operations West Division and formerly East Division
 - Sally French – Head of Crown Court Trials Unit CPS. *See below.*
 - Gina Bowers – CJU Manager HQ

Comment from DCI Stuart Morrison – Crime Manager West Division

Recommendation 3 on the VC Scrutiny cover report suggests PIP level 1 training for call takers. This would be problematic, as PIP is an evidence gathering NVQ type system, so in this case it would call for those people to be involved practically in volume crime investigation which they are not. I do agree that the call takers level of knowledge should be reviewed and that it may be necessary to invest in some training. Staff turn over may mean that such investment may be regularly lost but that will have to be factored into any decision.

Recommendation 6. In principal a corporate approach is desirable, but the three Divisions are different. For West Division, the centralised approach to volume crime management is easier to implement because I have more staff and can base most of my operation in one place. Even then, there is a risk that areas remote to the main operation (notably Sleaford and Gainsborough) may not benefit from this structure. I think that this effect is magnified when one considers East and South as they don't have a large concentration of crime and resources in one area. In summary, the NPIA volume crime model works better in a city environment than a more rural one (in my opinion).

General. The basic problem with file quality is that once one separates the investigative process into stages then there is no common ownership of that investigation. So for example, the officer first attending the report of a crime may carry out a basic investigation but subject to demands on their time will probably not take any key evidential statements. The enquiry is then passed on to the crime management unit who will try to do so, but that unit needs to be well staffed with the correct people in order to be able to take the time required to complete that investigation to the point where an arrest can be made in the knowledge that all available evidence has been gathered. If that CMU is not able to do all

that then the CIU (Crime Investigation Unit) side will have to do so, but that will impact on their ability to quickly process prisoners and will mean that they have to juggle the competing demands of dealing with today's prisoners against the need to complete yesterday's files quickly and to the standard required.

Breakdowns in this process, which are often the product of staff shortfalls and inexperience, tend to manifest themselves in sub standard files. The problems are aggravated by insufficient supervision. Not the whole story, but the essence of it.

Comment from Inspector Steve Taylor – CIU Manager South Division

In terms of my thoughts, I agree with the recommendations made.

Unless I have missed it, I would like to also highlight the impact CPS charging has on decision making amongst supervisors. (Both Sgts & Insps).

There is no doubt that by having CIU departments the investigation of volume crime becomes more efficient (providing they are managed robustly). However the inevitable is the de-skilling of PC's outside the department. These officers go on to become Sgts with still limited skill in terms of file preparation and investigation.

The file "In Tray" test that forms part of the forces selection process goes someway towards filtering candidates but the core issue of confidence and competence in decision making remains predominantly unaddressed.

My personal view is that we are seeing the results of having CPS (Local and Direct) making the lion share of decisions with "Dedicated Decision Makers" (DDMs) being the default for a large proportion of crimes that fall outside of the CPS remit.

The time is right to implement a Force wide project aimed at deskilling, training, standardising and promoting volume crime whilst also placing emphasis on managing investigations and decision making, until we reach the point whereby the Force delivers a top service to every victim of crime and deals with "today's crime today".

If there are any planned meetings looking at progressing the recommendations made I would be very interested in attending to include my views.

Comment from Sally French – Head of Crown Court Trials Unit CPS

Lack of timeliness of submissions has an impact on performance. From my perspective I think supervision is one of the biggest issues - performance issues are raised but sometimes you have little faith that things are ever acted upon.

Dave Hayward

Detective Chief Superintendent

Head of Crime Support

B. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no specific additional financial considerations for the Force and Authority arising from the Scrutiny report.

C. LEGAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS

There are no specific legal or human rights considerations for the Force and Authority arising from the Scrutiny report.

D. PERSONNEL, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

None specific.

E. REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

The Committee will determine the review date.

F. RISK MANAGEMENT

The risks relating to the Force's management of volume crime relate to crime and suspect management, leadership and capacity and the investigation of priority crime.

G. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

See Appendix 4 of the Volume Crime Scrutiny Report (Appendix A to this report)