

An inspection into how effectively the police investigate crime. March 2025

Report: [An inspection into how effectively the police investigate crime HMICFRS](#)

Response from: Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Hampshire and Isle of Wight

I welcome this HMICFRS inspection report on police effectiveness in investigating crime which provides an important overview of current investigative standards, while also highlighting areas where improvements are necessary. Ensuring that victims receive justice and that crimes are investigated thoroughly and fairly is a fundamental core function and responsibility of policing. I was pleased to see recognition of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Constabulary by HMICFRS in providing advice and guidance to more inexperienced officers to improve the quality of investigations and increase the knowledge base of our officers.

Key Findings

The report identifies several critical issues affecting the effectiveness of police investigations:

1. **Case Backlogs and Delays:** High workloads and resourcing challenges have led to significant delays in investigating crimes, impacting victim confidence and case outcomes.
2. **Quality of Investigations:** Variability in the standard of investigations, including inconsistent evidence gathering and case management, has been noted across forces.
3. **Use of Technology:** While some forces are effectively leveraging digital tools for investigations, others lack access to modern forensic and analytical resources.
4. **Victim Support and Engagement:** Effective investigations require strong victim engagement, yet the report finds inconsistencies in how victims are kept informed and supported.
5. **Training and Workforce Development:** There is a need for enhanced training and supervision to ensure that investigative skills remain up to date and that officers are equipped to handle complex cases.

Steps for Improvement

In response to the report's findings, it is essential to focus on:

- **Investing in investigative capacity:** Addressing staffing shortages and ensuring officers have the necessary resources and capacity to carry out timely and effective investigations.
- **Improving investigative standards:** Enhancing case management processes, supervision, and accountability to drive consistent, high-quality investigations.
- **Leveraging technology:** Expanding the use of digital forensics, data analytics, and AI-driven tools to strengthen evidence gathering and case resolution.
- **Strengthening victim engagement:** Ensuring victims are regularly updated and supported throughout the investigation process to build confidence in policing.
- **Ongoing training and professional development:** Implementing continuous training programs to equip officers with the latest investigative techniques and legal knowledge.

Commitment to Change

The findings of this report provide a clear mandate for action. I am committed to working with my Chief Constable to address these challenges, and to continue to invest in the investigative capabilities of my force. By implementing the recommendations and prioritising investigative excellence, we can rebuild public trust and improve justice outcomes for all.

We acknowledge the dedication of officers and investigators who work tirelessly to bring offenders to justice. However, we must ensure that they have the support, training, and resources needed to perform their roles effectively. Moving forward, we will continue to work collaboratively to deliver a

policing service that meets the highest investigative standards and best serves the needs of the public.

Donna Jones
Police and Crime Commissioner, Hampshire and Isle of Wight

Response from: Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary

Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary (HIOWC) identified early on that significant long term investment and focus was required to ensure a robust and proactive approach to investigating crimes impacting our communities. Part of our approach was to build upon the skills within our workforce to ensure a consistent high standard of investigation, with high levels of scrutiny, to bring justice to victims of crime and build trust and confidence.

To drive this commitment forward HIOWC have had in place a strategic Gold Group, led by an Assistant Chief Constable with an improvement plan delivered through the Investigations Oversight Board (IOB). The timely HMICFRS inspection provided the force with an opportunity to self-assess against each of the recommendations to track progress and identify any further areas for development that have been identified at a national level.

In closing the HMICFRS report, His Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, Lee Freeman KPM stated:
"As we have established through many of our inspections, there is little in policing that is more important to the public than investigating crime. The consequences of not doing it consistently well are lower levels of public trust and confidence in policing, and in the wider criminal justice system."

"Forces undoubtable need more officers and staff, but with the resources they have, there is much they can do to improve the effectiveness of crime investigations and the service they give to victims."

In 2023 the Chief Constable set the HIOWC policing priorities recognising that thorough investigation of crime is at the heart of our approach to: Putting Victims First, The Relentless Pursuit of Criminals and delivering Exceptional Local Policing.

It was made clear that under our new geographical model all officers needed to be investigators and have a strong investigative mind-set. The force recognised its officer initial training provision was not fully equipping staff with the tools needed to investigate crime to the highest standard and made immediate changes to initial training. The package now delivered is believed to provide officers with the skills and tools they need to deliver the forces vision.

The force also had a significant change to the operating model, moving from a functional model to an area based model that moved volume crime investigations out of central hubs and back into local policing (both response and neighbourhood teams). Many officers in these teams hadn't conducted the full range of investigation for some time and were deskilled so significant uplift training (Investigation Skills Practitioner Programme and What Good Looks Like training) was provided to approximately 1000 officers in these teams to equip them to carry out good quality investigations. This training focussed on early investigative enquiries, investigative mind-set, reasonable and proportionate lines of enquiry, disclosure and case file preparation (not an exhaustive list).

The force has gone further to establish an online Crime Knowledge Hub (CKH) which was praised in the recent HMICFRS Police Effectiveness, Efficiency and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspection, stating it as a source of trusted best practice. This online guidance and support tool is accessible to all, including

officers on their phones at scenes, and has a range of crime type related advice on best investigative practice but also subject areas on investigation skills such as suspect interviewing.

It is recognised that an investigation starts from the point of initial call or online report. Our Contact Management Centre staff are continuously trained to a high standard with continuous improvement at the heart of their operating model. Contact Management staff receive training from force Crime Scene Investigators (CSI) on evidence preservation and the 'Threat Harm Risk Investigation Vulnerability Engagement' (THRIVE) risk assessment tool now prompts the Contact Handler to ask specific and relevant questions in regard to crime prevention and scene preservation, alongside this the force information library (Knowledge Hub) provides Contact Handlers access to crime prevention and evidence preservation information whilst taking a call.

The adoption of 'THRIVE' in October 2023 has been designed to enable the Contact Management Centre staff to provide; increased accuracy, initial incident recording, triage and risk assessment with significant audits in place to assure continued success.

In addition auto generated messaging from the new victim portal contains crime prevention and evidence preservation advice alongside Victim Care Hub information and the Victim Code of Practice links (bespoke to crime type) with automated emails sent to victims that include specific crime prevention advice (based on crime type) alongside a link to the portal and general crime prevention link.

Crime prevention and evidence preservation now forms part of the Quality Assurance and Development (QuAD) audits within Contact Management and are included as part of the wider 'journey of the call' audit (in addition to Supervisor audits). As a part of our continuous improvement programme the force internal inspection teams (and recently HMICFRS) have found our assessment of threat, harm, risk and seriousness of the offence is good with regular use of risk assessment models to manage the risk within the lifespan of an investigation.

The force has also undertaken a significant review of our crime allocation policy. The policy aligns with the College of Policing Professionalism Investigations Programme (PIP) policy and ensures crimes are allocated to officers and staff with the right training and qualification for the nature and severity of the crime. This will remain under review to ensure this is working as required.

Putting victims first is a force priority therefore a post for a Superintendent Victim Lead has been established. Their purpose has been to ensure victims are at the heart of our approach and that that we have good levels of contact with victims throughout an investigation, with good application of the Victims' Code of Practice, alongside regular scrutiny of our performance. This is to ensure victims receive a high standard service that recognises vulnerability and individual need.

The force works proactively to fully understand the level of crime related demand and to ensure that the resources are available to bring justice for victims of crime and successfully pursue offenders. Governance and oversight of this demand is at a strategic level through the Strategic Resource Management Board overseen by the Deputy Chief Constable.

To continue to meet this demand one of the force's primary initiatives has been to grow our establishment of officers investigating crime, making significant efforts to uplift the number of trained investigators through the Gold Group and more latterly in launching The Crime Academy.

The Crime Academy is a positive environment that supports all our staff investigating serious and complex crime, furthermore it builds a sustainable pipeline of high performing and confident

investigators. Its purpose is to standardise best practice, create a better workplace for investigators and identify opportunities to develop our workforce and build a stronger investigative mind-set and culture of professional curiosity.

As of March 2025 the force reached its establishment of PIP2 investigators for the first time since 2015. This places the constabulary as a positive outlier with many other forces still experiencing significant detective vacancies.

To maintain this positive trajectory the force has a performance dashboard that is capable of monitoring officer workloads and other key metrics, this is complemented at both area and force performance meetings. This enables the force to be agile in terms of demand and put in place interventions around caseload on a team or individual officer level. This oversight is furthered by the implementation of a force Investigation Oversight Board (IOB) which monitors investigation standards and resilience across a number of metrics.

To ensure the quality of investigations remain high, there is ongoing dip sampling inspection (QuATT), thematic and crime based audits (VSA) and the creation of an Investigation Skills and Standards (ISS) Hub. The ISS Hub has created new review documentation which includes investigation plan templates, supervisor review template and a wealth of support guidance on what a good investigation plan should contain on the Crime Knowledge Hub.

This is further enhanced by the introduction of an investigation review standards guide which builds into policy how often or when plans need to be reviewed. These reviews, which have mandated first review of within 24 hours, focus not only on the investigative enquiries but also a continual assessment of risk, support required for victims of crime and Crime Data Integrity (CDI). The expectations also ensure the supervisor reviews the investigator's caseload in its entirety. The changes to supervisory review processes support better supervision and sign off on the suitability of investigation plans and lead to supervisor reviews providing value and clear direction.

The force has developed and delivered specific training to both PIP1 and PIP2 supervisors to improve their confidence and ability to supervise investigations (Investigation Skills Supervisor Course for PIP1 and Investigations Supervisor Development Programme for PIP2). Furthermore the force has also launched a peer support sergeant scheme which uses experienced and high performing supervisors to mentor, guide and support those less experienced. Delivery of bi-annual training to this cohort of officers enables opportunity to tackle any areas requiring performance improvement. At their roll out in 2024 the force utilised the peer support sergeants specifically to improve the standard of volume crime investigations.

The force has a well-recognised and leading wellbeing strategy which includes support for managing resilience of investigators and is an active participant in national programmes such as the Investigator wellbeing week of action. The Investigation Skills and Standards lead is also a stakeholder in the recruitment, retention and wellbeing of investigators meeting and has responded to a large number of recommendations outlined in the Oscar Kilo Investigator Wellbeing Plan. The Force has a number of psychological screening measures for officers in high risk roles and adopts a monitoring and rotation approach to ensure the good health of our staff.

Performance and progress monitoring in these areas of business will be routinely tracked by the Investigation Oversight Board and a range of area and force performance meetings and the area based investigation standards meetings will be utilised to draw out any learning from reviews, training needs or skills gaps and good practice.

As well as enhanced initial training to officers they are supported by the Crime Knowledge Hub in the identification and management of crime scenes and evidence, supported by the forces Forensic Services Department. The CKH contains guidance bespoke to crime types on scene and evidence management. An example of this is a section on responding to reports of burglary.

The force digital strategy has specific focus on the use of technology in investigating crime. The force Investigation Skills and Standards Hub are also exploring the use of technology to aid investigators alongside engaging in a number of trials in the use of AI to support the review of CCTV images (MCS) in major investigations. The force has invested in redaction software to improve efficiency in officer's obligations under CPIA.

Within our recent HMICFRS PEEL inspection, whilst the outcome is still pending, the comments made by the lead inspector were positive about the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Constabulary approach to improving investigations standards and outcomes. This reflects the significant effort and investment in staff to improve the standards and timeliness of crime investigations and evidenced in our heavily scrutinised force performance figures which show a continued positive trajectory of outcomes for victims alongside increasing victim satisfaction rates. Whilst there is still more to do, this has been a positive indication that the delivery plan is having an impact

Sam De Reya
Acting Chief Constable, Hampshire and Isle of Wight

Recommendations:

Recommendation 3

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure their force has an effective and efficient end-to-end process to deal with online reports of crime. The process should remove all unnecessary delays in recording, assessing and allocating crime reports, and make sure the force consistently complies with its requirements under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime.

OPCC response:

With an increasing number of crimes being reported online, it is essential that police forces have robust systems in place to ensure these reports are recorded, assessed, and allocated without unnecessary delays.

In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, we recognise the importance of a streamlined approach to digital crime reporting. Ensuring that victims receive a timely response, and that cases are investigated efficiently, is a key priority. I will continue to monitor the force's progress against this recommendation to ensure that online crime reporting meets the highest standards, improves public confidence, and ensures victims receive the service they deserve.

Recommendation 4

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure the end-to-end process for receiving, assessing and allocating reports of crime in their force minimises delays in the investigation process and the length of time before investigators contact victims.

OPCC response:

Ensuring that investigations begin without unnecessary delay and that victims are contacted promptly is essential to maintaining public confidence in policing and delivering justice. Reducing delays in investigations is a key priority, and I will continue to scrutinise the force's progress to

ensure that the public receives a high standard of service. Timely investigations not only improve victim satisfaction but also lead to better outcomes in bringing offenders to justice.

Recommendation 5

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should design and operate a policy that results in their force allocating to investigators crimes that are commensurate with each investigator's level of training, accreditation and experience.

OPCC response:

Ensuring officers have the necessary skills to conduct effective investigations is critical to delivering justice and maintaining public confidence. I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account on this recommendation to ensure that investigations are conducted by an investigator with the appropriate level of training, accreditation and experience.

Recommendation 6

By 30 September 2025, chief constables should make sure their force has a clear policy relating to investigation plans. They should make sure their force communicates this policy to officers and staff. As a minimum, this policy should cover:

- when to start an investigation plan;
- who is responsible for writing the investigation plan;
- what to consider including in an investigation plan;
- how supervisors should review and approve investigation plans; and
- how the force will monitor investigation plans to check their quality, and to make sure investigators and supervisors have followed them

OPCC response:

A structured approach to investigations is essential for ensuring consistency, accountability, and high-quality casework across all policing teams. By strengthening investigation planning, we can improve case progression, increase successful outcomes, and ensure victims receive a high standard of service.

I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account on the implementation of this recommendation, ensuring the force has a clear policy in place to support investigations which are thorough, efficient, and victim-focused.

Recommendation 7

By 30 June 2025, chief constables should include in their investigation policies a direction stating that when an image exists, investigators should search it against the Police National Database and any other relevant databases before their force closes an investigation.

OPCC response:

I fully support Recommendation 7 of the HMICFRS report, which requires all police forces to ensure that, before closing an investigation, any existing images are searched against the Police National Database (PND) and other relevant databases. Using available technology effectively is crucial for identifying offenders, securing justice for victims, and preventing further crimes.

By embedding this practice into investigative procedures, we can enhance the quality of investigations, improve detection rates, and strengthen public confidence in policing. I will continue to monitor the force's progress on this recommendation to ensure full implementation by 30 June 2025.

Recommendation 9

By 31 December 2025, chief constables should make sure the first supervisory review of a crime investigation takes place early enough for the supervisor to be able to:

- review any actions taken, including those to assess and manage risk;
- make sure the investigator has put in place the appropriate support for victims, and is complying with the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime;
- set or approve an investigation plan;
- review the investigator's caseload; and
- set a date for a further review

OPCC response:

Effective supervision ensures that investigations are progressing efficiently, victims receive appropriate support, and officers are managing their caseloads effectively. Early supervisory intervention is key to delivering high-quality investigations and maintaining public confidence. I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account on the implementation of this recommendation to ensure Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Constabulary meets the highest investigative standards by 31 December 2025.

Recommendation 10

By 31 March 2026, chief constables should:

- make sure any member of staff who has a role in supporting the investigation process completes the College of Policing 'Introduction to investigation' learning programme;
- satisfy themselves that the content of their force's ongoing investigative training for responders is designed to develop their investigative skills and performance, and to improve outcomes for victims, and that their force gives responders protected time to complete this training;
- make sure their force focuses sufficiently on case file preparation when providing professionalising investigations programme level 1 training, while taking into account local procedures and case management systems;
- make sure their force gives officers and staff continuing professional development opportunities about preparing case files;
- make sure their force keeps accurate records of professionalising investigations programme level 2 accredited officers and staff, and that those officers and staff complete annual continuing professional development to maintain their accreditation, which forces should also accurately record; and
- review the investigative training their force gives to supervisors, making sure it equips them to oversee and direct crime investigations effectively.

OPCC response:

Ensuring that officers and staff have the necessary skills and knowledge is fundamental to delivering high-quality investigations and securing justice. Investing in investigative training is essential for

maintaining public confidence and delivering justice for victims. I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account on the implementation of this recommendation to ensure that officers and staff in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight receive a high standard of investigative training by 31 March 2026.

Recommendation 11

By 30 September 2025, chief constables should establish and implement a process to monitor the proportion of recorded crime that their force allocates for investigation. This should include a process to make sure a decision not to allocate a crime for investigation is appropriate.

OPCC response:

It is essential that all crime allocation decisions are made transparently, consistently, and in the best interests of victims and the wider community. Ensuring that crime allocation processes are fair, transparent, and accountable is key to improving investigative outcomes and maintaining trust in policing. I will continue to monitor the force's progress on this recommendation and hold the Chief Constable to account to ensure its full implementation by 30 September 2025.