

The National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) : **What you need to know**

Why do we record crime?

Crime is recorded by the Police to assist:

- Investigations by capturing all information in one place
- In making decisions on officer safety issues when dealing with incidents
- In providing the police and partners with data, which informs the targeted use of resources and allows the effectiveness of crime reduction strategies to be established
- The public in making informed decisions about the risk of crime to themselves as individuals and to allow judgements on how effective Government, police and partners are in tackling crime
- Government (both centrally and locally) to establish whether their policies are effective in driving down crime and to assess relative performance of the police and associated partners.

What are NCRS and HOCR?

NCRS is the National Crime Recording Standard and HOCR is the Home Office Counting Rules for recorded crime. NCRS was originally proposed by the Association of Chief Police Officers after a highly critical review of 8 forces' crime recording procedures by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary that found a recording rate that varied between 55 and 82% across the forces. NCRS has twin aims of being victim focussed and maintaining consistency of recording across all forces. It is based on applying legal definitions of crime to victim's reports. HOCR stipulate what type and how many offences in any particular incident should be recorded by police and notified to the Home Office.

Isn't NCRS an unnecessary bureaucracy with lots of targets?

There are no targets within NCRS and it does not mandate police operational response to crime. It is a standard for recording crime in accordance with the law. The general principle of NCRS state:

An incident will be recorded as a crime for offences against an identified victim, if, on the balance of probability:

- (a) the circumstances as reported amount to a crime defined by law (the police will determine this based on their knowledge of the law and the counting rules) and
- (b) there is no credible evidence to the contrary.

NCRS simply requires police to record sufficient information to justify its classification. For the public to have confidence in the police there is a minimum expectation that police will accurately record crimes. Some forces may choose to use their crime systems to capture more information than is required by NCRS, often being used by specialist teams/supplied to external partners.

Doesn't NCRS criminalise people unnecessarily?

NCRS creates a consistent data set about crime allegations. The outcome that is applied to a crime may bring a suspect into the criminal justice system (Charge, Taken into Consideration etc), although the police response to a crime report is not set out in NCRS. NCRS by itself does not criminalise people.

What about fights in school playgrounds. Why are we recording these?

There is an agreed protocol between ACPO, Home Office and the Department for Children, Schools and Families that can be found as an Annex to NCRS. In essence the school is encouraged to deal with issues on school premises and the only times crimes should be recorded are if they were serious or the parent, school or victim asks police specifically to deal with the matter.

OK, what about a call to a fight in a chip shop where police arrive soon after and cannot find anyone involved who wants to talk to police?

NCRS is victim based and so requires confirmation from a victim that a crime has occurred before it can be recorded. Where a call has been made in good faith by a third party although no victims come forward after reasonable enquiries then there is no requirement to record a crime.

What about crimes where the victim is effectively the State?

For State based crimes (eg possession of drugs/weapons) then these should only be recorded where the points to prove to evidence the offence have been made out. This will normally be where a suspect is caught in possession of an unlawful article, but there may be cases where the points to prove have been made out although there is no suspect present (e.g. Production of cannabis offence, where a hydroponics factory is found after a search of an address).

How is the NCRS managed?

There is a Steering Group for NCRS that has ACPO/Superintendents Association/Federation/HMIC/Audit Commission representation along with Force Crime Registrar's from around the Country that steer the work of crime recording. Sub groups on specific issues containing policing representatives report to the Steering Group. Two seconded police officers at the Home Office also work to liaise with and overcome issues raised by forces to present coherent policy and ensure that concerns raised by forces can be dealt with efficiently and effectively.

Who can I go to for advice about crime recording issues?

Each force has a Force Crime Registrar who acts as final arbiter for crime recording and detection decisions in line with the Home Office Counting Rules for Recording Crime and NCRS. FCR's have an in-depth level of knowledge about NCRS and also act as the link between the force and Home Office.