



Police Service
of Northern Ireland

Crime Recording Statement

Outlines the Service methodology around ensuring accurate and consistent recording of incidents and crimes.

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Index

(Click on the heading to go to that section)

1. Aim

2. The Statement

Stage One: Incident reporting and recording

Stage Two: Deciding if a crime should be recorded

Stage Three: Recording a crime

Stage Four: Closing crime records

Stage Five: Checking that crime records are correct

3. Links to supporting documentation

1. Aim

The aim of this statement is to ensure that the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has an accurate and consistent approach to the recording of incidents and crimes. This methodology is based on adherence to the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS), the associated Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) and the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR). This statement applies to all officers and staff concerned in the reporting and recording of crimes and incidents.

2. The Statement

The PSNI is committed to ensuring that all crimes must be recorded ethically and with a victim focus.

Crime is recorded by the police and others to:

- Ensure that victims of crime receive the service they expect and deserve;
- Prioritise effective investigation of crime in keeping with national standards and the PSNI's Code of Ethics;
- Inform the public of the scale, scope and risk of crime in their local communities;
- Allows the PSNI to build intelligence on crime and criminal behaviour necessary for an efficient and effective response;
- Assists the Northern Ireland Executive, the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and other local partners in understanding the extent of demands made on the PSNI and the associated costs of service delivery; and
- Inform the development of, and monitors the effectiveness of, the Northern Ireland Executive's strategies and policies related to building safer communities.

The importance of these objectives, and in particular the need for the public and victims of crime to have confidence in the police response when they report a crime, makes it imperative that crimes are recorded consistently and accurately.

The administrative process of recording crime and incidents in England and Wales follow the guidelines set out by the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) and the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR). Although the PSNI does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Home Office, the same recording practices are followed and applied within Northern Ireland, allowing for differences in legislation between the two jurisdictions.

The Force Crime Registrar (known as the Service Crime Registrar in the PSNI) acts as the final arbiter for the interpretation of the NCRS and the HOCRs, and for the quality assurance process.

The crime recording process used by PSNI can be divided into five stages, which are set out below. Further detail and guidance is available in the supporting documentation referenced in Section 3.

Stage One: Incident reporting and recording

Incidents reported to the police relate to issues including public safety and welfare, crime, anti-social behavior and transport. There are a number of ways in which incidents can be reported to the police, these include

- victims, witnesses or other third parties can tell a police officer or member of staff either on the street or at the front counter of a police station;
- victims, witnesses or other third parties can telephone incidents to police control rooms;
- victims, witnesses or other third parties may report an incident online;
- the police might discover the crime themselves; or
- other agencies such as social services may refer them.

Incident recording is set out in the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR). An incident is defined as 'a single distinct event or occurrence which disturbs an individual's, group's or community's quality of life or causes them concern'.

These records may be created on ControlWorks or directly on to Niche. All ControlWorks incidents transfer automatically to Niche.

The HOOCR require that "all reports of incidents, whether from victims, witnesses or third parties and whether crime related or not, will result in the registration of an incident report by the police".

When recording an incident on ControlWorks, call handlers allocate both an "opening code" to the incident log and a "closing code" based on the NSIR.

Where police attend the scene, the officer will call in details of the circumstances to a centralised support unit who will input these details on to Niche.

If police are not required to attend, the caller will provide details of the circumstances to the call handler who will forward the details to the centralised support unit for input onto Niche.

Incidents containing a range of crime-related and potentially crime-related NSIR opening or closing codes are automatically flagged with Occurrence & Case Management Teams (OCMTs) for crime assessment and to identify possible missed crimes to follow up.

Stage Two: Deciding if a crime should be recorded

The HOOCR states:

"An incident will be recorded as a crime (notifiable offence):

1. 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 counting rules), and
 - b. There is no credible evidence to the contrary.

2. For offences against the state the points to prove to evidence the offence must clearly be made out, before a crime is recorded.”

The NCRS advocates a victim focused approach and the police will accept what the victim says unless there is “credible evidence to the contrary”; the following reasons are therefore insufficient to justify not recording a crime:

- the victim declines to provide personal details;
- the victim does not want to take the matter further; or
- the allegation cannot be proven.

In relation to the balance of probability test, the NCRS notes that:

“In most cases, a belief by the victim (or person reasonably assumed to be acting on behalf of the victim) that a crime has occurred is sufficient to justify its recording as a crime, although this will not be the case in all circumstances.”

“An allegation should be considered as made, at the first point of contact, i.e. the stage at which the victim or a person reasonably assumed to be acting on behalf of the victim first makes contact with the police, be that by phone, etc. or in person. If an alleged or possible victim cannot be contacted or later refuses to provide further detail, the Crime Recording Decision Making Process (CRDMP) should be based on all available first contact information.”

Where a victim is reporting a crime which has occurred in another police jurisdiction in the United Kingdom details of the alleged crime will be recorded as an incident only and transferred to the force in question. Where a victim reports a crime from outside the United Kingdom details of the alleged crime will be recorded as an incident only and the Service should assist the victim in relation to reporting the crime to the relevant country.

Stage Three: Recording a crime

Once the decision has been made to record a crime details are input onto Niche and passed to OCMT to ensure crimes are identified and correctly recorded in line with the NCRS and HOCCR. These rules will determine how many crimes to record and what offences have been committed. This decision will be made based primarily on the HOCCR’s Principle Crime Rule¹, Finished Incident Rule² and ‘One Victim per Crime’

Consider, for example, a burglary where the car keys are taken from a house and the car has been stolen:

- This may involve two offences: a burglary and theft of a motor vehicle.
- If there is only one victim and only one offender for all these offences then only one crime would be recorded, although the offender may be charged and convicted of all the offences

¹ If a sequence of crimes in an incident contains more than one type of crime then count the most serious crime only

² A sequence of crimes between the same offender/victim should be counted as one crime if reported to police all at once

- If there are two or more victims in the same incident, a crime should be recorded for each victim.

The HOCR requires police to record crime without delay and state that it must be recorded within 24 hours of the time the initial report was received.

Stage Four: Closing crime records

Crime records remain open while police investigate the crime, collect evidence and identify a suspect. The HOCR sets out the criteria to determine the outcome a crime can be given.

Crime records should be closed only when:

- The crime has a sanctioned outcome. These include, for example, when a person has been cautioned, charged, or summonsed to appear at court or a community resolution has been administered in relation to the crime.
- The investigation has reached its conclusion without bringing an offender to justice. Here there are a range of outcomes that can be applied which provide clarity as to why it has not been possible to apply a sanctioned outcome.

Alternatively, it may become apparent that a crime never actually happened. For example, an item initially recorded as stolen was then found to have been mislaid. In these circumstances the police may cancel the crime record. There are five circumstances when a crime can be 'cancelled' set out in the HOCR, with the key one being if "additional verifiable information is available which determines that no notifiable crime has been committed".

Only when a crime has been assessed and validated by OCMT will it be extracted from Niche for inclusion on the internal Management Information System. Figures are extracted from the Management Information System once a month and used to complete the publications available on the PSNI website and crime figures are made available to other websites such as Crime Mapper and the Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information System.

Stage Five: Checking that crime records are correct

The Service Crime Registrar who is responsible for overseeing compliance with the crime recording process. He or she is the final arbiter for the PSNI when deciding whether or not to record a crime or make a decision to cancel a crime. The registrar's responsibilities include training staff in the crime recording process and conducting audits to check compliance with the rules. The designated senior officer responsible for overseeing the force's approach to crime recording is the Deputy Chief Constable. The HOCR state that the Crime Registrar must be outside operational line command and answerable to the chief officer with overall responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of crime recording processes.

Staff in PSNI Statistics Branch run a suite of data validation checks on a regular basis to improve data accuracy.

3. Links to supporting documentation

[Authorised Professional Practice \(APP\)](#)

[Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime \(HOCR\)](#)

[The National Standard for Incident Recording \(NSIR\)](#)

[Police Recorded Crime Statistics User Guide \(published by the PSNI\)](#)

[\(back to top\)](#)

