### Police Incident Reporting – The Home Office Counting Rules

**Excerpt from the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR) For Recorded Crime (April 2017)**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/602799/count-general-apr-2017.pdf>

*National Crime Recording Standard*

*2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES*

*The Standard directs a victim focused approach to crime recording. The intention is that victims are believed and benefit from statutory entitlements under the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (CPVC).*

*2.1 All reports of incidents, whether from victims, witnesses or third parties and whether crime related or not, will, unless immediately recorded as a crime, result in the registration of an auditable incident report by the police.*

*…*

*3.9**Public Order Offences - Guidance on Recording: In the case of a public order incident where on the arrival of the police there is no continuing disorder and no specific intended victim, the incident will not be routinely recorded as a crime. Reasonable enquiries should be undertaken to identify specific victims and secure any supporting evidence which would enable further police action in terms of arrest or summons. Where enquiries fail to identify any victim or produce supporting evidence this will remain as an incident. Where police arrive at a scene and witness disorder, they will deal with the matter appropriately and, where notifiable offences are apparent, subject to the exception at paragraph 3.10 below, record a crime in accordance with the Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR).*

*3.10 Section 5 of the Public Order Act 1986: In the case of such offences where there is no specific or intended victim (other than the police officer) and where an officer warns an offender to stop the unlawful behaviour and as a consequence of the offender heeding the warning, the police take no*

*further action, the incident need not routinely be recorded as a crime.*

**From Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary –**

[*https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk*](https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk)

***Incident reporting and recording***

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

* *victims, witnesses or other third parties can tell a police officer, PCSO 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;*
* *increasingly, 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. It is also possible that other agencies will refer an incident that is clearly a crime.*

*The HOCR 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”. It goes on to stipulate that these must be recorded on an auditable system, which in practice means:*

* *an incident log (sometimes referred to as a command and control log); and/or,*
* *a record on the force crime system.*

*When recording an incident, staff allocate an “opening code” to the incident log. Opening codes indicate the nature of the incident, for example whether it relates to a road traffic accident or a burglary. Opening codes are important because they allow supervisors to see immediately what type of incidents are currently open and prioritise resources accordingly.*

***2. Deciding if a crime should be recorded***

*The HOCR require:*

*“An incident will be recorded as a crime (notifiable offence)*

1. *For offences against an identified victim if, on the balance of probability:* 
   1. *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*
   2. *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.”*

*Because the rules place an obligation on the police to accept what the victim says unless there is “credible evidence to the contrary”, the following reasons are 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.*