

Investigations dashboard to monitor workloads

Implementing a dashboard to manage and monitor the status of investigations.

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Key details

Does it work?	Untested – new or innovative
Focus	Organisational
Topic	Intelligence and investigation
Organisation	West Midlands Police
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Region	West Midlands
Partners	Police Private sector
Stage of practice	The practice is implemented.
Start date	July 2024
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Offenders Victims

Aim

The aim of the investigations dashboard is to:

- provide a platform which centralises information to create an efficient and effective overview of the status of investigations
- provide supervisors and officers in charge (OIC) with their own tailored dashboard to manage workloads
- support investigators in understanding what tasks and deadlines need prioritising

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of the investigations dashboard is to see a reduction in the number of:

- open investigations over four months
- unallocated investigations over 48 hours
- outstanding victim contact plans over seven days
- investigation plans required over seven days
- outstanding suspects over 28 days
- expired bails
- overdue victim contact
- overdue supervisor reviews
- overdue manager reviews

Description

In September 2023, following His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services PEEL inspection report, West Midlands Police was placed into 'Engage' status. The report identified a concern around effective investigations and included recommendations around the timeliness of investigations, effective supervisions as well as the creation of investigation plans.

In response, the investigations dashboard was developed as part of West Midlands Police's performance data improvement project (PDI). The project aimed to provide officers and staff with more substantial information on the force's goals and their progress towards them. The dashboard provided an opportunity for the PDI project to support colleagues, address their concerns and

enhance they way of working to ensure sustainable change.

User research for the investigations dashboard

To understand user needs, the force developed a feedback questionnaire on the existing performance dashboards using Microsoft Forms. The force received almost 100 responses from officers at various ranks. The consensus from the survey was that trust and confidence in the force's performance data was below expectations, particularly with first-line leaders.

West Midlands Police then held several workshops with sergeants and inspectors, to establish what performance data could do for the workforce, starting with investigations.

Development and roll out of the investigations dashboard

The force have been using Qlik software to visualise performance data for several years. The investigations dashboard was built by Qlik developers and the force's data specialists. Throughout the five-month development process, investigators and experts from across the force tested the dashboard to ensure it met their needs of presenting accurate data. User feedback was then fed back to the developers to refine the functionality and appearance of the dashboard.

To support the roll out of the investigations dashboard, the force recruited 150 'super users' from across the organisation. A dedicated intranet page was launched to host bitesize training videos, frequently asked questions and updates. The force have established a feedback loop which daily monitor for any issues from users. Common issues have been made into a mini-series of online lunch and learns to support users. User adoption is tracked via a session monitor which can observe individual users and sessions.

The data from the investigations dashboard has become integrated into the force's monthly performance day. The away day holds a key accountability board which is attended by all department heads and is chaired by the deputy chief constable. The executive support has ensured that there is strategic buy-in and encourages force wide adoption.

Resource and funding

The project team consisted of:

- a senior project manager

- a business analyst
- three internal Qlik developers
- two external Qlik consultants

The project team were also supported by an internal data engineer and the force's Cloud Services Team. The external consultants joined the project team over an 8-week period and were funded by West Midlands Police's existing contract with Qlik.

There was no cost to the development and roll out of the investigations dashboard.

Overall impact

The investigations dashboard was launched to the super users in July 2024 and was rolled out force-wide one week later. During July and August 2024, 3,400 unique users logged into the dashboard, averaging at 450 users per day. This totalled to 57,100 sessions, averaging at 1,100 sessions per day. The investigations dashboard became the most visited Qlik app for both users and sessions, within three weeks of the launch.

The investigations dashboard had an immediate and tangible impact on organisational performance including:

- 41% reduction in unallocated investigations over 48 hours
- 44% reduction in overdue victim contacts
- 62% reduction in overdue supervisor reviews
- 83% reduction in overdue manager reviews
- 97% reduction in investigation plans required

Feedback

In July 2025, the investigations dashboard logged 3,300 unique users, averaging 850 users per day. This totalled to 45,500 sessions, averaging at 1,800 sessions per day.

Officers and staff have provided the following feedback:

"I absolutely love the dashboard – it's so useful and easy to navigate!"

“I absolutely love this. I’ve already sorted a highlighted problem for me which was overdue investigation plans. This is a real good visual aid to show us what is overdue and upcoming, really impressed”

“The investigations dashboard is one of the most effective, useful and important streams of data that I, my sergeants and my staff could have ever wished to have access to [...] it’s easier to see, access and understand what needs to be done and by whom.”

Survey

To assess the impact of the investigations dashboard, a Microsoft Form survey was sent out to officers at various ranks. A further 100 officers completed the survey. The survey results included:

- 78% of officers thought the dashboard would have a positive impact on the supervision of investigations
- 58% thought the dashboard would have a positive impact on efficiency
- 68% thought the dashboard would have a positive impact on the daily management of investigations
- 60% thought the dashboard would have a positive impact on service to the public

Ease of use, satisfaction with level of detail provided and user confidence had increased from the baseline survey.

Learning

What went well

- There has been regular collaboration between the project team and users. This has enabled the refinement of the investigations dashboard during the design and testing stages. The force has also consulted with subject matter experts to ensure that the dashboard meets users’ needs.
- The dashboard has had a high adoption rate, influenced policies and highlighted the importance of data quality. The positive attitude towards the dashboard has supported West Midlands Police approach to improve investigation management.

Recommendations

- It is important to define the business roles before the start of the development process. A glossary should be written as part of the design process to provide clear communication to users.
- All dashboard updates and refinements should go through agreed change control. This should be supported by approval documentation, version controls and communication to users. During the first couple of weeks, several changes were required to the metrics and data visualisation. Several members of the team worked concurrently on the changes. Some of the changes made, were without adequate communication and this undermined the confidence of users. The project team have worked with users to ensure clear communication is provided when updates are released.
- It is essential to consider performance reporting to understand and measure the impact of the investigations dashboard.
- User support has been important to the development and refinement of the investigations dashboard. By creating a user designed dashboard, the wholesale upskilling of the workforce is not required.
- A key benefit for users is the consolidation of performance data in a single app. This removes the need to access multiple sources for data.
- It is essential to build a dashboard that can be easily accessed from different ranks, with clear navigation aids to enhance user confidence.

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