

Operation Converter – taken into consideration (TIC) unit to improve solve detection rates

Norfolk Constabulary have relaunched their taken into consideration (TIC) unit to gain intelligence on offenders, increase detection rates, and record a more accurate account of offending for cases.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Criminal justice Intelligence Investigation
Organisation	Norfolk Constabulary
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Region	Eastern
Partners	Police Business and commerce Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services)
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	November 2022

Key details

Scale of initiative	National
Target group	General public Offenders Victims Workforce

Aim

The aim of Operation Converter is to:

- identify and progress opportunities to engage with offenders to secure TIC disposals
- work with partners to identify and refer offenders to support services
- work with the judiciary, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and defence solicitors to improve support for TIC process
- provide victim follow ups relevant to offences subject of TIC
- provide investigative capacity for the workforce to enable them to focus on other cases
- ensure all TICs are recorded ethically and professionally

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes of Operation Converter are to:

- enhance detection rates
- improve victim satisfaction
- strengthen public confidence in both the police and the wider criminal justice system
- increase the detection of volume crime, such as shoplifting
- improve solve detection rates across all acquisitive crime groups

Description

Taken into consideration (TIC) is an opportunity for suspects to admit previous similar offences prior to sentencing. This also allows the court to deal with more than the offence they were arrested and charged with, and the court will take the additional offences into consideration when sentencing the offender.

Police officers are entitled to interview suspects for offences outside of those which resulted in the initial arrest or allegation, if there are reasonable grounds for suspecting the offender's involvement in these other offences. TIC is a legitimate way of achieving positive outcomes for outstanding investigations and is endorsed by the Home Office National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS).

Background

In 2022, Norfolk Constabulary's performance department conducted a review which identified only nine TICs from the previous year, linking this to an adverse effect on solve detection rates. In response, the senior management team were asked to launch Operation Converter to create a TIC unit and improve solve detection rates.

Norfolk Constabulary previously had a TIC unit, however due to lack of funding the unit was disbanded in 2020. To relaunch the unit, Norfolk Constabulary consulted with Suffolk Constabulary's TIC unit, also known as Operation Converter, to determine which roles were required and their parameters. Following the consultation, Norfolk Constabulary chose to use the same operation name to ensure consistency when collaborating.

The TIC unit consists of:

- a police staff supervisor
- a police staff investigator
- a police constable

Promoting Operation Converter

The TIC unit shared the benefits of using TICs with colleagues and how they could be supported. Operation Converter was promoted through an intranet page and the delivery of inputs to the following teams:

- Custody Investigation Unit

- East and West Criminal Investigation Departments (CIDs)
- all uniformed teams
- newly promoted sergeant course
- initial police officer entry routes

During the inputs, the unit outline how they are responsible for investigating and pursuing TICs with the intention of achieving additional positive outcomes. At the end of the sessions, the unit encourage officers to refer any offenders who have been charged with acquisitive crime.

Referrals

The TIC unit undertake their own research into offenders who have been charged with acquisitive crime. Research methods include:

- weekly checks of charge and remand cases
- weekly checks of charge and bail cases
- check ins with custody staff
- check ins with the 180 team (a dedicated multi-agency unit focused on managing and reducing re-offending by prolific offenders)

It is the responsibility of officers to notify the unit of offenders they may feel would be suitable for the TIC process.

The TIC unit focus primarily on offenders charged with the following:

- burglary (dwelling)
- burglary (other)
- robbery
- theft from motor vehicle
- retail theft

Whilst these offences take priority, other offences and offenders deemed suitable for the TIC process will be considered. Referrals can also be made from other police forces. The TIC unit communicate regularly with regional forces to maximise the potential of TICs.

Process

Once a referral is made and received, the TIC unit will assess and conduct research on the offender. Two members of the unit will then conduct visits with offenders, both in prison establishments, and those on bail where charges have been brought. TIC unit staff will conduct any TIC interview as they are specialist suspect or advanced suspect interview trained. All TICs obtained are assessed, recorded, and must be able to withstand scrutiny should a challenge subsequently occur. The TICs undergo independent auditing by a dedicated decision maker (DDM), to ensure that all the conditions of the TIC checklist have been met. This is completed by utilising a form 195 TIC checklist. All conditions must be met before the investigation will be solved as outcome code four on the Athena database. These additional layers of evaluation and procedural compliance ensure a transparent and ethical approach. Each month the TIC's obtained are further scrutinised by detective inspector who has oversight of the unit. The CPS decide on the final composition of charges and TICs.

Partnership working

The TIC unit work closely with the CPS and defence solicitors. They also collaborate with youth offending teams across the county to ensure that young offenders are suitable for the TIC process. All victims and offenders will have the process explained to them, and where appropriate, referrals will be made.

The TIC team highlight Norfolk Constabulary's position around TICs with the judiciary, involving close liaison with both Magistrates and Crown Courts, requesting that offenders who provide TICs have this reflected in their sentences. The unit work closely with the prison service, supporting their approach to safeguarding and rehabilitation of offenders, and Norfolk and Suffolk offender management units.

Informing victims of crime

The officers in charge (OIC) of the original investigation regularly provide updates to the victims on the progress of their case. Where offences have been TIC, the victim must be updated and the procedure clearly explained to them prior to the court case. Any objections or concerns raised by them are passed onto the CPS.

The TIC unit liaise directly with the OIC and agree a victim's contract to ensure all victims are updated and aware of progress.

Funding and resources

During the first year of implementation, approximately £168,000 was allocated by Norfolk Constabulary to the TIC unit. The funding covered the salaries of the unit, a vehicle to use for visits and running costs, work phones, laptops, and monitors.

Overall impact

There has been a substantial increase in the number of TICs obtained year-on-year:

- year one: 29
- year two: 685
- year three: 800
- year four: 933

The solve detection rate has increased across all crime types, with a notable rise in the number of prolific offenders going through the TIC process.

Operation Converter is delivering a positive impact across multiple areas of policing and public service. Based on these results, additional funding has been approved to establish the TIC unit as a permanent fixture within Norfolk Constabulary.

The unit's performance continues to be benchmarked against neighbouring forces, consistently demonstrating comparatively positive outcomes.

Learning

- It is essential to utilise the most experienced and skilled interviewers to maintain high standards of records.
- Using independent TIC auditors to review, assess, and approve crime types ensures that offences are obtained ethically. This process has helped establish a robust and transparent framework for securing TICs while maintaining public trust and confidence.
- If the TIC unit is unable to interview before sentencing, the CPS and defence team can put them to the offender in an open court. The magistrate or judge acknowledges during the sentencing that the TIC has been verbally accepted by the offender.

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