In August 2016, Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC*) issued Greater Manchester Police (GMP) with a critical report on crime data integrity measured against the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS), rating the force as ‘inadequate’. Alongside tactical measures aimed at improving that rating within the timescales set by HMIC recommendations, a behavioural review was commissioned and the Behaviour Change Team (BCT) applied a newly-designed methodology to diagnose influential behaviours and design interventions for improving outcomes. At the methodology’s heart is COM-B, a model designed by University College London (UCL**) and not previously used in a policing environment.

Acknowledging that we couldn’t be certain why we weren’t able to achieve HMIC standards, and inspired by Margaret Mead’s assertion that “What people say, what people do, and what they say they do, are entirely different things!” the BCT conducted participant observations, working alongside police officers for eight weeks, to understand the challenges to compliance within operational settings. The validity of any findings was wholly dependent upon those officers behaving as naturally as possible, given they were being observed, and observed by senior police officers #, so it was essential that the BCT was ‘credible’ and ‘trustworthy’. A critical element of the preparations ahead of the observations period became the engagement with the officers themselves.

During the observations all activities and interactions were recorded and analysed around the core question of NCRS compliance. Outcomes were reviewed by the Force Crime Registrar to establish levels of compliance, and identifying behaviours within those outcomes led to individual incident profiles and broader behavioural insight into recording crime in the working environment. The findings challenge ‘received wisdom’ on performance management and raise questions about validity of external scrutiny without an established evidence base.

The BCT’s goal is to design and test interventions within GMP. Its aim is to re-design policy and practice based upon a sound evidence base and application of behaviour science.

* HMIC is now HMICFRS, to include the Fire and Rescue Service

** UCL Centre for Behaviour Change www.ucl.ac.uk/behaviour-change

# BCT is comprised of police Chief Inspectors and police staff