Industry	Business Issue	Solution	Benefits
Public Sector	West Midlands Police needed data quality technology to help it circumvent aliases or false birth dates in its system and reduce the number of human errors such as typos and missing fields.	SAS® Data Management	Using data quality and fuzzy-matching capabilities, the police force has achieved a single view of the people in its system. It has also been able to consolidate arrest records, conduct faster searches and make more informed decisions to help protect the community.
Focus Data Quality			

Using Technology to Keep the Community Safe

West Midlands Police uses SAS® Data Management to correct and match database records

Inaccurate Data Could Lead to Safety Issues

West Midlands Police has a clientele that isn't always forthcoming with accurate information. Whenever suspects give fake names or false dates of birth, those inaccuracies could get fed into a system that already faces common errors such as typos or missing information.

Because of these inconsistencies, police officers and staff members were often unable to achieve an accurate, complete record of individuals in the system – or it would take a long time to identify all relevant records. Officers spent hours trying to run searches and piece together information that might pinpoint trends or help them make decisions – such as where suspects might be located, or whether those suspects had the potential to be a serious threat.

West Midlands Police knew the quality of information in its database was not just a matter of inconvenience – it was a safety issue. By correcting and matching criminal records, officers could achieve a more accurate picture of suspects, reducing the risk of harm to members of the public or frontline officers. They could also conduct faster searches, minimizing the time they spent behind computer screens. With those goals in mind, West Midlands Police set out to implement new data management processes.

Existing Technology Was Good, but Not Enough

West Midlands Police originally had a data warehouse and viewing system that enabled officers to search for arrest records or gather information on people who'd had encounters with the law (checking 15 systems with one search) – but fundamental data quality problems bogged the system down.

Since its existing technology lacked data quality or matching capabilities, the police force needed to find a supplemental system that could get the job done.

The Best Solution at the Right Price

Since West Midlands Police already had an idea of what it needed, its next step was finding the right vendor. It needed a technology company that could provide a solid solution at the right price point – and after evaluating several data management companies, it selected SAS. "It came down to who could provide the right functionality at an acceptable price. SAS® Data Management was cost-effective and did everything we wanted it to do – plus it had a good reputation," says Corinne Brazier, Records Manager at West Midlands Police.

An Easy Implementation to Get Up and Running

West Midlands Police faced the daunting task of implementing new technology and training a large team of people to use it. Its database administrator worked closely with a SAS team to begin cleaning and matching data. West Midlands Police found that the technology was easy to implement and worked well with its existing data management technology. The agency not only tackled data quality, it also set up fuzzy matching for names and matches on national reference numbers such as Police National Computer identification number.

Matching Records Almost Immediately

With the SAS® technology cleaning, matching and aggregating records, West Midlands Police saw almost immediate benefits. "I'm really impressed with the matches it managed to pick up," Brazier said. "It found some that hadn't been identified by some of our more experienced users." The matching has been so successful, in fact, that West Midlands Police has aggregated 14 million individual records from 13 different systems into 4 million nominal records, a clear sign that it now has a much more accurate, complete view of the people in its database.

Enabling Faster Searches

The police agency also had results that are slightly harder to quantify, such as making it easier – and faster – for officers to complete database searches. As a result, the force can spend less time in the office and more time policing the streets. "It's now much easier to quickly summarize the records and scan through to see if anything relevant is there," Brazier said. "Now we can just do one search and find it all in one place."

Managing the Shelf-life of Records

SAS Data Management technology also helped West Midlands Police manage the shelf-life of its database records. The agency keeps criminal records for a set number of years and has its system scheduled to delete them automatically. By aggregating records that relate to the same individual, the police force can manage whole nominal records together, instead of handling records in each system separately – which could have meant that some records were deleted too early. With the help of advanced data management capabilities, West Midlands Police is now prompted before a record is deleted, giving them the option of extending the shelf-life if a policing purpose exists – and enabling officers to make informed decisions about whether a record should be kept. As a result, West Midlands Police has more control over its database.

SAS gives West Midlands Police THE POWER TO KNOW®

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