

**HM Inspectorate of Constabulary  
Northern Regional Office**

**Follow-up/Monitoring Visit  
Congleton and Vale Royal BCU  
Cheshire Constabulary**

**BCU Inspection Conducted – February 2004**

**Follow-up Visit Conducted – March 2005**



**Follow up/monitoring visits to inspected BCUs**

*Congleton and Vale Royal BCU – Cheshire Constabulary*

<b>Date of Inspection</b>	<b>Lead Inspector on revisit</b>	<b>BCU Commander</b>	<b>Date of final report</b>	<b>Date of monitoring visit</b>
23-27 February 2004	Ch Supt Wendy Walker	Ch Supt Tim Jackson	22 April 2004	22 March 2005

**1. Significant Developments since the original Inspection** (eg, boundary changes, changes to management team, increase/decrease in strength)

- There have been no changes within the SMT at Congleton and Vale Royal BCU since the original Inspection.
- Police officer staffing levels have remained broadly similar though police staff numbers have increased by 26% over the last two financial years.
- The proportion of BCU constables still within the probationary period has reduced by 54% as these officers, progressively, have completed their training.
- In April 2005 Cheshire Constabulary will implement a significant programme of change that will restructure the Force from six to three BCUs. The 'Taking Control' programme will also introduce neighbourhood policing units and re-configure how the Force responds to calls for service and the investigation of crime and disorder.
- Over the past year this programme of change has necessitated, in conjunction with headquarters departments, considerable preparatory work involving the BCU Commander and other members of his management team.

**2. Performance**

- Congleton and Vale Royal BCU is performing excellently in reducing total crime offences to a level that is ranked best of the 14 most similar BCUs (MSBCU). Domestic burglary offences have reduced by 27% and vehicle crime offences by 14%. Offences of robbery have reduced by 37% and the performance of Congleton and Vale Royal BCU against this indicator is ranked first in the most similar BCU group. This is commendable performance and the BCU is to be congratulated on its success.
- The detection rate for domestic burglary has increased by 7% over the past year and the BCU is ranked first against its MSBCUs under this indicator. Detection rates for vehicle crime have also increased. These results demonstrate very creditable performance by the BCU.

- The detection rate for robbery offences has decreased by 3% but BCU performance against this indicator is still above the MSBCU average.
- There has been a 2.85% rise in violent crime offences, but the BCU is still ranked second in the MSBCU group making Congleton and Vale Royal one of the safest of 14 BCUs.

**Crime Performance Table (Latest 11 Months) compared to MSBCU Group**

<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>Performance April 2003 to Feb 2004</b>	<b>Performance April 2004 to Feb 2005</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>MSBCU group mean</b>	<b>MSBCU group rank</b>
<b>Recorded crime per1,000 population</b>	66.35	60.80	-8.36%	70.90	1
<b>Recorded crime detection rate</b>	29.76%	27.32%	-2.44 p.p.	27.98%	8
<b>Domestic burglary per1,000 households</b>	9.76	7.10	-27.28%	9.43	5
<b>Domestic burglary detection rate</b>	28.21%	35.45%	7.25 p.p.	16.59%	1
<b>Robberies per1,000 population</b>	0.34	0.21	-36.99%	0.46	1
<b>Robbery crime detection rate</b>	42.47%	39.13%	-3.34 p.p.	29.47%	3
<b>Vehicle crimes per1,000 population</b>	9.17	7.89	-13.97%	8.97	6
<b>Vehicle crime detection rate</b>	14.73%	16.82%	2.10 p.p.	11.44%	4
<b>Violent crimes per1,000 population</b>	12.20	12.54	2.85%	15.06	2
<b>Violent crime detection rate</b>	63.48%	56.58%	-6.90 p.p.	57.71%	8

*Note: This data is not validated and therefore is only provisional and is out of all 14 BCUs in the MSBCU group.*

- The BCU still needs to increase detection rates for violent crime, which have reduced by 6.9% over the past year. There is a particular need to focus on sanction detection rates, which are low in comparison to other similar BCUs. These detection levels remain an area for improvement but the inspection team was reassured that already focused activity would address this need.

### Type of Detection method

For the time period **April 2004 to February 2005**, the BCU had 3,580 **all crime** detections. The table below shows a breakdown of these detection methods compared to the MSBCU group:

	No of Detects	No fixed penalty	No of Charge/ Summons	No of Cautions	No of TIC Recorded	No of TIC Not Recorded	No of Other Detects	% of Other Detects
Congleton and Vale Royal Total Crime	3580	127	1252	519	409	19	1254	35.03
<i>MSBCU avg Total Crime</i>	<i>4945</i>	<i>152</i>	<i>2319</i>	<i>910</i>	<i>302</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>1228</i>	<i>24.83</i>
Congleton and Vale Royal Domestic Burg	223	0	60	7	125	4	27	12.11
<i>MSBCU avg Domestic Burg</i>	<i>161</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>89</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>48</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>8.35</i>
Congleton and Vale Royal Robbery	18	0	12	1	2	0	3	16.67
<i>MSBCU avg Robbery</i>	<i>506</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>400</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>49</i>	<i>9.68</i>
Congleton and Vale Royal Vehicle Crime	286	0	54	11	206	2	13	4.55
<i>MSBCU avg Vehicle Crime</i>	<i>256</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>106</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>20</i>	<i>8.00</i>
Congleton and Vale Royal Violent Crime	1530	80	470	197	4	0	779	50.92
<i>MSBCU avg Violent Crime</i>	<i>2166</i>	<i>126</i>	<i>928</i>	<i>348</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>759</i>	<i>35.02</i>

### Road traffic collisions involving death or serious injury

- Congleton and Vale Royal BCU has seen a decrease in the number of RTCs per 1,000 population. This is a positive performance, which translates into a 14.91% reduction, ranking the BCU 6<sup>th</sup> in the MSBCU group for 2003/04.

Year	RTCs	RTCs per 1,000 population
2002/03	114	0.53
2003/04	97	0.45

## Sickness Absence

The table below shows the change in sickness for the BCU for the past two financial years:

Financial Year Sickness Absence in Days		
	Congleton and Vale Royal BCU	Cheshire Constabulary
Average number of sick days per police officer- 2003/04	8.93	9.32
% Change compared with the same period the previous year	-25.00%	-18.77%
Average number of sick days per police staff - 2003/04	9.46	9.54
% Change compared with the same period the previous year	-46.56%	-25.77%

- Congleton and Vale Royal BCU has reduced both the levels of police officer and police staff sickness from 2002/03 to 2003/04 with rates lower than both the Force and MSBCU group averages.
- Against this performance the BCU ranked well in both the Force and MSBCU groups:
 





Police Officers	4 <sup>th</sup> in MSBCU group and 3 <sup>rd</sup> in Force
Police Staff	7 <sup>th</sup> in MSBCU group and 3 <sup>rd</sup> in Force
- Whilst this performance has been good, more recent data for April to December 2004, compared to the same period the previous year, indicates both the levels of police officer and police staff sickness have increased. The SMT will need to sustain efforts to manage absence levels.

Quarterly Sickness Absence in Hours			
	Q1 to 3 of 2003/04	Q1 to 3 of 2004/05	% Change
Hours lost through sickness for police officers (and per police officer)	16322.7 (51.49)	20926.6 (66.01)	28.21% (28.21%)
Hours lost through sickness for police staff (and per police staff)	2662.36 (51.20)	3622.44 (55.73)	36.06% (8.85%)

Please note: That the average figures are not truly accurate due to using the previous financial year's average staffing data for the calculations and not the quarterly data (as it is not collected).

## Performance Summary

*Below is a summary of Congleton and Vale Royal's performance when compared with the MSBCU group averages and previous year's performance for the period April 2004 to February 2005:*

<p>Good - Getting Better </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total Crime per 1,000 population</li> <li>• Domestic burglary per 1,000 households</li> <li>• % Domestic Burglary detected</li> <li>• Robbery per 1,000 population</li> <li>• Vehicle Crime per 1,000 population</li> <li>• % Vehicle Crime detected</li> </ul>	<p>Good - Getting Worse </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % Robbery detected</li> <li>• Violent Crime per 1,000 population</li> </ul>
<p>Poor - Getting Better </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>Poor - Getting Worse </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % Total Crime detected</li> <li>• % Violent Crime detected</li> </ul>

- Congleton and Vale Royal BCU is performing well in reducing crime and against a range of other indicators. There are clear indications that this performance is sustainable.

### 3. Inspection Recommendations

<b>Recommendation 1</b>	
<b><i>That the command team ensure that all the objectives developed for the 2004/05 BCU business plan should aim to meet SMARTS criteria (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timebound and stretching).</i></b>	
<b>Action taken by BCU</b>	<b>Measurable impact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The BCU has revised the business plan for 2004/05 and it is now presented in 'SMARTS' format.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The business plan now contains an appropriate range of objectives.</li> <li>• Each objective is supported by relevant targets, performance indicators and a series of action plans which include timescales for updates and completion.</li> <li>• During the monitoring visit it was apparent that the SMT has rigorously examined BCU business planning processes and SMT members were clear on the progress of all aspects of the business plan.</li> <li>• Inspectors and police staff equivalent were aware of the main themes and expected outcomes.</li> </ul>

<b>Recommendation 2</b>	
<b><i>That all managers and supervisors in the BCU command team introduce a rigorous and clear approach to the management of finance, and in particular to the control of police overtime. This should include clear guidance to, and accountability for, all managers and supervisors.</i></b>	
<b>Action taken by BCU</b>	<b>Measurable impact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The BCU has produced a financial plan to ensure the year end budget is within spending limits and progress is reviewed each month by the command team.</li> <li>• BCU finances are also scrutinised at bimonthly meetings by the assistant chief constable (operations) and the assistant chief officer (resources).</li> <li>• The BCU has allocated overtime budgets for CID and uniform officers.</li> <li>• Section and community inspectors now operate devolved overtime budgets.</li> <li>• All occasions where overtime is likely to be incurred require prior approval from a nominated budget holder.</li> <li>• Inspectors are held accountable and the management of devolved budgets is scrutinised at chief inspector level within a wider performance management process.</li> <li>• Other BCU funding streams, including rural policing funding are controlled by SMT members, supported with reviews by the BCU finance officer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inspectors were operating devolved budgets with confidence and have developed practical arrangements to ensure effective management between individual budget allocations.</li> <li>• The BCU has established a moderately sized central contingency budget to cater for more serious events or incidents. This budget was being used appropriately.</li> <li>• It was pleasing to note that the BCU has embarked on a process to require and challenge a clear business case for expenditure on specific items. Furthermore the need for this process appeared to be understood by staff at all levels.</li> <li>• The BCU has reduced an anticipated overspend and it is expected that the BCU will meet spending limits at year end.</li> <li>• There were some indications that officers are exceeding the BCU limits for unpaid 'time in lieu' and owed rest days although it was noted that a limit of 16 hours owed seems particularly low. <b>The SMT may therefore wish to review these limits to ensure time owed is actively managed and that working time regulations are met.</b></li> </ul>



<b>Recommendation 3</b>	
<p><b><i>That the BCU command team, in conjunction with the Force director of intelligence, review the development and production of strategic and tactical assessments and target and problem profiles to ensure that the final products are clear, concise and focused. Further, the purpose and structure of the pre-tasking meeting must be reviewed and clearly defined and, if appropriate, incorporated into the formal tasking and co-ordinating meeting. The BCU command team must ensure that tasking and co-ordination meetings are dynamic and purposeful.</i></b></p>	
<b>Action taken by BCU</b>	<b>Measurable impact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A process to monitor and quality assure strategic intelligence assessments has been put in place. The headquarters intelligence-led policing team has reviewed recent intelligence assessments produced by the BCU.</li> <li>• The intelligence unit review and advise on the production of tactical assessments.</li> <li>• The Force has introduced an IT based system called 'PROMS' to record, update and manage tactics being deployed to reduce and resolve a range of crime and disorder issues affecting the BCU. This system has been used at Congleton and Vale Royal since November 2004. It supports the BCU tasking and co-ordinating process, where the activities being used to address problem issues are regularly reviewed.</li> <li>• Since the original Inspection the SMT has reviewed, changed and developed the BCU tasking and co-ordinating meetings and supporting processes. The 'pre meeting' has now been discontinued.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The current assessment is clear and comprehensive. It contains analysis of crime trends and assesses the impact and effect of recent policing tactics.</li> <li>• Although only recently introduced, all staff were conversant with the PROMS system and it is now central to BCU tasking in relation to persistent crime and disorder problems. As a system that provides up to date reference to monitor some areas where activity is being focused, PROMS is useful. However, it is not yet clear that the greater proportion of mainstream activity is being directed through the tasking and co-ordinating process. There is further scope for the BCU to develop more focused accountability of tasks.</li> <li>• Thus far the use of PROMS has not supported effective evaluation of tasks or results. This gap has been recognised and the SMT is developing an improved approach.</li> <li>• Participants welcomed the changes to the tasking and co-ordinating meetings and it was clear that the meetings are now more focused.</li> </ul>

<b>Recommendation 4</b>	
<b><i>That the BCU command team, in conjunction with headquarters, develops a consistent and rigorous approach to minimise the time from a DNA sample or fingerprint being found at a scene to the point at which action is taken, whether by means of arrest or elimination, following a positive identification.</i></b>	
<b>Action taken by BCU</b>	<b>Measurable impact</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The BCU has introduced a control process to ensure quality in DNA sampling and processing.</li> <li>• Performance measures to monitor the completion and ‘turnaround’ time for DNA hits have been introduced.</li> <li>• BCU performance is reported monthly to headquarters.</li> <li>• The Force forensic investigations unit has introduced a courier service to speed up collection of samples obtained by CSIs and processing time is now one week.</li> <li>• A similar approach to speed up the handling of DNA samples from detained persons is being explored.</li> <li>• Fingerprint and DNA hits are currently managed on databases. Plans are in place to replace these with use of the Force crime recording system ‘OMEGA’.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Currently 34% of DNA hits are completed within the 14 day target period.</li> <li>• The steps taken have improved the handling of forensic samples and action taken where positive results are found.</li> <li>• This is reflected in the BCUs excellent performance in domestic burglary detections.</li> <li>• The SMT is encouraged to explore in detail the practices used under ‘Operation Converter’ by West Yorkshire Police. This includes specific analyses of intelligence and tactics supporting the follow up of positive forensic results.</li> <li>• Cheshire Constabulary has already piloted this approach and it is intended to extend the use of this highly effective method to all BCUs in the Constabulary.</li> </ul>

- **A total of 16 suggestions were made during the initial Inspection. It was clear during the follow-up Inspection that these matters have all been addressed.**

#### 4. Monitoring Assessment and Follow-up Action

Have all recommendations been accepted and acted upon?	Yes
Has the remedial action/implementation plan led to demonstrable improvement?	Yes
Has performance in relation to national/local targets improved? If not, are the reasons for deterioration understood (eg, transition to NCRS) and being addressed?	Yes
Have any problems arisen since the Inspection that are likely to affect performance and merit further scrutiny by HMIC?	No
Other than notification of monitoring outcome to regional office (lead staff officer), is any further action required by HMIC Inspection team – eg, contact with PSU?	No

**Chief Superintendent Wendy Walker**  
**Staff Officer to HM Inspector of Constabulary**