

**Inspection of Durham South BCU  
Durham Constabulary  
April 2005**



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# Introduction

1. Between 18 and 22 April, 2005 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary conducted the Inspection of Durham South Basic Command Unit (BCU).
2. There are over 300 basic command units (BCUs) in England and Wales and no two are alike. They vary in size from a little over 100 officers to over 1,000; some serve densely populated, ethnically diverse inner cities, while others cover vast tracts of sparsely populated countryside. What they do share are some key aims and objectives, specifically to work with partner agencies on reducing crime in their areas, and to do so with integrity. Scrutiny of police performance is shifting from aggregate force outcomes to the performance of individual BCUs, with the recognition that policing is essentially a locally delivered service. However, BCUs are not islands – they operate within a framework of policy and support determined by headquarters based chief officer teams. The precise configuration of policing units and the balance of resources between HQ and BCUs varies across the 43 forces in England and Wales.
3. The focus on performance in reducing crime and disorder is likely to be relentless. Forces and police authorities, working with local authorities and other community safety partners, will need to raise their game year after year. Indeed, the statutory regime of Best Value demands 'continuous improvement'. The Government recognises the need for additional resources in the fight against crime, and the 2004-07 comprehensive spending review (CSR) settlement is acknowledged to be the most generous the police service has received for many years. More police officers, better communications and information technology and ever more sophisticated forensic techniques should all enhance police effectiveness. However, the potential for the service as a whole to deliver better results in crime reduction and detection cannot conceal an inescapable fact – that performance between BCUs operating in similar policing environments and with comparable resources varies to a degree that is at times remarkable.
4. Leadership by BCU commanders is probably the single most important determinant of BCU effectiveness. The responsibilities of command are significant, and some superintendents are not well supported in terms of the strength of their management teams and/or the quality and quantity of support from headquarters. Without exception, staff in pilot sites wanted their management teams to be more visible and accessible. One outcome from BCU inspections should be a better understanding of the practical manifestations of effective leadership.
5. In trying to make sense of the variations in operational performance, which exist – to differing degrees – in every force, a key ingredient is *focus*. The best performers focused efforts of their staff through timely, dynamic local briefings that are supported by a well managed intelligence system. They set targets and make sure that staff are aware of them; they communicate results and celebrate success. They define responsibilities and hold individuals to account for how they have used their time. In some BCUs this performance culture is absent, reflected in the fact that the personal development review (PDR) system of setting and monitoring individual

goals is in abeyance. A nationwide rolling programme of inspections that focus upon performance and leadership is thus likely to produce an upturn in results.

**Note**

**For consistency, the term Basic Command Unit (BCU) will be used throughout this report, albeit that within Durham Constabulary local policing is delivered through an area command structure.**

## Overview

**1.** Durham Constabulary polices the area of County Durham and Darlington Borough (a unitary authority), occupying an area of around 2,429 square kilometres. The Force is bordered by Northumbria and Tyne and Wear to the north, Tees Valley and North Yorkshire to the south, Cumbria to the west and the North Sea coast on its eastern border. Much of the area is rural, with over half the population (estimated at around 592,000) living in settlements of 10,000 people or less. A high proportion of these are resident in around 260 villages or small towns, many of which are former mining communities. The Force has some larger centres of population within its boundaries, including Peterlee, Darlington, Chester-le-Street and Durham City.

**2.** The past 30 years has seen substantial changes to the region's economic base; the original post industrial structure was characterised by large-scale heavy industries, particularly coal. By 1994 however, all 154 coal mines in the area (employing 108,000 people at its peak) had closed. The local economy has been forced to diversify more into manufacturing and service sectors, driven within the Force area by the work of the County Durham Strategic Partnership and the Tees Valley Partnership. The north east region retains an unemployment rate higher than the national average (4.9%). The figures for County Durham and Darlington are 6.4% and 6.3% respectively (2002 baseline). As with all counties in the UK, Durham and Darlington retains pockets of relatively high deprivation, health problems and lack of educational attainment, particularly amongst young men. In County Durham, three out of the seven local authorities appear in the top 50 most deprived areas in the government index of multiple deprivation. The minority ethnic population stands at around 1.2%, the majority of which originates from the Indian sub-continent.

**3.** The Force headquarters is located on the outskirts of Durham City, within easy reach of the main centres of population. An executive team, consisting of the Chief Constable, deputy chief constable, assistant chief constable and director of finance command the Force and provide the support and strategic leadership required.

**4.** The Force vision is 'Aiming for Excellence' and its flagship community reassurance strategy 'StreetSafe' provides the framework for operational activity in this area. The Force is committed to putting more uniformed officers into communities and solving community problems as outlined in the 'Streetsafe' vision. As a result, over the last year the Force's organisational structure has undergone a major review which has caused significant upheaval. This is due to moving from a six basic command unit (BCU) model, to two BCUs covering the whole Force - north and south (known locally as areas). A total of 12 sectors (defined geographic areas) have now been created with local policing teams, commanded by an inspector, responsible for much of the reassurance work which underpins the Force strategies.

**5.** At the time of the Inspection the Force had responsibility for 1,709 police officers, 764 police staff, 41 police community support officers (PCSOs) and 78 special constables. The total budget for the Constabulary in 2004/05 was £100,663,550.

## Durham South BCU

**6.** Durham South BCU is coterminous with the boundaries comprising Darlington Borough Council, Sedgefield Borough Council and the district councils of Wear and Tees, an area covering 1,759 square kilometres.

**7.** Policing in the BCU has therefore to take account of urban and rural factors, old and new towns, historic villages, remote settlements, central business areas, together with established and emerging retail and industrial parks. The resident population is 278,648 and the combined housing stock 124,100.

**8.** The BCU has a strength of 553 police officers, 151 police staff, 27 PCSOs and 31 active special constables. Policing is based on the communities comprising Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland, Crook, Darlington, Newton Aycliffe, Spennymoor and their surrounding areas. Each has a community inspector (two at Darlington) with responsibilities for identifying the policing priorities for their communities.

**9.** The south area policing plan for 2005/06 has been prepared in consultation with local strategic partnerships (LSPs), crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs) and police consultative groups. Community safety is the key theme with the following priorities identified:

- Public reassurance;
- protecting vulnerable people;
- alcohol related crime;
- disorder and anti-social behaviour;
- disrupt the supply of controlled drugs; and
- burglary and vehicle crime.

**10.** During the BCU Inspection week the team interviewed over 120 members of staff at all ranks and grades and a cross section of partner agencies. A number of reality checks and data gathering exercises were performed during this period, including discussions with staff at all outlying police stations, the intelligence unit, the custody suite and the south area communications room. The process concluded with a debrief to the BCU Commander and his command team, followed by a similar meeting with the executive team and Police Authority chair and members.

**11.** The inspection team would like to express its thanks to the BCU Commander and his staff for the courtesy, openness and assistance afforded them during the course of the Inspection. In particular, the constructive participation and the helpful nature of the BCU staff at all ranks and grades.

## Part One – Leadership

### The BCU Management Team

#### BCU Commander

**1.1** The post holder has 19 years' service and became Darlington Divisional Commander in April 2001. Following the Force restructure in April 2004 he assumed responsibility for the south area BCU incorporating Darlington, Sedgefield and Wear and Tees divisions. In addition to uniform and detective roles, he has the following headquarters experience - forward planning (corporate development), scientific support manager and head of the criminal justice department.

#### Superintendent (Area Operations Manager)

**1.2** The post holder has 27 years' service and was appointed temporary superintendent in May 2004 moving from his senior investigation role (SIO) in the professional standards department. He has operational responsibility for CID, core and community justice and has previously held chief inspector posts in all three roles. In addition, he has responsibility for policing Durham Tees Valley airport and Darlington football matches. He directs the national intelligence model (NIM) processes and is the firearms incident commander for the area. At silver command level, he is a Force PSU and CBRN commander.

#### Chief Inspector (Area Response Manager)

**1.3** The post holder has 25 years' service and joined the BCU on 15 November 2004 having been promoted to chief inspector in August 2003. Since his promotion to inspector in 1996 he has performed a variety of roles in that rank including core uniform inspector, staff officer to the ACC (head of foundation training at National Police Training) and planning manager within the corporate development department.

#### Chief Inspector (Area Community Justice Manager)

**1.4** The post holder joined Durham Constabulary in 1979. He has held various posts in uniform, CID and corporate development before becoming an inspector in 1995. He was promoted to chief inspector, community justice (with specific responsibility for criminal justice) in 2001. He has considerable experience in partnership working, project management and community policing. He is a trained firearms incident commander, Force negotiator and frequently undertakes acting superintendent duties. He transferred to his current role in December 2003.

#### Detective Chief Inspector (Crime Manager)

**1.5** The post holder was promoted to detective chief inspector in August 2003 at Wear and Tees division and joined the BCU on its establishment. He has spent the majority of his 29 years' service in CID at all ranks and has benefited from secondments to the Force drug squad, vulnerability unit and three years as liaison officer at the Forensic Science Laboratory, Wetherby.

#### Area Business Manager

**1.6** The post holder has worked with Durham Constabulary since June 1985 performing a variety of administration roles during this time including posts within HQ CID and criminal justice. In 2000 she was promoted to training resources manager, a principal officer post. In 2003 she transferred to the HQ support services

department as development manager and finally secured her current post in November 2003. The post holder has achieved a BTEC National Certificate in public administration, an NVQ Level 4 in management development, and a Postgraduate Diploma in human resources. She is a Member of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators.

### Visibility of the BCU Command Team

**1.7** A number of those interviewed during the Inspection cited the lack of command team visibility as a negative element of the restructure from three BCUs to one. This is almost inevitable given that the BCU command team has reduced from 12 members to six and their workload has increased considerably during the change process.

**1.8** The command team recognised that its visibility was likely to be a major concern and introduced a co-ordinated programme of visits to all stations. In addition to scheduled visits, senior officers are expected to go on patrol with staff during late turn shifts. Consideration of the records maintained indicates that regular visits are undertaken and in particular the BCU Commander's commitment to patrolling with staff is outstanding.

**1.9** Overall, staff had confidence in the command team, understood the heavy workloads involved in running a large BCU, and expressed the view that all members are approachable and supportive. Without exception, the BCU Commander's efforts were praised by staff, many stating: *"He never goes home and is always on patrol"*.

**1.10** The inspection team feel that once the accountability process is properly embedded within the BCU (see Part Two, Performance), it will present a further opportunity for the command team to become more visible and openly supportive of work being undertaken by operational staff.

**1.11** Staff associations expressed the view that members of the command team were approachable and listened to their views. However they feel that, although consulted on issues, decisions had invariably been made before their involvement. The BCU command team should ensure that staff associations are appropriately consulted and their views taken into account when making decisions affecting their members.

**1.12** **HMIC commends the efforts of the BCU command team to be visible and supportive of staff and, in particular, the commitment of the BCU Commander is applauded.**

### Strategic Management

**1.13** The BCU Commander has primary responsibility for the strategic development of the BCU both internally - as leader of the change programme - and externally with partner agencies. He is an active participant in all relevant Force strategic development groups including the Force review implementation group and policy advisory group. The BCU Commander represents the BCU at all four CDRPs (see Partnerships below). He is also actively engaged on numerous other partnership groups including the Darlington drugs and alcohol action team where he is vice chair.



**1.14** During the last twelve months the Commander has led the BCU through an intense period of change. In April 2004 three separate BCUs were combined to form a single command servicing half of the Durham Constabulary area. This necessitated considerable redesign of structures, roles, responsibilities and processes. There has been significant disruption to staff, many of whom have had to cope with changes to working practices, more remote support/management arrangements, and some with relocation to a different workplace. The restructure has clearly consumed a significant proportion of the senior management team's (SMT) time yet their operational commitment remains strong.

**1.15** A comprehensive BCU business plan, supported by a detailed development plan provides the appropriate framework for leaders within the BCU to take improvements forward constructively. The BCU Commander has personally led this development, drawing together national issues (including the modernisation programme), Force objectives and local priorities. Effective monitoring and review arrangements are in place within the BCU, managed by the performance and quality unit. Future inclusion of detailed financial and HR/training plans will help ensure that resources and skills are available to deliver all actions identified and documented within these plans (see later).

**1.16** During the Inspection it was clear that consultation of inspectors during the drafting of the business plan was limited and most of those interviewed felt that they had not played a role in its development. As a consequence, they gave the impression that they were less enthusiastic about the actions needed to make it a success than they otherwise would have been.

**1.17** **HMIC congratulates the BCU Commander and his SMT in developing such comprehensive and well managed business plans, but urges greater consultation to ensure that there is full support for implementation, particularly from the inspector rank.**

## Partnerships

**1.18** The inspection team met with a range of partner agencies during the Inspection, including representatives from the four LSPs and the three CDRPs.

**1.19** Partnership arrangements are complex due to the two-tier local government arrangements and due to the BCU servicing four local authority areas, as follows:

- Darlington Borough Council (unitary authority);
- Sedgefield Borough Council;
- Wear Valley District Council; and
- Teesdale District Council.

**1.20** Each local authority area has a LSP and a CDRP. Wear Valley and Teesdale have a combined CDRP resulting in the BCU servicing three groups. The BCU Commander chairs both the Darlington and the Sedgefield CDRPs and is the vice chair on the Wear Valley and Teesdale group. CDRPs have clear responsibility to report progress to their respective LSPs ensuring a wider understanding of all partnership activity.

**1.21** A number of themed or action groups report to the CDRPs as follows:

**Darlington**

- Tackling crime and disorder;
- anti-social behaviour;
- youth offending;
- substance misuse; and
- public protection.

**Sedgefield**

- Crime reduction (vehicle crime, burglary dwellings, violent crime);
- domestic abuse;
- substance misuse;
- ‘Streetsafe’ - including two further sub-groups - ethnic liaison and anti-social behaviour panel.

**Wear Valley and Teesdale**

- Substance misuse;
- Minority ethnic forum;
- domestic violence;
- anti-social behaviour; and
- four geographic task groups to deal with identified local problems:
  - Barnard Castle;
  - Stanhope;
  - Crook and Willington; and
  - Bishop Auckland.

**1.22** As mentioned in the Force Overview, ‘Streetsafe’ is the Force’s flagship community reassurance strategy encompassing four main themes:

- Presence in the community;
- environment and physical factors;
- effective response; and
- communication and police engagement.

**1.23** Despite this complexity there was considerable evidence of strong support for partnership working across the BCU and co-operation and understanding of current issues.

**1.24** The BCU Commander and chief inspector (area community and justice manager) are both very highly considered by partners and are acknowledged to be leading, managing and driving forward a number of strategic partnership issues. They understand the need to ensure that BCU interests are fully represented and that the new funding arrangements (through Safer and Stronger Communities) are complementary to the good work being undertaken on community safety - seeing this as change to represent an opportunity rather than a threat.

**1.25** Each CDRP has completed a crime audit and has developed its 2005-08 community safety strategy (two strategies for the Wear Valley and Teesdale group to

reflect their slightly different priorities). These align closely to the objectives contained in the BCU's area command plan – see table below ('Yes' indicates that the BCU objective is specifically mentioned in the respective community safety strategy):

<b>Figure 1: Community Safety Strategy</b>				
<b>BCU Plan objectives</b>	<b>Darlington</b>	<b>Sedgefield</b>	<b>Wear Valley</b>	<b>Teesdale</b>
Public Reassurance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Protecting Vulnerable People	Yes (including Domestic Abuse)	Yes (Domestic Abuse)	Yes (Domestic Abuse/Hate Crime)	Yes (Domestic Abuse/Hate Crime)
Alcohol Related Crime	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Disorder & Anti-Social Behaviour	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Controlled Drugs Supply	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Burglary/ Vehicle Crime	Yes / Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Others specified in CDRP plans	Theft pedal cycle, Theft from person, Violent Crime, Prolific and other Priority Offenders (PPOs)	Criminal Damage, Violent Crime	Rural Crime, Violent Crime, Criminal Damage (including deliberate secondary fires), PPOs	Violent Crime, Criminal Damage (including deliberate secondary fires), PPOs

**1.26** All partnership meetings were well attended and invariably had appropriate representation by partner agencies including the police (over 40 different meetings at various levels are attended by the police). The strong commitment made by the BCU to attend this number of meetings at all levels is laudable, and this is matched by the enthusiasm and strong participation in community safety based initiatives witnessed during the Inspection. These include:

- 'Streetsafe' (as described above);
- a number of very committed 'watch' groups particularly in the rural areas;
- perpetrators scheme to provide structured support for those who recognise that they may commit or be committing domestic violence/abuse. This extends to wider support to perpetrators' families. A Home Office funded post to manage domestic violence issues has been extended through mainstream police funding to ensure sustainability of this work;
- joint partner agency working at the Gladstone Street Annexe, Darlington. This has ensured a fully integrated approach with partners, appropriate information sharing, and a flexible approach to common objectives;
- multi-agency working arrangements through the four geographically based task groups at Weardale, Crook and Willington, Bishop Auckland and Barnard Castle. Community inspectors work closely with the local authority anti-social behaviour co-ordinator, health, probation, education, youth engagement, social services, housing, fire officers and community representatives to undertake problem solving

initiatives. Actions are agreed through a partnership tactical tasking and co-ordinating arrangement (similar to the police system) to identify:

- Crime and disorder hot spots;
  - prolific and priority offenders;
  - crime trends;
  - community intelligence; and
  - secondary fires in line with their arson reduction strategy.
- 
- Axenic 2004, a multi-agency initiative to deal with environmental and anti-social behaviour issues relating to one of the most deprived areas within the BCU.
  - Alleygates, a Wear and Teesdale initiative to erect gates at one end of backstreets or alleyways to reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour by restricting access to the rear of properties other than to residents or emergency services.
  - Nightsafe, a multi-agency initiative to reduce alcohol related violence, nuisance and disorder.

**1.27** The very positive partnership arrangements are reflected in the recent successful bid for beacon council status in relation to Darlington crime and disorder partnership. The partnership was assessed as ‘outstanding’ with the following summary:-

*“Darlington is the epitome of true partnership working, with all services housed under one roof and genuine multi-agency co-operation taking place on a daily basis. The police have made a huge commitment to the partnership both in resources and through joint funding and have reorganised so as to have coterminous boundaries with the council.”*

**1.28** Overwhelming evidence during this Inspection illustrates that such commitment is not restricted to Darlington but is evident across the BCU, in all three CDRP areas. **HMIC commends the BCU command team, particularly the BCU Commander and the chief inspector (community and justice), for their commitment, dedication and considerable ability in supporting partnership working and helping to make these partnerships so successful.**

## **Operational Management**

**1.29** SMT roles and responsibilities align to the corporate model, i.e. a BCU Commander supported by a superintendent (operations), two uniformed chief inspectors (response and community justice), a detective chief inspector and two senior police staff posts (business manager and personnel manager).

**1.30** There are 25 inspectors within the BCU. One has responsibility for community partnerships in Darlington, 12 are allocated to core (24/7 response) duties at three main locations across the BCU, six are detective inspectors and six are

responsible for the community beat teams (CBTs) working from the six main police stations.

**1.31** The sergeant and constable establishments of the BCU are 80 and 439 respectively – sergeants strength being almost up to establishment, constables being 3.3% below. Resources are approximately divided between the main disciplines as follows:

<b>Figure 2: Distribution of sergeants and constables</b>		
<b>Response &amp; Community Policing</b>	<b>Crime</b>	<b>Support</b>
72%	21%	6.5%

**1.32** The proportion of police officers in support roles is high. The Force has recognised the need for greater civilianisation but the lack of available funding and the inability to use police officer salaries more innovatively are prohibiting such development.

**1.33** Core response teams parade for duty at the six main police stations. They work a duty pattern based on a traditional four shift system which is acknowledged as outdated and a review is currently underway to identify a more modern shift pattern to better meet operational needs. There are four core teams at each station to cover the shift rota, with the 24 teams being supervised by a sergeant. Four core inspectors are based at three principal sites (Darlington, Newton Aycliffe and Bishop Auckland) to oversee these teams and provide the necessary leadership and guidance to, in the main, young in service officers. These arrangements are in line with the former three BCU structures, but will also require review to support the impending new duty system and, unless additional sergeants and inspectors are to be provided, some rationalisation will be necessary. The BCU command team has recognised the need to review this structure, but a decision to rationalise core inspector cover from 12 officers to 10, taken in January 2005 at the South area focus day, had not been implemented at the time of the Inspection.

**1.34** Community beat inspectors provide supervision and support to all community beat officers, including those at the more rural police offices across the BCU. The teams concentrate on local problem solving issues, working closely with partners and utilising the newly introduced partnership tasking structure (as described under partnerships, above). The community beat teams include PCSOs and also have the support of the Special Constabulary, as appropriate. The structure does not afford command responsibility by community beat inspectors for all staff working within their areas, the BCU not operating to a purely geographic policing model.

**1.35** During the Inspection there was a strong recurring theme that beat officers, CID and core (24/7 response) officers tended to work in isolation of one another, with little information sharing and minimal integrated working. This was more evident at Darlington than the outer stations but was still a factor in all stations visited.

**1.36** Ironically, the joint partnership annexe at Darlington was cited on several occasions by those interviewed as the main cause of a dislocation between beat officers and other operational staff. Police officers from the different disciplines do

not parade for duty at the same venue, joint briefings are not normal practice (see later), and officers tend to interact only when a conscious effort is made to do so. Similarly, Darlington beat officers located at Gladstone annexe tend to be distanced from local communities living on the outskirts of the town. This has been recognised by the BCU command team and beat officers are soon to parade for duty at locations within the local communities. Whilst this helps address the potential loss of interaction with the public it does not resolve the lack of integration of beat officers with other police staff.

**1.37** CID officers are based at five of the six main stations (Barnard Castle being the exception), five detective inspectors are based at BCU headquarters, the other at Bishop Auckland. Most CID officers seen during the Inspection did not consider community engagement to form part of their remit but rather saw themselves in a more traditional CID role. In the interests of improved integration and 'joined-up' working, some BCU command teams in the region have provided community inspectors with direct command responsibility for CID officers working within their team to help address volume crime problems and investigation. CID officers based at BCU headquarters then have clear responsibility for crime of a more serious nature and for provision of policy, guidance and support to their community beat colleagues. A similar model is worthy of consideration for Durham South BCU.

**1.38** Community safety teams consisting of sergeants and constables service the three main CDRP areas and are appropriately located at Darlington, Spennymoor and Bishop Auckland police stations. The Darlington team is led by an inspector but the other teams are line managed directly through their community safety sergeant to the chief inspector (community justice). This arrangement is placing unnecessary additional demands on the chief inspector, who already experiences a heavy workload emanating from complex partnership arrangements and through his responsibilities as the BCU portfolio holder for criminal justice. This situation is partly historical in nature as a dedicated community safety inspector traditionally focuses on Darlington and is partly due to the pressures brought about by meeting the demands of such an active partnership. Widening the Darlington community inspector's remit would ensure a consistent and corporate approach whilst providing much needed support to the chief inspector. Alternatively, increasing the accountability of the community safety teams to their corresponding community beat inspectors would facilitate a more inclusive team approach within the sectors whilst also reducing the burden on the chief inspector.

### **Recommendation 1**

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the BCU command team review the structures, roles and responsibilities in respect of core, community beat, community safety and CID staff to accommodate the new shift pattern (once agreed) and to ensure more effective and integrated working arrangements across the BCU.**

**1.39** Operational proactive capability is mainly provided by a team consisting of four detective sergeants and 12 detective constables (under the direction of a detective inspector) based at an outlying station but having a BCU-wide remit. The team is well motivated, well equipped and there was strong evidence provided of their success in relation to operations across all areas of the BCU. The successes of the team are not widely known by other members of the BCU, partly because some of the work undertaken is of a confidential nature and partly because, even after an operation is complete, there appears to be little involvement of other officers outside that team. There is often considerable value in involving community beat teams and community safety at the conclusion of a sensitive operation to consider wide-ranging multi-agency partnership opportunities, particularly if the offences in question have a direct impact on the local community. In addition, involvement of uniformed officers (possibly on secondment) would widen the understanding of the role of this valuable team whilst providing development opportunities for less experienced staff.

**1.40** Roads policing, dog support and firearms capability is provided by HQ based uniform operations rather than being devolved to the BCU. There appears to be a strong, 'on the ground' working relationship but more formal requests for support emanating from the tactical tasking and co-ordinating meeting was less evident (see later).

**1.41** There are three operational custody suites in the Durham South area, Darlington, Newton Aycliffe and Bishop Auckland. The inspection team had three areas of concern in relation to these arrangements.

**1.42** Firstly, the bail management system is unreliable and is dependent on individual commitment and personal efficiency rather than being systematic and accurate. The process has three elements:

- Details of the alleged offender is recorded on the custody IT system;
- a paper based bail diary is kept; and
- necessary paperwork is collated and should be available within a file in the custody suite in readiness for the alleged offender's return to answer bail.

**1.43** During one visit to Newton Aycliffe custody suite the inspection team was informed that two people were due to or had answered bail that day. One was included in the bail diary but the paperwork was absent and there was no record on the custody system. The other had the paperwork available but there was no record in the bail diary. Similar problems were identified at Darlington.

**1.44** Secondly, the inspection team had concerns that risk assessments relating to those being detained were not rigorously assessed, but rather the process appeared automated and the custody record endorsed without real consideration of the issues involved.

**1.45** Thirdly, the inspection team witnessed a situation where the custody sergeant at Newton Aycliffe was operating alone at night although several cells were occupied.

This presents health and safety risks to both those sergeants operating under this system and those detained under his/her care.

## Recommendation 2

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the BCU command team review the custody arrangements, to ensure that appropriate working practices and procedures are implemented to support this crucial area of work.**

### Demand Management

**1.46** A large number of officers interviewed raised concerns about the communications centre servicing the BCU, particularly the apparent lack of incident disposal other than by deploying an operational resource. The Force has undertaken a significant amount of work in this area but chief officers acknowledge that there is still considerable development needed to modernise the service for both the external and internal customer, not least in systems and information technology. This is to be subject of a Best Value review shortly.

**1.47** The inspection team was satisfied that, other than the SMT (see summary later), workloads were not excessive and most staff interviewed considered them manageable.

### Organisational Culture

#### Communications

**1.48** The BCU command team meets quarterly with the Force executive (Chief Constable, deputy chief constable, assistant chief constable and director of finance). This meeting, following EFQM principles of continuous improvement, identifies pertinent issues affecting the BCU in relation to:

- Leadership;
- process management;
- communications;
- finance;
- welfare; and
- community outcomes.

**1.49** The BCU Commander has a separate quarterly meeting with the Chief Constable, again looking to identify how performance can be improved and to identify 'enablers' to that process. A monthly performance review meeting is held between the BCU Commander and the assistant chief constable and this is followed by an accountability meeting between the BCU Commander and the superintendent (operations).

**1.50** The Force executive recently addressed a meeting of community beat officers within the BCU to ensure they understood the vision and development of the Force.



During that meeting, the BCU Commander made a presentation explaining how the BCU was translating those plans into action. It is intended to repeat this process with core, CID and police staff members and arrangements are being progressed. To ensure that all staff have an awareness of these issues, the BCU Commander has e-mailed a copy of his presentation to everyone in the BCU and is reinforcing this during his regular visits to the outstations.

**1.51** Day-to-day communication in relation to individual roles and responsibilities is good and accountability meetings, although in their infancy and yet to be consistently applied, should in the future provide much needed focus for staff and assist in further developing a performance driven culture.

**1.52** As outlined in the strategic management section of this report, inspectors feel that they could be more actively engaged in the business planning process. Similarly, most staff interviewed felt that the plans, although comprehensive, seemed to promote everything as a priority and greater clarity was needed to assist with their day-to-day activity.

**1.53** To ensure that all staff are conversant with priorities pertinent to their roles, HMIC urges the BCU command team to develop a communications plan in conjunction with, and for delivery by, inspectors and equivalent police staff members.

### Complaints/Public Satisfaction

**1.54** The table below compares the complaints received in respect of police officers for the 15 most similar BCU (MSBCU) group for the 2003/04 financial year.

**1.55** Durham South received 22% less complaints per 1,000 officers than the group average and was the fourth lowest of the group. Three of the 91 complaints received were substantiated which is at a similar level to the other BCUs in the group.

BCU	Complaints Received	Police Strength	Complaints per 1,000 officers	Finalised	Substantiated
BCU A	51	214	238	47	3
BCU B	68	368	185	71	2
<b>Durham South</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>551</b>	<b>165</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>3</b>
BCU C	92	456	202	103	4
BCU D	66	283	233	68	0
BCU E	99	354	279	57	3
BCU F	53	235	225	53	0
BCU G	144	619	233	157	3
BCU H	105	574	183	94	6
BCU I	42	237	177	59	0
BCU J	67	560	120	86	3
BCU K	66	280	236	66	0
BCU L	74	248	298	64	6
BCU M	158	550	287	165	6
BCU N	69	380	181	74	0
<b>MSBCU Average</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>394</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>3</b>

**1.56** More recent data indicates that overall the number of complaints received Force-wide has increased during the last three years from 169 during 2002/03 to 204 in 2003/04 and finally, 274 in 2004/05.

**1.57** The inspection team did not have access to detailed BCU statistics for this period, but Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary urges the BCU command team to investigate this further. It should be satisfied that any increases in the numbers of complaints received for Durham South are analysed and remedial action taken, as appropriate.

### Working relationships

**1.58** There is clearly a single employee culture within Durham South BCU, police officers and police staff being supportive and working constructively together. The inspection team was impressed with the attitudes of staff and the positive working environment within the police stations visited.

**1.59** As outlined previously, the BCU command team, and in particular the BCU Commander, work hard to ensure that they are visible; they go on patrol during late shifts, and this is recognised and highly valued by those staff interviewed. However, the lack of fully integrated working between the policing disciplines as outlined in the operational management section above is considered the main area for improvement.

**1.60** Similarly, whilst day-to-day tactical leadership by sergeants and inspectors was evident, staff lacked real focus and had no clear understanding of current BCU performance nor how it was intended to progress with more strategic development. As a consequence, most officers viewed their work in isolation of wider BCU achievement, and had little perception of what was important outside their immediate team, and even less understanding of developments in other areas of the BCU to where they were working.

**1.61** Concern was raised by a number of those interviewed that formal acknowledgement of good work and commendations appeared to be less prominent since reorganisation to a single BCU, and many attributed this to a loss of contact with senior managers. The inspection team is aware that formal processes exist and that the command team has acknowledged good work. Consideration of the numbers of staff who have received commendations recently tends to rebut staffs' perceptions. In the 12 month period January to December 2003, 14 officers from the Durham South area received either an Area Commander's Commendation or Chief Constable's Commendation. During the period January to December 2004, 82 officers received such an award and 21 are waiting for a HQ decision on the BCU's recommendation. Even taking into account the increased size of the BCU resulting from amalgamation to the three areas, this represents a significant increase in such acknowledgement.

**1.62** HMIC urges the BCU command team to continue in their efforts to acknowledge the good work done by staff and to ensure that, whenever appropriate, such acknowledgement is publicised widely across the BCU.

## Resource Management

### Administration

**1.63** The new police staff structures have reduced senior management within the BCU from three support managers (former three BCU structure) to two, a business manager and a personnel manager. The BCU has a large establishment (approximately 700 police officers and police staff) and the inspection team has some concern that the capacity and resilience of this small team may be restrictive to the future development of the BCU. The additional responsibilities through impending increased financial devolvement, whilst presenting opportunities, will add to that pressure. That said, both the business manager and the personnel manager are extremely enthusiastic, committed and clearly have a good grasp of the development needed to take the BCU forward.

**1.64** **HMIC urges the BCU command team to monitor this situation and, if a lack of senior police staff capacity and resilience becomes a serious barrier to the ongoing progression of the BCU, make appropriate representation at the Force executive.**

### Financial Management

**1.65** The BCU has restricted financial freedom as few budgets are devolved (currently limited to overtime, vehicle hire and some supplies and services). Such restriction makes it difficult for the BCU to develop progressive financial plans in support of the BCU business plan objectives.

**1.66** As a consequence, financial management is mainly based on simple forecasting and accounting. The business manager has recognised the need to build a more strategic resourcing plan into the BCU business plan and the impending increased devolvement (police staff salaries from July 2005) is seen as an opportunity to develop this process. The Force has recognised the need for further financial freedom and this will occur incrementally over the next three years.

**1.67** The BCU's 2004/05 budgetary provision was appropriate and, despite the need to identify some efficiency savings during the year, an overall modest underspend was achieved and carried over to 2005/06. The BCU is expected to identify further efficiency savings during 2005/06 making the more strategic approach to financial planning and the recommended overarching review of core, community safety, CID and beat resources essential.

### Health and Safety

**1.68** The BCU business manager appropriately represents Durham South at the Force-led health and safety forum, and health and safety is an agenda item on the BCU command team meetings where such issues are raised and discussed. However, there is no specific health and safety meeting held within the BCU as the command team determined that this was unnecessary as such matters could be appropriately addressed at the management team meeting. **HMIC encourages the command team to reconsider the decision not to hold BCU health and safety meetings as there are significant benefits from having an official forum for staff or their representatives to raise issues of concern, and to have actions appropriately recorded and monitored.**

**1.69** The BCU has been subject to an audit by headquarters to establish BCU compliance with health and safety legislation and Force policy and an action plan agreed.

## Absence Management

### Police Officers

**1.70** The sickness rate for police officers in Durham South BCU (combining the performance of the three previous BCUs) during 2003/04 was 11.3 days per officer, which is above the Force average of 9.82 days and the MSBCU average of 10.66 days. The Wear/Tees area had the highest rate of the three original BCUs at 14.6 days compared to rates below the Force average for the other two areas. Overall Durham South was 10<sup>th</sup> out of 15 MSBCU for police officer absence.

**1.71** More recent Force data indicates that Durham South has a current sickness rate of 10.23 days per officer (March 2005) which is below the Force average (10.56 days) but, as little information was available regarding detailed trend analysis, it is not possible to determine whether this is a sustained improvement. Long-term sickness is clearly a problem for the BCU as during March 2005 18 officers were on long-term sickness (defined as over 28 days) and this accounted for 309 lost working days that month, i.e. almost 59% of the entire BCU sickness. Compared to the North BCU, Durham South had six more members of staff on long-term sickness (18 compared to 12) and six more on medium-term sickness (14 compared to 8). This tends to indicate that the absence management policy is not having the desired effect of returning staff to duty as quickly as practicable.

### Police Staff

**1.72** Sickness absence per police staff employee was higher than that of police officers during 2003/04 at 12.24 days. It was above the Force average (10.33 days) and approximately 1.5 days higher than the MSBCU average (10.6 days per employee). Sedgefield represented the area of greatest concern with a sickness rate of over 15 days per staff member. Once again the BCU ranked 10<sup>th</sup> out of the 15 MSBCUs.

**1.73** Consideration of more recent absence data indicates that the sickness rate may be decreasing for police staff members (11 days per member in March 2005), which almost matches that of the Force. Once again, trend information was not available to the inspection team, therefore it is difficult to assess whether such improvement has been sustained for a meaningful length of time.

**1.74** The BCU command team has made absence management an element of the accountability process for all line managers. In addition, compliance with the Force's attendance policy (contact with those on sickness absence, visits, back-to-work interviews, references to occupational health, recuperative duties etc.) is reinforced with all line managers. A monthly meeting is convened to address sickness absence issues however, to date, the lack of reliable management information has been a major impediment to sustained improvement.

**1.75** The Force anticipates that improvements to management information will accrue from the procurement of the NSPIS HR system (National Strategy for Police Information Systems) later this year. **Whilst acknowledging the shortcomings with**

the current Force sickness absence data, Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary is concerned that the BCU command team does not have sufficient analytical management information to make important decisions in respect of absence management.

### Recommendation 3

**HMIC recommends that the BCU command team ensure that available information is analysed on a regular basis to identify particular sickness absence problems or trends affecting the BCU and to implement necessary remedial action.**

## Training and Development

**1.76** The business manager represents the BCU at the Force-led training user group (TUG), a strategic level meeting to identify and prioritise Force training provision. The BCU has also commenced a training needs analysis to identify the BCU skill profile and determine necessary training requirements to support delivery of BCU objectives. This work is in its infancy but is essential to the development of the BCU. Area training officers (HQ training staff) are allocated to each BCU to manage their training portfolio and these staff are assisting with the training needs analysis.

**1.77** The BCU command team also recognise that the PDR process should better identify training needs and to facilitate this, line managers complete a learning needs form which they submit to the personnel manager for consideration and, as appropriate, progression to HQ as a training bid.

**1.78** Consideration of the BCU finances reveals that there was no allocated training budget for police staff during 2004/05 – training clearly being limited to that available through HQ training. The potential lack of training opportunities is likely to result in less than effective use of these valuable staff, affect morale if training requests are continually refused due to wider Force priorities taking precedence, and leave the BCU short of skills as staff move into new posts. **HMIC urges the BCU command team to review the training budget in relation to police staff as part of the 2005/06 financial business planning.**

**1.79** The BCU does not have a probationer tutor unit but rather allocates probationer constables to individual tutor constables. Given that the BCU currently has 61 probationer constables working within the area and a further 21 undergoing initial training, it may prove beneficial to take the lead of a number of BCUs in the region and develop such a unit. The advantages are:

- Consistency in training/development;
- consistency in monitoring progress;
- resilience and wider support for these very inexperienced officers; and
- increased opportunity to ensure appropriate levels of supervision.

**1.80** As the BCU rationalises and reviews the core/CID/beat/community safety

roles and responsibilities (see Recommendation 1 above) an opportunity may exist to create such a unit.

### Personal Development Review (PDR)

**1.81** Sixty seven performance development reviews for staff working within the Durham South BCU were examined during the Inspection. Sixty of these had been completed within the previous 12 months, 58 were evidence based assessment of performance, but only two had a SMARTS development/action plan (the others being vague, not linked to objectives or not measurable). The inspection team is aware that a new system, based on the national competency framework, has recently been introduced and this requires positive promotion throughout the BCU by line managers if it is to be a success.

**1.82 Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary considers that the BCU command team should take steps to ensure that the new PDR process is fully utilised to link individual performance to BCU objectives, set SMARTS action plans and draw out training/development needs to better inform the BCU's training plans.**

### Estates

**1.83** The estate in Durham South was, in the main, of a good standard and ongoing refurbishment was taking place at the time of the Inspection. Darlington police station (also Durham South HQ) is rather cramped and property storage (both 'found' and 'property other than found') is clearly a problem. The inspection team was concerned about the amount of property left insecure in police stations and a review of processes for accepting property at front counters is needed. The BCU command team has recognised this problem and **HMIC welcomes the decision to conduct a full property review shortly.**

**1.84** The co-location of the Force administration support unit with the CPS at Newton Aycliffe police station is appropriate and welcomed. The advantages of this arrangement are already in evidence.

**1.85** One concern raised by staff, particularly at the outer stations was the day-to-day ownership of estate and security issues. Since the removal of command teams at two stations (to form the command team at Darlington), lines of responsibility for all outstations have become unclear. It seems that community beat inspectors are expected to hold such responsibility but those concerned felt that this is impractical. The BCU command team will need to clarify this as soon as practicable.

### Special Constabulary

**1.86** There are 31 Special Constabulary members supporting the BCU – one area officer, two assistant area officers, one station officer and one recruitment officer. The Force has introduced a bonus payment scheme for these staff in recognition of their good work and this has been well received. Special constables work constructively with both core and community beat officers and a good working relationship has also developed with PCSOs. The inspection team was impressed by the attitude and commitment of those interviewed. Members of the Special Constabulary felt valued by operational colleagues and stated that there was a good rapport.

**1.87** The main area of concern cited by special constables was that they are having some difficulty accessing radios when they attend for duty. Whilst fully understanding the necessity for security of a nationally encrypted radio system, it is important that these valuable resources are not hampered nor made to feel less important than their colleagues by not being able to access this essential equipment.

**1.88** **HMIC urges the BCU management team to review the allocation of radios to members of the Special Constabulary.**

#### Police Community Support Officers

**1.89** There are currently 27 PCSOs working within the BCU and following a recent successful funding bid by the Force, a further 10 are soon to be allocated to the South BCU. As would be expected, given this BCU's strong partnership commitment, they are appropriately deployed, working alongside community beat officers and relevant partner agency staff on high visibility patrol and quality of life/public reassurance initiatives.

**1.90** All members of staff seen during the Inspection spoke highly of PCSOs, including members of the Special Constabulary who were enjoying working closely with them.

## Part Two: Performance

### Performance Management and Accountability

#### Performance Management Structures

**2.1** The monthly performance review meeting between the BCU Commander and the assistant chief constable focuses on continual improvement in relation to both crime reduction and investigation. Detailed statistical information regarding individual sector performance is available at this meeting. This is followed by an accountability meeting between the BCU Commander and the superintendent (operations) where issues raised at the first meeting are discussed and actions/initiatives in relation to the key performance indicators assessed.

**2.2** A series of cascaded accountability meetings between line managers and staff has recently been introduced to ensure that everyone within the BCU understands that it is their responsibility to improve performance across the BCU.

**2.3** In addition, at the fortnightly tactical tasking and co-ordination group meeting, performance is considered and each morning any crimes and incidents of note that were committed during the night are analysed.

**2.4** Whilst acknowledging that this system is in its infancy and is to be subject to continual review, the inspection team had the following concerns:

- The application of the ‘accountability’ process, other than that between the BCU Commander and the superintendent, is inconsistent. A number of those interviewed at the more senior levels stated that their ‘accountability’ meeting was a rather less formal process consisting of an ad hoc discussion during the normal working day with no identified actions documented.
- In relation to response/core staff, the inspection team felt that a quarterly ‘accountability’ meeting between the chief inspector and the inspectors was insufficient to make any real difference and would not provide the vehicle to identify problems quickly enough for dynamic action to be taken. In addition, several performance measures which have been set are inconsistent with officers’ priorities and reinforced their perception that ‘everything is a priority’.
- There was little evidence of ‘accountability’ meetings taking place with CID officers. The inspection team was concerned that a number of detectives interviewed did not have knowledge of the current detection rates and had very few suggestions of how investigation could be improved throughout the BCU.
- The lack of stated BCU-wide targets against priorities is resulting in very few members of staff knowing the current BCU performance. ‘Continuous improvement’ - measuring each individual area of the BCU to continually reduce crime and improve detection rates in



each one, whilst laudable, does not focus BCU-wide activity to where it can have the greatest impact. Indeed, continuous improvement in several areas of Durham South BCU is unrealistic as they are already some of the lowest crime and disorder areas in the country. **Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary appreciates that the ‘accountability’ process is relatively new and applauds the development of a performance framework. However, if it is to significantly drive up performance it has to be consistently and rigorously applied, targets must be set against objectives and accountability meetings must be held regularly.**

**Recommendation 4**

**Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the BCU command team review performance accountability processes across the BCU.**

## Intelligence Led Policing

### National Intelligence Model

**2.5** A strategic threat assessment is produced on a 12 monthly basis by the BCU and is of a good standard. The resulting control strategy has seen a six monthly review and from April 2005 has identified six main areas to address. Several of the control strategy priorities are made up of a number of crime areas which are not highlighted within the strategic threat assessment as posing a significant threat for the BCU. Their inclusion broadens the priorities for the BCU, loses focus and creates significant additional work for analytical staff. (See table below.)

**Figure 4: Control Strategy**

Control Strategy Priority	Includes sub areas of
Public Reassurance	
Protecting Vulnerable People	Bogus Official Burglary Domestic Violence Hate Crime Child Protection Issues
Alcohol – related crime	Violence Damage
Disorder and Anti-social behaviour	
Disrupt the supply of controlled drugs	Focus on Class A Drugs
Burglary and Vehicle Crime	Burglary Dwelling and Other Than Dwelling Theft from and of Motor Vehicles

**2.6** This control strategy mirrors the BCU’s business plan objectives which is positive in many ways as it keeps these priorities prominent and consistent, however due to the breadth of the crime areas grouped within each control strategy heading it makes the TTCG a lengthy and somewhat drawn out meeting. For example,

‘protecting vulnerable people’ whilst very important and rightly a business plan objective, none of the crimes associated with it are causing this BCU a sufficient problem to justify inclusion in the TTCG for action plans to be drawn up for either target or problem profiles. The TTCG is not intended as a mechanism for managing business objects but should be a dynamic process focusing on those issues that need targeted action.

**2.7** The tactical assessment provides the framework for the TTCG meeting and includes a review of overall crime and incident levels as well as current and predictive assessments for each control strategy priority.

**2.8** The TTCG meeting is held fortnightly at Darlington police station and chaired by the superintendent. The meeting has recently been revised and is attended by intelligence unit staff, crime scene investigators, CID and chief inspectors. Additionally, the new meeting format has secured the involvement of sector inspectors via telephone conferencing. The inspection team observed a TTCG meeting which was professionally conducted, with the chair displaying a clear understanding of the operational issues facing the BCU and a determination to support front line staff tackling criminality and disorder.

**2.9** Durham South’s commitment to the multi-agency persistent and prolific offenders (PPOs) scheme is admirable however, attempting to discuss the top 20 PPOs as target profiles within the TTCG is ambitious and is not working as well as it might. Prioritisation before the meeting to a more manageable number would better focus resource on intelligence gathering, preparing effective target profiles and deploying resource. As a result, the level of intelligence supporting target profiles was limited and in-depth discussion on these profiles was not evident.

**2.10** **The BCU command team is encouraged to review the current control strategy to ensure it clearly and accurately reflects the key priorities for the BCU to enable the TTCG to focus on the main issues causing the greatest problem for the BCU as identified through the strategic threat assessment.**

**2.11** The predictive and forward planning information presented within the tactical assessment was well utilised within the TTCG and a clear initial allocation process was evident which summarises all allocated tasks and identifies action ‘owners’. This is produced in a timely manner and circulated across the BCU by intelligence unit staff following each meeting. It was disappointing however, that a rigorous accountability/audit process beyond this point does not underpin action plan monitoring. Updates to TTCG on previous tasks allocated are sporadic in nature and plan owners are often not held firmly to account for this. In addition, there is no evidence of analysis of the results of previous allocated tasks and it is difficult to determine exactly what has worked in tackling crime and disorder problems nor even when some operations are concluded.

**2.12** Clarity is also needed of how bids for level 2 resources are to be made by plan owners – currently, this appears ad hoc, unstructured and BCU-wide prioritisation of such bids is not evident.

**2.13** As mentioned earlier in the report, the main proactive capability of the BCU is provided by a team of four detective sergeants and 12 detective constables working from Spennymoor police station. Tasking of that team is appropriately co-ordinated within the TTCG. Awareness of the proactive teams' role, availability and tasks undertaken were not widely known across the BCU, the unit being seen as working on confidential tasks in isolation of other departments and sections. As a result sector staff felt they were unable to bid within the TTCG for the use of the proactive resource to assist in any planned initiatives or operations.

**2.14 The BCU command team is encouraged to review proactive capacity/accessibility to ensure sectors are able to benefit from such valuable support.**

### Intelligence Handling

**2.15** In January 2004, as part of the Force restructure, the three area based intelligence units of Wear and Tees, Sedgefield, and Darlington amalgamated to form the south area intelligence unit now located at Darlington police station.

**2.16** A detective inspector has responsibility for the intelligence unit and the crime management unit. Roles within the intelligence unit are divided into key functional areas: data management, analysis and research, field intelligence, financial investigation and source management. They all strive to deliver NIM products and to assist the BCU with all aspects of intelligence-led policing.

**2.17** Within the intelligence unit, there are three analysts and three researchers who are all supervised by a senior analyst. Their primary responsibility is the production of the four intelligence products: strategic assessment, tactical assessments, target and problem profiles. They have been divided into three teams, each containing a researcher and analyst and each team has responsibility for two of the control strategy areas.

**2.18** During 2004/05 the analytical teams produced over 650 products (excluding briefing items and DNA and fingerprint research). At the time of the Inspection the analytical teams were working on nine problem profiles and 11 target profiles. Whilst all products were commissioned through the TTCG process, analytical staff expressed concern with the high number of analytical products required. The resulting and ongoing situation is that there are significant backlogs and delays in the production of documents with out of date material being provided to frustrated plan owners across the BCU.

**2.19** In addition to producing the four main intelligence products, the teams have responsibility for preparation of operational briefing documents which are produced three times per week - each of the 12 sectors receiving a bespoke package. Intelligence staff also research and produce intelligence packages relating to all positive fingerprint and DNA returns (hits). Such 'hits' (approximately 40 per month) are received directly by the intelligence unit on behalf of the BCU and an intelligence package is produced and forwarded to the newly formed converter team. Much of this analytical work is unnecessary as subsequent enquiries by the converter team often reveal that the 'hit' was the result of legitimate access to the crime scene (e.g. owner) rather than relating to a potential offender. As a consequence the intelligence unit

staff tend to undertake superficial research in respect of all 'hits' as they do not expect success from the majority of cases. There is a need to review this whole process if the BCU is to maximise the benefits of both the converter team (see performance, paragraph 2.30 ) and the intelligence unit.

**2.20** There was widespread frustration across the BCU with the current situation both within the intelligence unit and by those in receipt of their products. **HMIC considers that a full review of the analytical requirements of the BCU is required to ensure appropriate use of analysts and researchers' skills and to maximise existing capacity to enhance the timeliness and usefulness of intelligence products.**

**2.21** The data management unit (DMU) was established in January 2004 with the primary remit to ensure intelligence submitted was validated, correctly coded and where appropriate entered on to the Force 'Memex' system in a timely way. The agreed establishment being five full-time posts including one supervisor. Since September 2004 the DMU has been up to establishment.

**2.22** In December 2004 the Force moved to direct inputting of intelligence by officers and this has resulted in expansion of the role of the DMU staff from simply 'inputters' to include verification, review and weeding of intelligence to ensure compliance with the Data Protection Act. Staff interviewed expressed some concern over the lack of identified formal training and development for the new role. At the time of the Inspection DMU staff reported no significant delays with intelligence verification and they were able to deal with the submissions in a timely manner. Of concern to the inspection team however, was the current backlog of intelligence items to be weeded - this was reported to be in excess of 7,000 items at the time of the Inspection. DMU staff were currently working ad hoc overtime to impact upon the backlog. **HMIC urges the BCU command team to satisfy itself that DMU personnel are appropriately trained to fulfil their new role and that a longer term strategy is developed to address the 'weeding' requirements of the BCU.**

**2.23** Since the introduction of the direct intelligence input, DMU staff reported a reduction in intelligence submissions by sector staff across the BCU. Whilst the inspection team acknowledge the direct inputting system is relatively new within the Force, it was concerning to hear from staff interviewed across the BCU of the limited training provided on the new system and widespread difficulties in accessing computer terminals. **HMIC would urge the BCU command team to satisfy itself that staff has sufficient training and accessible IT to maximise intelligence submissions.**

**2.24** There is an establishment of six field intelligence officers (FIOs) within the intelligence unit (five being in post at the time of the Inspection). The team operate within the three CDRP boundaries, two FIOs allocated to each. The FIOs work closely with sector teams, CID and the source management unit, all being trained detectives or undergoing such training. This enables them to provide relevant advice and support to fill intelligence gaps, support initiatives and provide RIPA (Regulatory Investigative Powers Act) guidance across the BCU. Some difficulties were experienced by the FIOs in fulfilling and pursuing intelligence due to the lack of available transport.

**2.25** The source management unit is based at Darlington and is currently managed by a detective inspector (controller) supported by a detective sergeant and six dedicated source handlers. At the time of the inspection the BCU had 29 covert human intelligence sources (CHISs) covering all aspects of the control strategy. The co-ordination and flow of intelligence from the source unit appeared effective. The DMU prioritises items received from the source unit thus ensuring no significant backlogs. The unit was experiencing some delays however in carrying out their business due to the limited IT terminals and, once again, lack of available transport.

## **Briefing Systems**

**2.26** As stated above, the intelligence unit produces bespoke briefing packages three times per week for each sector, the packages being available electronically for all staff to view. The inspection team observed uniformed briefings at each police station across the BCU at varying times of the day and evening, all of which varied in style and delivery.

**2.27** All briefing rooms have appropriate computer systems available to ensure those undertaking the briefing are able to make effective use of the intelligence packages produced. During the briefing, information can be displayed on large screens for all staff to view but it was disappointing that this facility was not always utilised. Often, supervisors printed out the document and passed round any relevant photographs to staff or requested staff view the briefing material themselves following the formal briefing by accessing the system.

**2.28** The briefing format consisted of structured information against each control strategy priority, including previous crime patterns, hot spots, target offenders and some tasking. Once again, due to the breadth of control strategy this often resulted in lengthy briefing items using out of date information (the documents are only prepared three times per week). Tasking and good informal debriefing processes were more apparent in the outer sections where there was some sharing of 'hot' intelligence issues.

**2.29** The inspection team was disappointed at the limited attendance and involvement at core briefings of CID and beat officers. Improved attendance could provide greater focus on intelligence requirements and encourage more integrated working between the teams.

### **Recommendation 5**

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the BCU Commander undertakes a comprehensive review of intelligence-led policing structures, processes, priorities and equipment to maximise the effectiveness of National Intelligence Model products (including briefing).**

## BCU Performance

**2.30** Within this section the term most similar basic command unit (MSBCU) will be used to make comparisons of performance. Durham South BCU is grouped with 14 other most similar BCUs as follows:

Figure 5: MSBCU	
Force	BCU
Cleveland	Langbaugh
Gwent	Caerphilly & Blenau
Lancashire	Eastern
Cumbria	Workington and Whitehaven
Lancashire	Pennine
Durham	South Durham
Gwent	Pontypool
Kent	South East Kent
Kent	Swale
West Yorkshire	Calderdale
South Yorkshire	Doncaster
Northamptonshire	Northern
Northumbria	Northumberland
South Wales	Neath and Port Talbot
South Wales	Bridgend

## Crime Data Analysis

**2.31** The table below compares Durham BCU's performance for the period May 2004 to February 2005 to the same period during 2003/04. There is a discrepancy with data relating to April 2004 therefore that month is discounted for the purposes of analysis and further comparison with the MSBCU group.

Figure 6: Performance				
Performance Indicator	Performance May 2004 to February 2005	% Change	MSBCU group mean	MSBCU group rank
Recorded crime per 1,000 population	69.78	-6.21%	79.59	5
Recorded crime detection rate	29.4%	<b>Not available</b> (Force data indicates a reduction of approximately 1.5 percentage points)	30.88%	10
Domestic burglary per 1,000 households	6.84	-30.53%	9.58	5
Domestic burglary detection rate	22.98%	<b>Not available</b> (Force data indicates an improvement of approximately 2.5 percentage points)	20%	5
Robberies per 1,000 population	0.25	-47.66%	0.40	6

Figure 6: Performance continued				
Robbery crime detection rate	14.93%	Not available (Force data indicates a reduction of approximately 11 percentage points)	32.24%	14
Vehicle crimes per 1,000 population	8.36	-29.81%	9.92	4
Vehicle crime detection rate	12.91%	Not available	15.13%	10
Violent crimes per 1,000 population	11.13	-0.8%	16.6	2
Violent crime detection rate (includes violence against the person, robbery and sexual offences)	66.23%	Not available (Force data indicates a reduction of approximately 6 percentage points)	60.18%	3

## Crime Reduction

**2.32** As stated earlier in the report, the BCU does not have specific targets set by the Force for crime and public order reduction but rather, is expected to continuously improve in all key PI areas. Each of the three CDRP areas have targets set independently for the period 2005-2008 which are recorded in their community safety strategies.

**2.33** Durham BCU, consistent with the Force, has a very good track record in crime reduction and this has been the main focus. The BCU continues to experience a reduction – there being a 6.21% decrease in total crime per 1,000 population for the period under consideration. This is almost 10 crimes per 1,000 population below the MSBCU average during 2004/05 and places it 5<sup>th</sup> out of the 15 BCUs in this group. Crime trend analysis shows that the BCU consistently remains below the MSBCU average.

**2.34** In relation to domestic burglary per 1,000 households, the BCU has seen a huge reduction (over 30%) compared to the corresponding period in 2003/04. At 6.84 crimes per 1,000 households it is significantly below the MSBCU average of 9.58 crimes and is again placed 5<sup>th</sup> in the group. The BCU is consistently below the MSBCU average throughout the year.

**2.35** In relation to vehicle crime per 1,000 population, the BCU has once again experienced a considerable reduction (of almost 30%) reflecting the amount of effort directed into a crime area that was recently the cause of some concern to the police standards unit. Durham South is now placed 4<sup>th</sup> out of the 15 most similar BCUs in this category of crime.

**2.36** Durham South is ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in its MSBCU group for violent crime at 11.13 offences committed per 1,000 population compared the group average of 16.6.

**2.37** According to Force statistics, both ‘criminal damage’ and ‘burglary other than a dwelling’ increased slightly in Durham South at 6.1% and 7.6% respectively. This reflects a similar position to that in the Force’s other BCU, Durham North.

**2.38** Force data also indicates that the county has experienced a steady growth in public order incidents reported to the police over the last three years (see table below):

<b>Year</b>	<b>April/February data</b>	<b>Increase</b>
2002/03	4,189	N/A
2003/04	4,691	12%
2004/05	5,010	7%

**2.39** The ‘public order’ category is a combination of 12 incident types including breach of the peace, community problems, racial/ethnic incidents, domestic disturbances, vehicle crime, criminal damage, and youths causing annoyance.

**2.40** Darlington area has the highest number of such incidents in the Force (10,215 during April 2004 to February 2005). It experienced almost a 23% increase compared to the previous year and had the highest number of incidents per 1,000 population at almost 114. This is 3.5 incidents per head of population more than the next highest, Sedgefield (also in the Durham South BCU). Whilst Sedgefield has experienced a slight drop in incidents compared to last year, Wear and Tees is also showing a significant increase (above 25%).

**2.41** The BCU command team has recognised this is a problem and has formed an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO) team at both Darlington and Newton Aycliffe. The Darlington team has been created using existing resources and consists of one inspector, one sergeant and four constables. Newton Aycliffe’s team consists of two sergeants and two constables against an establishment of six posts. These teams have had considerable success working with their respective local authorities considering the relatively low numbers of staff involved.

**2.42** The top 40 PPOs form a significant element of the CDRP area TTCG meetings attended by the community beat inspectors. Although these are extremely valuable meetings, the inspection team was concerned that a BCU-wide analysis and co-ordination of resources to focus strongly on particular problem hot spots was not evident (see intelligence-led policing above).

**2.43** The BCU command team is to be congratulated on its performance in relation to crime reduction; the BCU’s positioning (1<sup>st</sup> quartiles or just outside for all key crime reduction areas) is commendable. Vigilance in relation to increasing public order offences is clearly a priority and this is recognised by the BCU command team.

### **Crime Investigation**

**2.44** For the period May 2004 to February 2005 the BCU has an overall detection rate of 29.40%, slightly below the MSBCU average and placing it 10<sup>th</sup> highest in the MSBCU group.



**2.45** Comparison of recent Force data (slightly different period to MSBCU data - April to March) indicates that the detection rates across a number of crime areas have reduced between 2003/04 and 2004/05 but has improved in three key areas, as below.

<b>Figure 8: Detection Rates</b>			
<b>Category</b>	<b>Detection rate 2003/04</b>	<b>Detection rate 2004/05</b>	<b>Percentage point change 2003/04 to 2004/05</b>
Burglary – Dwelling	19.5%	21.8%	+ 2.6 percentage points
Vehicle Crime	10.0%	12.4%	+ 2.4 pp
Theft	20.5%	22.6%	+2.1 pp
Burglary – Other	11.9%	10.2%	- 1.7 pp
Criminal Damage	16.8%	14.4%	- 2.4pp
Violent crime	73.3%	66.8%	- 6.5 pp
<b>All Crime</b>	<b>31.0%</b>	<b>29.1%</b>	<b>- 0.9 pp</b>

**2.46** Burglary dwelling is the area showing greatest increase in detections at 2.6 percentage points compared to last year, and is placed 5<sup>th</sup> out of 15 in the MSBCU. The BCU has a burglary dwelling detection rate almost 3% above the MSBCU average representing very good performance.

**2.47** The detection rate for violent crime has clearly reduced since last year. However, the BCU is still rated 3<sup>rd</sup> in the MSBCU table and enjoys a detection rate over 6 percentage points higher than the MSBCU average. Comparison with 2002/03 data illustrates that the decline in performance has not been limited to last year as the previous year experienced a 2.4 percentage points reduction. In total, there has been a two year decline in the violent crime detection rate of almost 8.5 percentage points.

**2.48** Vehicle crime, although seeing a significant improvement to the detection rate is still over two percentage points lower than the MSBCU average and is only 10<sup>th</sup> in the MSBCU table of 15.

**2.49** The robbery detection rate, at just under 15%, is a matter of considerable concern as it is 17.3% below the MSBCU average and places Durham South in bottom place in the MSBCU table.

**2.50** For the 11 month period April 2004 to February 2005, Durham South detected 750 more crimes than the MSBCU average, preferred charges or summonses on 900 more occasions, but used cautions as a method of disposal 40% less often than its MSBCU group average. In respect of violent crime, despite very similar numbers of reported incidents to the group average, charges/summonses were issued 36% more, cautions were used 27% less and fixed penalty tickets 30% less.

**2.51** This low number of fixed penalty notices compared to the MSBCU group is surprising given the high numbers of ‘public order’ incidents experienced in this BCU.

**2.52** The high proportion of case disposal by charge or summons in Durham South BCU is laudable. However, HMIC is concerned that the BCU may not be maximising opportunities to either appropriately increase its detection rate by greater use of cautions and fixed penalty notices or may be dealing with disposal

**by more bureaucratic means than necessary. The BCU command team should undertake research to ensure such opportunities are not being missed.**

**2.53** The BCU has identified detection rates as an area for improvement. The DCI has a weekly meeting with the CPS to ensure that decisions regarding statutory charging are assessed and improvements to police and CPS processes are identified and progressed. In addition, a converter team has been established to deal with DNA and fingerprint hits, see below.

### Converter Team

**2.54** To improve investigation of positive DNA and fingerprint returns the BCU command team introduced a converter team in January 2005 using existing BCU resources. It consists of a detective sergeant and three detective constables with analytical support being provided by the intelligence unit.

**2.55** The unit currently receives an average of 40 DNA and fingerprint hits on a monthly basis and progress of the unit is regularly considered by line management. Despite being operational for four months, no formal analysis of results and performance of the unit had been undertaken.

**2.56** The converter team raised concerns about the quality of the intelligence packages produced for them by the intelligence unit. This is limited to previous convictions and recent intelligence. The reason for the limited support by the intelligence unit is outlined earlier within the intelligence-led policing section, i.e. due to insufficient analytical capacity rather than because of the skills or commitment of staff.

**2.57** For the converter team to have the desired and essential impact on crime investigation the following is required:

- The profile of the unit across the BCU should be raised and made clear that it is a significant element of the detection strategy;
- More refined intelligence systems are required to ensure that research is better focused and supportive;
- The quality of crime recording, especially detailed MOs needs to be addressed to ensure similar crimes to that subject of a positive identification can be established. The BCU did not receive a favourable review from the recent Force NCRS audit.

### Detection Plan

**2.58** The BCU does not have a comprehensive detection strategy. As a consequence, whilst elements of such a plan may be in existence, they are not properly co-ordinated to ensure maximum impact.

**2.59** Such a strategy should outline appropriate ownership for crime related areas and necessary actions, identify review dates and evaluation parameters in respect of key objectives under the following four categories:

- Training needs;
- intelligence opportunities;

- investigation; and
- offender management.

**2.60** The Force promoted professionalising the investigation process (PIP) is an element of such a strategy. There was evidence that the PIP programme is being driven throughout the BCU and that officer progress is being effectively monitored by line managers. However, staff did not really understand how the programme fitted into the wider objectives of the BCU.

### Recommendation 6

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the BCU command team develop an integrated detection strategy to draw together all elements of this important area of policing and ensure that every opportunity is taken to maximise the BCU's capacity towards improved investigation.**

## Summary

**2.61** The BCU management team has worked extremely hard over the last 12 months to establish the new BCU following the amalgamation of the previous three BCU areas, and members are to be congratulated on what they have achieved over such a relatively short period of time. They have maintained community partnership arrangements that are exceptional (being awarded beacon status in one area).

**2.62** However, they recognise that they have not yet completed the re-modelling of the BCU and that there is still considerable work to be undertaken, not least in respect of:

- Systems (particularly IT systems) supporting the BCU;
- performance management/accountability and HR processes;
- improved financial strategic management;
- review of police officer structures and roles to facilitate better integrated working across the disciplines and ensure the BCU operates as one;
- proactive/intelligence-led policing;
- crime investigation; and
- internal communications.

**2.63** The BCU command team has done exceptionally well to lead the BCU to its current position, but from this firm base a new and progressive implementation plan is required that builds on the BCU Commander's business plans and monitoring mechanism. A recurring theme during the Inspection was the enormity of the work being undertaken and the difficulty staff have in determining priorities. This must be addressed quickly and the full buy-in of staff, driven by inspectors at the tactical level, is now required.

**2.64** Prior to reorganisation, the three separate BCUs each had a BCU Commander (Superintendent range 2), two chief inspectors (crime and operations), and a senior

police staff post (support manager) – 12 senior management posts altogether. Following reorganisation, for the same policing area there has been a reduction of one superintending post, three chief inspectors and a senior police staff member - a reduction of over 40%.

**2.65** Consideration of the levels of senior police officer management (chief superintendents, superintendents and chief inspectors) as a ratio of the number of officers under their command (see below) across the MSBCU group reveals that Durham South’s management capacity is one of the lowest, this despite managing such a large reorganisation.

**Figure 9: Senior Police Officer Management**

BCU	No of Senior Police Officers	Establishment	Ratio senior officers to establishment
BCU 1	4	233	58
BCU 2	4	245	61
BCU 3	8	532	67
BCU 4	4	303	76
BCU 5	3	231	77
BCU 6	5	390	78
BCU 7	3	240	80
BCU 8	3	248	83
BCU 9	7	653	93
BCU 10	6	587	98
South Durham	5	558	112
BCU 11	4	467	117
BCU 12	3	364	121
BCU 13	5	617	123
BCU 14	3	383	128
MSBCU Average	4	403	90
Durham South if one more senior officer deployed	6	558	93

**2.66** The BCU command team, as hard as they are prepared to work, have a finite capacity and they are now having difficulty finding the time needed to fully engage the rest of the staff on the BCU. The Commander is exceptionally committed in this regard but the demands placed upon him, from partners alone, are significant.

**2.67** The inspection team feels that if this BCU is to progress as well and as quickly as the Force executive wish, consideration should be given to increasing the chief inspector establishment by one. This will bring it more in line with the MSBCU average and alleviate the current pressures on the command team. In addition, the numbers of senior police staff posts are low. Whilst this may be appropriate, it should be subject to close monitoring as the demands increase on the BCU.

**2.68** That said, Durham South is a well managed and an effectively led BCU. The commitment of the BCU command team and focus on partnerships during a period of

immense change is commendable. As a consequence, crime reduction performance remains excellent but crime investigation/detection is an area for improvement. A comprehensive detection strategy and improvements to intelligence-led policing arrangements are the key to this.

**2.69** Ensuring that the policing disciplines (core, CID, community beat, proactive) work much more in unity, with clear objectives, is essential and the inspection team feels that the necessary review of these areas following agreement on a new duty rota provides an opportunity to address this. The current policing structures, based on CDRP areas, may be inhibiting necessary changes to ensure the best use of operational resources across the BCU. Whilst the inspection team fully understand the sensitivities involved, if the BCU is to operate to maximum effect it is important that such changes be expedited whilst managing the expectations of partners.

**2.70** Overall, the BCU Commander is to be complimented for what has been achieved to date. He and his team are clearly taking the lead in many difficult areas, are well respected, and have considerable operational credibility to take this BCU forward.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary makes six recommendations:

**1.** That the BCU command team review the structures, roles and responsibilities in respect of core, community beat, community safety and CID staff to accommodate the new shift pattern (once agreed) and to ensure more effective and integrated working arrangements across the BCU.

[Para 1.38 refers]

**2.** That the BCU command team review the custody arrangements, to ensure that appropriate working practices and procedures are implemented to support this crucial area of work.

[Para 1.45 refers]

**3.** That the BCU command team ensure that available management information is analysed on a regular basis to identify particular sickness absence problems or trends affecting the BCU and to implement necessary remedial action.

[Para 1.75 refers]

**4.** That the BCU command team review the performance accountability processes across the BCU.

[Para 2.4 refers]

**5.** That the BCU Commander undertakes a comprehensive review of intelligence led policing structures, processes, priorities and equipment to maximise the effectiveness of National Intelligence Model products (including briefing).

[Para 2.29 refers].

**6.** That the BCU command team develops an integrated detection strategy to draw together all elements of this important area of policing and ensure that every opportunity is taken to maximise the BCU's capacity toward improved investigation.

[Para 2.60 refers].