



HMIC Inspection Report
Hertfordshire Constabulary

October 2007



Hertfordshire Constabulary – HMIC Inspection Report

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Introduction to HMIC Inspections

For a century and a half, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has been charged with examining and improving the efficiency of the police service in England and Wales, with the first HM Inspectors (HMIs) being appointed under the provisions of the County and Borough Police Act 1856. In 1962, the Royal Commission on the Police formally acknowledged HMIC's contribution to policing.

HMIs are appointed by the Crown on the recommendation of the Home Secretary and report to HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, who is the Home Secretary's principal professional policing adviser and is independent both of the Home Office and of the police service. HMIC's principal statutory duties are set out in the Police Act 1996. For more information, please visit HMIC's website at <http://inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/>.

In 2006, HMIC conducted a broad assessment of all 43 Home Office police forces in England and Wales, examining 23 areas of activity. This baseline assessment had followed a similar process in 2005 and has thus created a rich evidence base of strengths and weaknesses across the country. However, it is now necessary for HMIC to focus its inspection effort on those areas of policing that are not data-rich and where qualitative assessment is the only feasible way of judging both current performance and the prospects for improvement. This, together with the critical factor that HMIC should concentrate its scrutiny on high-risk areas of policing – in terms of risk both to the public and to the service's reputation – pointed inexorably to a focus on what are known collectively as 'protective services'. In addition, there is a need to apply professional judgement to some key aspects of leadership and governance, where some quantitative measures exist but a more rounded assessment is appropriate.

Having reached this view internally, HMIC then consulted key stakeholders, including the Home Office, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Association of Police Authorities (APA). A consensus emerged that HMIC could add greater value by undertaking fewer but more probing inspections. Stakeholders concurred with the emphasis on protective services but requested that Neighbourhood Policing remain a priority for inspection until there is evidence that it has been embedded in everyday police work.

HMIC uses a rigorous and transparent methodology to conduct its inspections and reach conclusions and judgements. All evidence will be gathered, verified and then assessed against an agreed set of national standards, in the form of specific grading criteria (SGC). However, the main purpose of inspection is not to make judgements but to drive improvements in policing. Both professional and lay readers are urged, therefore, to focus not on the headline grades but on the opportunities for improvement identified within the text of this report.

Programmed frameworks

This report contains assessments of the first three key areas of policing to be inspected under HMIC's new programme of work:

1. Neighbourhood Policing;
2. performance management; and
3. protecting vulnerable people.

Neighbourhood Policing has been inspected not only because it is a key government priority but also, and more importantly, because it addresses a fundamental need for a style of policing that is rooted in and responds to local concerns. The police service must, of course, offer protection from high-level threats such as terrorism and organised criminality, but it

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also has a key role in tackling the unacceptable behaviour of the minority of people who threaten the quality of life of law-abiding citizens.

Performance management is an activity largely hidden from public view, although members of the public are directly affected by poor performance on the part of their local force. This inspection has focused on the need for forces to maximise the opportunities for performance improvement. It also posed questions as to whether forces have an accurate picture of how they are doing and the capability to respond to changing priorities. This area was selected for inspection because it is a key factor in delivering good performance across the board.

Protecting vulnerable people covers four related areas – child abuse, domestic violence, public protection and missing persons – that address the critically important role of the police in protecting the public from potentially serious harm. In the 2006 baseline assessment this was the worst performing area and raised the most serious concerns for HMIC and others. As a result, this area was prioritised for scrutiny in 2007.

Risk-based frameworks

In addition to its programmed inspection work, HMIC continues to monitor performance across a range of policing activity, notably those areas listed in the table below.

HMIC risk-based frameworks
Fairness and equality in service delivery
Volume crime reduction
Volume crime investigation
Improving forensic performance
Criminal justice processes
Reducing anti-social behaviour
Contact management
Training, development and organisational learning

While these activities will not be subject to routine inspection, evidence of a significant decline in performance would prompt consideration of inspection. For 150 years, HMIC has maintained an ongoing relationship with every force. This allows it to identify and support forces when specific issues of concern arise. On a more formal basis, HMIC participates in the Home Office Police Performance Steering Group and Joint Performance Review Group, which have a role in monitoring and supporting police performance in crime reduction, crime investigation and public confidence.

HMIC conducts inspections of basic command units (BCUs), also on a risk-assessed basis, using the Going Local 3 methodology. Combining these various strands of inspection evidence allows HMIC to form a comprehensive picture of both individual force performance and the wider national picture.

The grading process

Grades awarded by HMIC are a reflection of the performance delivered by the force over the assessment period April 2006 to July 2007. One of four grades can be awarded, according to performance assessed against the SGC (for the full list of SGC, see <http://inspectors.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/methodologies/baseline-introduction/ba-methodology-06/?version=1>).

Excellent

This grade describes the highest level of performance in service delivery and achieving full compliance with codes of practice or national guidance. It is expected that few forces will achieve this very high standard for a given activity. To achieve Excellent, forces are expected to meet **all** of the criteria set out in the Fair SGC and the vast majority of those set out in Good. In addition, two other factors will attract consideration of an Excellent grade:

- The force should be recognised, or be able to act, as a 'beacon' to others, and be accepted within the service as a source of leading-edge practice. Evidence that other forces have successfully imported practices would demonstrate this.
- HMIC is committed to supporting innovation and we would expect Excellent forces to have introduced and evaluated new ways of delivering or improving performance.

Good

Good is defined in the Collins English Dictionary as 'of a high quality or level' and denotes performance above the minimum standard. To reach this level, forces have to meet in full the criteria set out in Fair and most of the criteria set out in Good.

Fair

Fair is the delivery of an acceptable level of service, which meets national threshold standards where these exist. To achieve a Fair grading, forces must meet all of the significant criteria set out in the Fair SGC. HMIC would expect that, across most activities, the largest number of grades will be awarded at this level.

Poor

A Poor grade represents an unacceptably low level of service. To attract this very critical grade, a force will have fallen well short of a significant number of criteria set out in the SGC for Fair. In some cases, failure to achieve a single critical criterion may alone warrant a Poor grade. Such dominant criteria will always be flagged in the SGC but may also reflect a degree of professional judgement on the level of risk being carried by the force.

Developing practice

In addition to assessing force performance, one of HMIC's key roles is to identify and share good practice across the police service. Much good practice is identified as HMIC conducts its assessments and is reflected as a strength in the body of the report. In addition, each force is given the opportunity to submit examples of its good practice. HMIC has selected three or more of these examples to publish in this report. The key criteria for each example are that the work has been evaluated by the force and the good practice is easily transferable to other forces (each force has provided a contact name and telephone number or email address, should further information be required). HMIC has not conducted any independent evaluation of the examples of good practice provided.

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Future HMIC inspection activity

Although HMIC will continue to maintain a watching brief on all performance areas, its future inspection activity (see provisional timescales below) will be determined by a risk assessment process. Protective services will be at the core of inspection programmes, tailored to capacity, capability and the likelihood of exposure to threats from organised criminality, terrorism and so on. Until its full implementation in April 2008, Neighbourhood Policing will also demand attention. Conversely, those areas (such as volume crime) where performance is captured by statutory performance indicators (SPIs), iQuanta and other objective evidence will receive scrutiny only where performance is deteriorating, as described above.

The Government has announced that, in real terms, there will be little or no growth in police authority/force budgets over the next three years. Forces will therefore have to maintain, and in some areas improve, performance without additional central support or funding. This in itself creates a risk to police delivery and HMIC has therefore included a strategic resource management assessment for all forces in its future inspection programme.

Planned Inspection areas
Serious and organised crime
Major crime
Neighbourhood Policing
Strategic resource management
Customer service and accessibility
Critical incident management
Professional standards
Public order
Civil contingencies
Information management
Strategic roads policing
Leadership

Force Overview and Context

Geographical description of force area

Hertfordshire Constabulary's boundaries are congruent with those of the county of Hertfordshire. Local policing is delivered through three BCUs – Western, Central and Eastern – covering an area of 1,643 square kilometres, with a resident population of well over a million. In addition, there is also a considerable commuting population that passes through the county every weekday by road and rail, to and from London.

The county comprises a mix of large urban areas, new towns, market towns and villages, and has some of the busiest strategic roads in Europe. Most of the southern areas of the county share characteristics with their neighbouring parts of North London. On the northern and eastern edges of the county, the nature of the area is countryside, and its policing dimensions are therefore similar to the rural context of southern Cambridgeshire and western Essex.

The county continues to grow rapidly, both economically and demographically. Further major housing developments are planned for the coming years, both to the west of Stevenage and in the south east of the county on the Essex border.

The county has two international airports within a mile of its border, and all of London's airports are easily accessible. The significant motorway and trunk road network of the M1, M25, M10, A1(M), A41, A10 and A5 provides significant strategic road coverage and significant policing problems. There are three mainline rail links (Midlands, East Coast and West Coast) and easy access to the east coast sea ports. This level of infrastructure provides excellent transport links and characterises a highly mobile community.

These features, together with the proximity to London, shape the community that lives, works, travels or spends its leisure time in the county. Rail crashes at Watford, Hatfield and Potters Bar in recent years are reminders of the vulnerability to natural, accidental or terrorist incidents that result from such a concentration of transport infrastructure in one place. The Buncefield oil depot explosion in December 2005 reinforces the potential for major incidents in an area of densely populated residential and light and heavy industrial enterprises.

Many of the county's towns feature a vibrant night life that needs policing, and championship football is a regular feature of policing on Western BCU. A long history of film production has traditionally had little impact on policing. However, the arrival of the 'Big Brother' house at Elstree has attracted considerable media interest and, on occasion, specific interest in police activity.

The proximity to London, together with a number of key parliamentary seats, leads to extensive and numerous VIP visits and impacts on police resourcing, particularly at general election time. The impact of the high cost of living and difficulty in finding affordable housing for staff directly impinges on resourcing, recruitment and retention.

Demographic profile of force area

With a population of 1,041,000 in 1,643 square kilometres, Hertfordshire contains 19% of the people in the east of England in only 8.6% of the land mass. Some 20.5% of the population is under 16 years of age, while there is an 81% employment rate for those of employable age.

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The proportion of the population from black and minority ethnic communities is 6.3%, which is lower than the national average. The largest sector of this group (1.6%) is Indian. The more concentrated minority communities are predominantly situated on Western BCU with some notable exceptions, for example in Hitchin, in the north east of the county.

The education and health indices demonstrate that the county as a whole is on a par with or ahead of the region, and well ahead of national figures. However, in the areas where poor health and education are evident, this level of deprivation is felt all the more keenly when compared with the relative comfort of the rest of the county. Economically, the county performs well, with a £20 billion gross added value assessment. This represents 25.6% of the gross figure for the six counties in the East of England region.

Strategic priorities

The force has six strategic priorities: the first five set out what the force wants to achieve and the sixth provides objectives and targets for the use and development of the force's resources.

- **Provide a citizen-focused police service**
 - Improve public confidence and satisfaction in the service provided by the police
- **Reduce crime**
 - Reduce total crime, particularly serious violent crime
- **Investigate crime**
 - Bring more offences and offenders to justice
 - Tackle Class A drug supply and its impact on criminality
 - Combat serious and organised crime and protect the county from terrorism and domestic extremism
- **Promote public safety**
 - Reduce anti-social behaviour and disorder
 - Increase visibility, accessibility and reassurance in all our communities
 - Improve safety on our roads
- **Provide assistance**
 - Improve the police response to calls for assistance
- **Manage resources**
 - Recruit, retain and develop a skilled and representative workforce to deliver excellent policing to all communities in Hertfordshire
 - Work in collaboration where this will deliver tangible benefits and efficiencies

Force developments since 2006

Collaboration

The business case for collaboration with Bedfordshire on major crime and with Bedfordshire and Thames Valley for vehicle fleet has been agreed by the police authority. Detailed implementation plans are being prepared, with major crime working towards a 'go live' date in the autumn of 2007 and fleet to be fully live from April 2008. A bid for demonstrator site funding for major crime has been approved by the police minister.

Neighbourhood Policing

Fully staffed Safer Neighbourhood Policing teams are now in place across all communities, a year ahead of the national target. Community engagement and reassurance strategies

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around the fear of crime have been published and, using partnership and geo-demographic (ACORN) data, the force has progressed the mapping of the county via a 'fear of crime matrix'. This identifies the different ways in which communities are affected by their perceptions of safety. A toolkit has been developed to support targeted interventions at a neighbourhood level in order to increase a sense of community safety and raise confidence in the police.

Training facilities

In November 2006, most of the learning and development department moved from headquarters (HQ) and ad hoc rented sites to leased premises in Stevenage – Six Hills Court. There is increased capacity for training (especially IT), more modern facilities with a better learning environment, and improved access to the Hydra suite. This move has resulted in significant efficiency savings on external hire for training venues.

New custody facilities

The new cell block at Hoddesdon Police Station opened in June 2007 with a 16-cell capacity. Two further projects are progressing – Stevenage, which will have a capacity of 24 cells, and Hatfield, with 40 cells and an incorporated remand court. Both these projects are currently due for completion by June 2008. Additionally, custody facilities at Bishop's Stortford were re-opened in December 2006, jointly operated and funded by Essex and Hertfordshire and serving both counties.

Individual performance management

This project commenced in October 2006 and works through the personal development review (PDR) structure to establish clear individual performance measures for all officers in the force. In April 2007, measures for intervention officers and Neighbourhood Policing officers were introduced. The next phase is directed at roads policing and area crime groups.

Specialist interview unit

This employs some of the force's best interviewers, ensuring that prolific offenders are dealt with thoroughly in terms of both their criminality and their rehabilitation needs. The specialist interview unit (SIU) is also the force's training academy for the interviewing of suspects. Using a combination of theoretical and experiential learning, officers attending the SIU acquire the full range of effective interviewing skills. The SIU was responsible for 5.5% of the force's overall crime sanction detection rate and 40% of its total offences taken into consideration.

Choices and Consequences

This is a new, multi-agency initiative with the aim of providing an alternative to custody for the county's most prolific offenders. People recommended for the project must admit their full criminal history before being entered on the rehabilitation programme by a Crown court judge. Funding has been secured, training delivered and governance arrangements agreed. So far, three offenders have entered the project.

Completion of move to OSB1

All contact centre and control room staff moved across to new, purpose-built accommodation during the spring of 2007. Further developments for the use of OSB1 are being considered to support the collaboration projects. The building was formally opened by the Duke of Kent in May 2007.

Findings

National summary of judgements

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Neighbourhood Policing				
Neighbourhood Policing	6	14	21	2
Performance management				
Performance management	6	29	8	0
Protecting vulnerable people				
Child abuse	3	17	21	2
Domestic violence	1	13	27	2
Public protection	2	16	23	2
Missing persons	1	21	21	0

Force summary of judgements

Neighbourhood Policing	Grade
Neighbourhood Policing	Good
Performance management	Grade
Performance management	Good
Protecting vulnerable people	Grade
Child abuse	Good
Domestic violence	Fair
Public protection	Fair
Missing persons	Good

Neighbourhood Policing

GRADE	GOOD
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National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
6	14	21	2

National contextual factors

The national Neighbourhood Policing programme was launched by ACPO in April 2005 to support the Government's vision of a policing service which is both accessible and responsive to the needs of local people. It was anticipated that, by April 2007, every area across England and Wales would have a Neighbourhood Policing presence appropriate to local needs, with all Neighbourhood Policing teams (NPTs) in place by April 2008. For local communities this means:

- increased numbers of police community support officers (PCSOs) patrolling their streets, addressing anti-social behaviour and building relationships with local people;
- access both to information about policing in their local area and to a point of contact in their NPT; and
- having the opportunity to tell the police about the issues that are causing them concern and helping to shape the response to those issues (Home Office, May 2006).

By focusing on the key areas of resources, familiarity/accessibility, problem identification and joint problem solving, this inspection has identified the extent to which Neighbourhood Policing is being implemented. It has also examined forces' capability and commitment to sustain implementation beyond April 2008.

Contextual factors

Hertfordshire, like other forces, has not yet fully embedded Neighbourhood Policing. In part this is to be expected, owing to such a significant change in how resources in the form of specialist police officers, PCSOs, volunteers and support staff are selected, trained and deployed. However, the pace of change in the transition by the force to Neighbourhood Policing has been good; to a large extent this has been a result of the leadership displayed by chief officers and the police authority.

This recent inspection has shown that Hertfordshire needs to concentrate on a number of elements critical to the success of Neighbourhood Policing, including: the development of neighbourhood profiles; ensuring that neighbourhood and intervention officers are deployed appropriately and consistently throughout the force area; and monitoring supervisory officers' abstractions in a similarly robust manner to that now applied to officers and PCSOs.

Hertfordshire has ten crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs) contained within its three BCUs. There are 12 inspectors who each lead an NPT. These teams comprise sergeants, police constables, PCSOs, special constables and, in some cases, accredited organisations and volunteers. NPTs cover 75 Safer Neighbourhood (SN) areas between them and have designated staff as points of contact for communities.

Strengths

By 30 April 2007, the force had full implementation and coverage of PCSOs across every BCU. Every neighbourhood has a minimum of one PCSO. In total, 252 PCSOs are deployed: 208 were deployed against an agreed demand/vulnerability model; 60 PCSOs, match funded by CDRPs, were deployed to those CDRP areas for local deployment against priorities; 38 school PCSOs were deployed to align directly with the Hertfordshire extended schools consortium (HESC) 'hub' schools; and six PCSOs have been deployed to provide mobile police station services.

The organisation is clearly demonstrating a citizen-focused approach, which is demonstrable through the attitudes of staff and underpinned by qualitative sampling of service delivery. There is a clear link to the force's published quality of service commitment. Customer-facing functions are well integrated with this agenda. Developments such as the area service desks; and, PCSO staffed mobile police station services which reach out into communities, provide evidence of an incremental approach.

Neighbourhood Policing is a well defined philosophy within the force, underpinned by the strong foundation of commitment to its delivery made in 2004/05. The Chief Constable is a clear driving influence, while strategic accountability is held by the assistant chief constable (operations) (ACC (O)). Each BCU has its own area project plan, managed by an area board and feeding directly into the force-level SN board.

Staff throughout the organisation are aware of the force commitment to Neighbourhood Policing – and indeed their responsibilities within this. Neighbourhood Policing features strongly within the force annual policing plan. For the last four years, the force has hosted a problem-solving conference that has attracted both national and international delegates.

At county level, both the chief officer group and Hertfordshire Leaders Group ensure that all partners are represented at executive level, are consulted on a bi-monthly basis and provide clear strategic direction on key issues (ie local area agreements (LAAs)). In May 2007, the group ratified the Chief Constable's paper, signing up local authorities in Hertfordshire to the concept that a partnership-based SN approach is the only viable way to deliver stretch LAA targets on the ground.

The strategic youth and school PCSO initiative, linking staff directly with the designated hub schools within the HESC, arose directly as a result of partner influence. These PCSOs will be involved in appropriate lessons and have a specific role in engaging with the Hertfordshire school community. To this end, a new role profile has been developed to widen the working hours and scope of work carried out in relation to young people and the school community, before, during and after the school day and during holiday periods.

Recognition is consistently given to NPTs. Constables are in receipt of special priority payments, which were doubled to reflect the importance of the role. PCSOs have opportunities to develop their careers into particular theme areas. In Stevenage, there are specialist PCSOs focused on anti-social behaviour, hate crime, drugs and alcohol, and schools.

National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) BCU self-assessment templates are used to test progress across the force's BCUs at CDRP level. The results of regular Neighbourhood Policing audits are monitored at force level with local delivery being driven through action plans.

Considerable structural change has taken place within the force to ensure Neighbourhood Policing delivery at a local level. This has included the creation of CDRP-level chief

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inspector posts, responsible for all service delivery; the alignment of the Special Constabulary with Neighbourhood Policing; the implementation of local crime investigation units (LCIUs); and the creation of area service desks.

The SN project team is currently engaged in co-ordinating self-inspection activity and reporting to the programme board against the ten key deliverables and 38 critical success factors. Its current role is to drive improvement activity until business is fully normalised.

Local priority setting has been largely achieved through an alignment of Neighbourhood Policing with the existing council-led area committee meetings. Although this provides a convenient and at times advantageous structural fit, attendance by the public tends towards the vocal and visible. Nonetheless, these formal panels currently provide the mechanisms for public oversight and scrutiny of the street-level engagement referred to later.

The Neighbourhood Policing community engagement strategy has been rewritten as an overarching reassurance strategy. There is a focus on capacity building through the use of crime prevention panels, Neighbourhood Watch and community safety accreditation schemes. Currently, 118 staff across ten agencies have been accredited with relevant powers. These include University of Hertfordshire guards, Broxbourne park guards and licensing officers.

The force has invested in a dedicated tasking and problem-solving database, TAPS, which is widely used. At a CDRP level, joint action groups (JAGs) are the tangible mechanism for delivering a joined-up approach and form the basis for partnership tasking and co-ordination at the CDRP level. The force has hosted a problem-orientated policing conference for the last four years, attracting national and international delegates as well as involving staff and partners.

Early in 2007, a chief inspector post was aligned to each of the county's ten CDRPs. CDRP chief inspectors have cross-cutting operational responsibility for a range of disciplines, including intervention (response), SN teams and LCIUs. This development has brought together and integrated a number of outward-facing functional areas to improve service delivery. In addition, the chief inspector role has provided a single point of contact for partnership work, which is already seen to be paying dividends.

Each BCU now has an area service desk working alongside crime desks and providing both a managerial function for calls that may require a slower attendance time or can be dealt with by way of advice, and a means of liaison between NPTs and the public.

There is a clear focus on quality of service within the force, as stated within the Hertfordshire policing plan for 2007/08. Over 250 station officers, call handlers and other customer-facing staff have received training in the provision of quality customer services. Supervisors, particularly at the first line, routinely call back victims to ensure that expectations have been met in respect of a quality service. This particular activity is to be further strengthened through the Improving Personal Performance (IPP) framework, which aims to draw together performance and quality in a single mechanism for assessing staff. For neighbourhood staff, 33% of the framework is weighted towards quality and a further 33% towards community problem solving. In the case of intervention (response) constables, 50% is targeted on quality of service.

An example of how the thread of quality is being drawn through the organisation is that stop and account forms have been amended to canvass the satisfaction of the 'stopped' person following the encounter.

A model for PCSO deployment was largely based on work to profile deprivation and limited incident demand. Staff were deployed accordingly. Neighbourhood Policing constable

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allocations were delivered through the force-level recalibration of resources, with an analysis of demand and need provided by the Neighbourhood Policing project. Additional supervisors and constables were provided to meet the changing demand in the Eastern BCU area.

The force is identifying learning needs from Neighbourhood Policing performance and implementation. The project lead has strong links with the force training manager. A bespoke course for youth and school PCSOs is in development with partners for delivery during 2007, and a fourth module of training for SN constables has now been agreed, involving working in the community with partners.

Partnership-funded geographic information system analysts are in place within intelligence management units on each BCU. They are particularly responsible for delivering products at the CDRP-level under which SN teams are grouped and managed. Their work has been used to direct activity such as environmental action days. Specific SN-level products may be commissioned as needed. Partners and the police have also funded three county-level multi-agency information and data access system (MIDAS) analysts to work within a partnership data hub.

At force level, a range of data feeds performance processes, including confidence and satisfaction measures together with other survey data. Accountability is driven down through BCU level to NPTs through processes structured by the CDRP. Additionally, at the neighbourhood level, the qualitative measures arising from the IPP framework are now available.

On Eastern BCU (the pathfinder), CDRP-level self-assessments take place every four months and progress is tracked centrally through the BCU Neighbourhood Policing project board. It is intended that this approach will be spread to the remaining BCUs, which at the time of the field visit had conducted their own self-assessments using the NPT guide. Action plans drive ongoing development and are managed through the area project boards. In February 2007, the national NPT visited the force by invitation and carried out a benchmarking exercise on Western BCU.

The SN programme board is benchmarking progress against the National Centre for Policing Excellence (NCPE) guidance, ten key deliverables and 38 critical success factors. A force-level action plan is in place, driven through the programme board. The police authority is represented on the board and the authority's SN committee holds the force to account for progress and provides identified links with each CDRP through police authority leads.

Community engagement is being delivered across all neighbourhoods and is being developed through the use of a number of techniques, ranging from formal panels to less formal face-to-face interactions. Such engagement is also feeding published bespoke neighbourhood plans at sub-CDRP level and in some areas at ward level. The actions within these plans have named owners and timescales that are agreed with the community served. Feedback on results are provided through a variety of panel arrangements.

Joint problem solving is evident across the whole force. One example given addressed anti-social behaviour in the form of the sale of alcohol to underage people, alcohol consumption, and related graffiti and nuisance in the vicinity of Longcroft Road in Stevenage. Operation Envy involved partners photographing graffiti and identifying tags and the directed use of CCTV. A test purchase operation centred on the premises suspected of unlawful sales. Fifteen arrests were made and charges brought. As a result of the test purchase operation, action is being considered against the licensee under the Licensing Act. The results of the operation were fed back to the community through the area committee meeting.

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There is a clear commitment to Neighbourhood Policing from the entire chief officer team, strongly supported by the police authority. Neighbourhood Policing is described as having 'strategic programme status', with a force-level SN board led by the ACC (O). This is mirrored at a BCU level, with linked project boards. Decision making can be tracked through minuted meetings and action plans. The project team itself has direct access to its ACPO lead.

Staff across the force and in a variety of roles have good awareness of Neighbourhood Policing in the force's SN programme. A robust communications strategy has been implemented to embed cultural change within the force and partner organisations. Chief officers have taken a lead by engaging strategic partners in shaping 'the next steps for partnership working in Hertfordshire'.

The Chief Constable hosts six to seven leadership events each year, catering for around 700 staff. Each of these is opened with a presentation on Neighbourhood Policing, particularly how it relates to other aspects of policing activity such as response.

The SN project team has given presentations to all sergeants and police staff equivalents, to each of the 12 SN teams, to partners in the LAA Safer and Stronger Communities block, and to the Watford community safety manager (see also 'Work in progress').

The force has a detailed project plan that looks to sustainability beyond 2008. PCSO roll-out was completed on target and the plan considers financial sustainability. Indeed, strategic decisions have been made to ensure that the project would not be compromised if one or more partners withdrew funding. In addition to PCSOs, 12 inspectors, 29 sergeants and 172 constables are committed directly to Neighbourhood Policing. The project team is now moving into a role of monitoring progress and harvesting and spreading best practice.

Hertfordshire Constabulary has staffed NPTs as a priority. There has been a clear rationale for the deployments within the project plan. Vacancy levels are closely monitored and are counted as abstractions within the policing plan targets for visibility.

Clear role definitions are available for staff engaged in Neighbourhood Policing (see also 'Work in progress').

PCSOs have a clear visibility target of 80% of their time spent physically within their neighbourhood. Abstractions are not permitted. Similarly, there is a clear abstraction target for neighbourhood constables bespoke to their role. The target level for constable time committed to neighbourhoods is at least 80%. Performance against the targets is monitored locally and at a force level through the operational performance meeting (OPM), leaving no doubt that challenges will be made where the targets are not being met.

Partners and other key stakeholders were engaged in consultation to define neighbourhoods, which are based on one or more brigaded wards; however, this consultation did not specifically extend to the community. Demand was considered in the process, but the main driver was the link with existing partnership and political structures.

The force's engagement strategy has been implemented in a meaningful way. A range of techniques are utilised by teams to reach their communities, including newsletters, street meetings, Neighbourhood Watch and other established meeting structures (see also 'Work in progress').

All neighbourhoods within the force have current, though limited, profiles, including details of a range of groups. Sophisticated mechanisms are not in place to identify and engage new and emerging communities. SN teams each have three rolling priorities. The mechanism for identifying priorities varies depending on the neighbourhood in question. At Potters Bar, the

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priorities were set by the team after consulting with Neighbourhood Watch, drop-in centres and councillors. At Harpenden and St Albans, priorities were established at ward-level meetings. Partners are generally supportive of the Neighbourhood Policing agenda and are engaged with the force at both a strategic and a tactical level.

Partnership geographic information system analysts are in place in each BCU. On a practical level, information-sharing protocols are in place and information sharing genuinely takes place. A range of partners are signed up to and support the development of the MIDAS data hub.

Neighbourhood profiles are reviewed regularly and monitored through BCU-level self-inspections on a four-month cycle (see also 'Areas for improvement').

A deployment model for PCSOs based on incident data, deprivation indices, etc has been developed for the force. The final model, allowing some local flexibility was agreed between BCU commanders and chief officers.

A protocol has been agreed for the deployment of the Special Constabulary alongside SN teams for 75% of their working time. Roles include policing events, traffic, anti-social behaviour and nuisance youths. The contribution of the Special Constabulary is well regarded by staff.

A modular training package exists for Safer Neighbourhood constables and sergeants. Currently three modules are in existence with a fourth agreed for roll-out in January 2008. The package covers a broad range of topics, such as reassurance, engagement, problem solving, intelligence and chairmanship. At the time of the inspection field visit, a good proportion of neighbourhood constables had undertaken one or more of the modules; however, some gaps in delivery existed in terms of both existing staff and the period of time taken between a new member of staff coming into a team and receiving training. All neighbourhood officers have now undertaken the modular course (see also 'Work in progress').

PCSOs are not currently eligible for the Neighbourhood Policing modular training. However, it is anticipated that delivery of this training for PCSOs will commence in late spring 2008.

The impact of SN training is currently being reviewed on a six-monthly basis. It was as a direct result of one review that a gap was identified in respect of partnership working at constable level. The recently approved fourth module of training for SN constables will close this gap.

SARA (scanning, analysis, response, assessment) problem solving has been promoted by the Hertfordshire Constabulary for some time. Although not widely taken up, a package of computer-based training (CBT) for problem solving is available to all staff. Additionally, some neighbourhood constables have received formal SARA training as part of the Neighbourhood Policing modular course delivered in force.

Accommodation and equipment for NPTs appeared generally reasonable, and where there are tensions the force is responsive. New building and refurbishment on Eastern BCU will resolve the position there in the medium term. At St Albans, accommodation was described as cramped. Staff were generally positive regarding the overall picture, the only exception being at Stevenage, where one team had been moved on more than one occasion and felt that it was resented as a 'squatter' in its present accommodation. The moves are temporary and have been unavoidable as a result of ensuring health and safety during the course of major building works in delivering a new BCU HQ.

Staff within the county control room (CCR) have, and follow, clear guidance on the types of

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call that PCSOs should be deployed to.

SN, intervention and other BCU-level teams are well integrated in delivering services to the public.

CDRP chief inspectors hold monthly performance meetings with their SN staff. On Central BCU, these are joined on a quarterly basis by the BCU commander. Staff generally believed that the focus of accountability remained with intervention (response) teams and readily measurable indicators such as outstanding arrests. The IPP framework has now been implemented; this uses a mixture of qualitative and quantitative measures to assess an individual's performance bespoke to role and comparative to peers. IPP for Neighbourhood Policing staff is 33% quantitative, 33% quality of service (including stakeholder engagement) and 33% a measurement of the level and quality of delivery against local priorities and problems solved, drawn from the TAPS problem-solving database. The TAPS database records neighbourhood priorities and their resolution. IPP scores aggregate from individual through team and BCU to force level for inclusion in force-level performance processes.

Community impact assessments are produced when required and are reviewed.

Safer Neighbourhood coverage across the force is complete and there is a named contact for each of those neighbourhoods. However, it is recognised that a member of the public may need to refer to a secondary source in order to identify the name of the particular constable responsible for their area. Posters in station offices provide this information. Neighbourhood constables and PCSOs are familiar in their communities, particularly as a result of surgeries and other engagement activities (see also 'Work in progress').

ACPO tracking data is accurate and current.

Evidence was provided of a range of techniques having been used to engage with the community, including newsletters, public meetings, ringmaster, street meetings and surveys. In addition, the corporate communications department, supported by the police authority, carried out a house to house visibility audit.

Neighbourhood Watch has been reinvigorated across the force over the last three years, with an investment in ten CDRP and one force co-ordinator post. The force has also introduced and supports a central Herts Watch body to represent Neighbourhood Watch issues at force level. OWL (Online Watch Link) has been developed as a subscription-funded communications tool that replaces and enhances the ageing ringmaster system. This can be used for communicating information (similar to ringmaster), but could also be used for conducting surveys. This is in the process of being rolled out across the force and is highly regarded by those SN teams that currently have access to it.

Joint problem solving is taking place across the entire force, with various levels of sophistication. The force has a dedicated problem-solving database – TAPS – and new JAGs are operational in each CDRP.

Work in progress

The force is currently in the process of developing PCSOs into specialist roles. In partnership with the children, schools and families department (CSF), 38 PCSOs have been aligned to the 38 hub schools within the HESC. PCSOs have been in post since the end of 2006, with specialist training due to be delivered during 2007.

The force, together with the police authority, has worked to develop a comprehensive public access and visibility strategy, with the key principles of:

- providing better access to police services;
- providing police access to the community;
- ensuring that accommodation is of the right type;
- providing suitably equipped buildings to meet operational requirements;
- undertaking redevelopment projects on an incremental/phased basis; and
- ensuring that the property estate supports intelligence-led policing.

A review of police station opening hours and enquiry officer provision is currently being conducted by the SN project team as part of the wider public access and visibility strategy to improve accessibility. Opening hours are 'patchy' at present, and during the inspection visit a sign in the window of one station indicated that it might be closed due to staffing issues (see 'Strengths').

Since the inspection visit, the special chief officer has been working with the learning and development department to incorporate SN into the induction course for new special constables and to write a distance learning package for existing special constables (see 'Strengths' and 'Areas for improvement').

Joint training with partners is planned. Examples include the training scheduled for school PCSOs and the fourth module of SN constable training.

The concept of community intelligence is not embedded at the operational level. Staff see the priority area for intelligence being criminal intelligence, particularly linked to priority crimes. Community intelligence was described as a 'huge gap'. At present, two modules of training have been developed and fully delivered to neighbourhood constables. A third, now being delivered, focuses on developing information into intelligence and confidential contacts. This module, one of a total of four, will be delivered first to neighbourhood constables. Since the field visit, the force has indicated that the intelligence input should now have reached all Neighbourhood Policing officers, if not through the bespoke module then through area training days. However, it has not been possible to test this further.

The force, county and district councils jointly fund and support MIDAS. Housed at County Hall, this hub is currently being populated with data from partners including the police, the fire and rescue service, the county council and CSF. Presentations are currently being made to managers within the force to promote the capabilities of the system. Hertfordshire Constabulary currently has access to ACORN geo-demographic data through a licence for the INSITE system.

JAGs have now been agreed and set up, at least in an initial format, across all ten CDRPs. It is the function of JAGs to balance the corporate demands of agencies with those of communities, while ensuring that resources are targeted and co-ordinated to best effect (see 'Strengths').

A conscious decision has been made by the force to re-brand NPTs as SN teams, shifting the emphasis from policing to the community. At the same time, a number of other changes have been made to simplify terminology. While this will be less confusing for the public in the longer term, the fact that some staff persist in using historic titles such as 'ward constables' and 'localities' will only serve to increase the potential for confusion in the short term (see 'Strengths').

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There are clear links between the SN project team and the force training manager. Training is being developed for neighbourhood constables. Three of the four proposed modules are being delivered to equip staff with engagement, problem-solving and community intelligence skills.

The modular training available to constables has not yet been extended to PCSOs, although it is anticipated that it will be by late Spring 2008.

Many of the force's Neighbourhood Policing engagement structures have been established around existing council meetings. It is acknowledged that these generally attract a narrow and non-representative spectrum of the public. NPTs are actively developing mechanisms to broaden the level of engagement in their management arrangements.

At the time of the inspection visit, individual officers were able to point to isolated examples of engagement with established minority communities, such as Travellers and Muslims – and indeed to the value of those engagements. In Bishop's Stortford, the SN team identified a Portuguese proprietor of a café as a good contact with the emerging Portuguese community. This contact was invaluable during the build-up to the England v Portugal football match in the 2006 World Cup. The new relationship between local officers and the proprietor provided an opportunity for community intelligence to be gathered in relation to Portuguese intentions during the match, and for reassurance messages to be disseminated to the wider Portuguese community.

Despite these examples of good work, there was little evidence of any conscious approach to the identification of and engagement with new and emerging communities at any level. It was clear, however, that such groups existed, notably Lithuanian and Polish. In the absence of a focused approach, there is a danger that Neighbourhood Policing will not be truly inclusive of whole communities.

Since the field visit, the force has developed an excellent strategic document in respect of the nature and profile of the wider Eastern European emerging community across the force, from which clear strategic and tactical engagement opportunities have been signposted (see 'Strengths').

The force is currently working towards the further development of CDRP-based strategic assessments on a six-monthly cycle. It is anticipated that these will draw on partnership data. However, at the time of the inspection, it was too early to gauge whether these could be described as 'joint strategic assessments'.

The situation where no SN constable worked on Sundays and late working was a rarity was addressed by the force recalibration project with the implementation of a shift pattern intended to reflect the seven-day nature of policing. However, one negative consequence has been identified – the fairly inflexible application of the pattern for SN constables as part of a response to the force's overall demand profile. One consequence of this is that SN constables and their linked PCSOs may not work alongside one another for extended periods. While it is acknowledged that this may provide wider coverage in neighbourhoods for the public, communication between SN constables and PCSOs is often achieved only through the use of email. The force is currently in the process of considering alternative shift provision with the Police Federation to remedy the situation (see 'Strengths' and 'Areas for improvement').

Volunteers are being used across the force in a variety of roles, but only limited examples were provided as to how these were directly linked to neighbourhood roles. One very recent example on Eastern BCU saw volunteers recruited as Neighbourhood Policing administrative assistants, but it is too soon to evaluate this initiative (see 'Strengths').

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The force has just developed a new policy in respect of repeat victimisation, which is in the process of being implemented. There is an existing focus on repeat victims. A spreadsheet is used to track victims of domestic incidents and appropriate interventions are made by domestic violence officers (DVOs). BCUs have dedicated hate crime officers, and, on Eastern BCU, hate crime PCSOs. Area service desks have been developed to assist in meeting commitments with the Victims' Code.

The force is currently redeveloping its website to improve the quality of its functionality, having looked at other force websites for good practice (see 'Strengths').

Neighbourhood management arrangements are currently being developed in each CDRP area across the force. JAGs have been implemented across all ten CDRP areas; however, these are generally a new concept and will need time to develop into mature structures. All now have non-police chairs; they are generally chaired by community safety managers. Community issues are considered and partners involved in action. In excess of 50% are now fully effective.

At the time of the inspection visit, the target definition relating to abstractions from neighbourhoods had recently been revised from the previous year. It was evident that, whilst staff knew the target percentage figure for activity linked to their neighbourhood, the detail of what represented an abstraction was lacking and at times confused. The force duty system (PROMIS) relies on officers updating their own deployments, leading to the strong possibility that core data could be flawed. This was evidenced in a subsequent force-level OPM, where it was acknowledged that data capture had been problematic, requiring substantial manual 'chasing'.

The final figure for SN constable activity linked to their neighbourhood presented to the OPM was 85%. However, interviews suggested that abstractions were substantially greater even than the 20% accepted.

The force has now addressed the data capture issue through an electronic fix. Together with measures to ensure that staff fully understand the abstraction measure, the force underpins the quality of the measure by monitoring a 'compliance rate'. Figures became available in May 2007 (force target met), with compliance monitoring coming on stream in June.

Areas for improvement

No clear protocol exists to direct the apportioning of work between response (intervention) and neighbourhood. There is also inconsistency among areas and indeed CDRPs in the allocation of crimes.

Bi-weekly police-led CDRP-level tactical assessments have been produced for some time and partners are consulted on the development of six-monthly strategic assessments at BCU level. However, truly joint partner strategic assessments are not yet in place.

Continuity/succession planning for Neighbourhood Policing is managed at BCU level and at present does not necessarily include overlapping deployments to ensure continuity.

The development of Neighbourhood Policing training has been organic, largely driven by the observations of the project team. The force may benefit from conducting a structured training needs analysis, to examine the needs of staff not only directly involved in Neighbourhood Policing, but within the wider organisation and including the Special Constabulary (see 'Strengths' and 'Work in progress').

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Formal links to counter-terrorism issues are made as a result of the Neighbourhood Policing project lead being a member of the force security review group. The linkage between Neighbourhood Policing, counter-terrorism and serious and organised crime could be strengthened through strategic assessments and control strategies.

Neighbourhood sergeants are currently exempted from abstraction monitoring. This is an area in which appropriate targets could be set in order to adequately reflect the importance Hertfordshire clearly attaches to visible leadership.

Early decision making in the development of Hertfordshire's Neighbourhood Policing model has seen the creation of strong neighbourhood links at ward level, originally determined through consultation between the police, the police authority, district councils and the county council. There is a clear willingness at BCU level to develop the neighbourhood model further to best match community need, as evidenced on Central BCU which is developing sub-ward structures. As referred to elsewhere, the force is using the national Neighbourhood Policing self-assessment model largely at BCU level; however, outside this there is no separate formal process for the review of neighbourhoods. The Boundary Commission has signalled that it is likely to review Hertfordshire ward structures later in 2007, and it is likely that this will necessitate a county-wide review for Neighbourhood Policing purposes.

Neighbourhood profiles are rudimentary, limited largely to lists of key local community groups and individuals. They specifically exclude socio-economic and other demographic data, and as such are of limited value in informing strategic assessments or for targeting activity.

Neighbourhood constables have responsibility for directing the PCSOs working alongside them, although PDR responsibilities rest with neighbourhood sergeants. Some neighbourhood constables have had no bespoke training in support of this responsibility. However, following a review in April 2007, a large number of PCSOs now have their PDRs completed by their SN police constable. This practice, supported by training, is being rolled out throughout the force during the course of 2007.

Vehicular transport seems to be the main area of concern for NPTs. A corporate decision has been made by the force not to provide urban-based PCSOs with 'regular' access to vehicles to ensure that foot-based resources are used to best effect. Notwithstanding this, all teams have dedicated vehicles, including a number supplied through sponsorship. In Stevenage, despite local bus companies offering free 'on duty' travel, PCSOs have taken the decision to pair up as a matter of course after 6pm as a result of the perceived lack of transport. The provision of bicycles has been received very favourably; however, availability across and between BCUs varies. Similar inconsistencies can be seen in respect of the allocation of mobile phones across differing teams (see 'Strengths').

Although guidance is available to CCR operators regarding the types of call that PCSOs should be deployed to, this is not the case for SN constables. In the absence of such a protocol, CCR operators use common sense to determine the type of calls that should be allocated to SN constables. This naturally leads to inconsistency.

Following a similar theme, focus groups of BCU staff were unable to define the role of a neighbourhood constable beyond dealing with quality of life issues. Investigative workloads varied depending on local policy; however, there was no evidence that they were excessive.

The PDR process was seen as positive. Generally objectives are appropriate for Neighbourhood Policing, but in a number of cases historical objectives have not been revised following a staff member's move into their new role.

RECOMMENDATION 1

That the force develops and maintains high-quality neighbourhood profiles using a range of available data, thereby enabling their use within National Intelligence Model products such as strategic assessments.

RECOMMENDATION 2

That the force develops joint partnership strategic assessments.

Developing Practice

INSPECTION AREA: Neighbourhood Policing

TITLE: The community safety accreditation scheme

PROBLEM:

The Police Reform Act 2002 provided the legislation for chief officers of police to set up accreditation schemes.

Hertfordshire Constabulary introduced a scheme in 2004, recognising the opportunities to engage partners to work more closely in dealing with crime, disorder and nuisance at an operational level.

SOLUTION:

The scheme was introduced following a period of consultation with relevant stakeholders and local authorities, which were invited to be part of the pilot process for the scheme.

Five out of the ten local authorities volunteered to help implement the scheme guidance and processes, and were officially accredited in November 2004. Those authority staff accredited ranged from street wardens and environmental health officers to anti-social behaviour officers.

A formal review of the first 12 months of the pilot took place in 2005 and a number of recommendations resulted. One significant concern at the time was the difficulty for the accredited people to communicate with the force. A decision to implement a dedicated telephone line into the force contact centre was taken, and this has assisted accredited people who on occasion need to call for guidance, to report a crime, or to request a Police National Computer (PNC) check.

Since then, the guidance and processes have been refined, in line with Home Office and ACPO guidance, and the scheme has expanded to include security officers at the University of Hertfordshire in Hatfield and a private security company in Broxbourne.

Powers are seen as a secondary benefit to increased information sharing; however, they do provide an additional and beneficial tool for accredited people. Evidence has shown that the most useful powers have been the requirement for people to provide their name and address and the ability of accredited people to confiscate alcohol from those under age and in no alcohol zones.

The scheme has facilitated closer working relationships between partner agencies, and now private companies, involved in community safety. This has resulted in joint training, joint patrols and initiatives, an increase in information shared and more understanding of police officer, PCSO and accredited roles.

In some areas this has formalised existing relationships, but it has also established new positive links. Of particular note is the scheme working in Broxbourne with a private company that provides the parks patrol for Broxbourne Council. A team of four parks patrol officers are accredited, have created close links with the SN team and assist with information sharing and operations.

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Over the next 12 months, the scheme will continue to expand. It is anticipated that the number of accredited organisations in Hertfordshire will double, and there is great potential to work with organisations from the private sector that are showing interest in creating closer relationships with their local SN teams. There will also be accreditation of national companies and those providing a service across force borders, as has already been experienced with Essex Police, where successful joint accreditations with Hertfordshire have taken place.

OUTCOME(S):

Currently there are ten accredited organisations and over 100 accredited people in Hertfordshire. These are providing close partnership working relationships to deal with local problems.

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Performance Management

GRADE	GOOD
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National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
6	29	8	0

National contextual factors

There is no single accepted model of performance management across the police service but any such model or framework must be fit for purpose. Ideally, forces should demonstrate that individuals at every level of the organisation understand their contribution to converting resources into agreed delivery, and know how they will be held to account. On a daily basis, first-line supervisors monitor, support and quality assure the performance of their teams. At the other end of the spectrum, chief officer-led performance meetings – often based loosely on the American Compstat model – are a vehicle for accountability and improvement. Robust leadership, a commitment to improvement and reliable, real-time information systems are all critical factors in effective performance management.

There is no mechanistic link between overall force performance and the grade awarded in this framework. The grade is based on the quality of the force’s processes that enable it to identify and react to changes in performance.

Contextual factors

A performance management culture is clearly evident within Hertfordshire and is a contributory factor to the current good performance the force is enjoying against key priorities.

The force follows recognised performance management principles and the framework used is fully understood by managers and staff.

As highlighted below, the force-level monthly OPM is an important element of managing performance and has broad attendance, from chief officers and police authority members through to senior managers and representatives of staff associations. This meeting adds considerable value to the performance management process and is regarded by HMIC as good practice.

Performance management in the force is seen as inclusive and evidence was found of good performance being recognised and rewarded, but also of poor performance being challenged.

The force is aware of the need to reliably measure and monitor performance in the high-risk areas of protecting vulnerable people (PVP) and is currently working on a framework to ensure that all elements are assessed in tandem with higher volume crimes.

Strengths

Hertfordshire’s criminal justice board and strategic partnership (LAA) at force level, and CDRPs at BCU level, have shared targets and review processes.

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The force has used activity-based costing data in a limited way in support of developing a model for the force recalibration project, which saw a shift of officers out of response policing and into other domains to create greater efficiencies. It has also been used to support the design of abstraction targets for SN staff, and, in a comparative sense, to benchmark the value of the investigative process against other forces. This latter activity led to a change of process in achieving offences taken into consideration.

The force utilises most similar force (MSF), most similar BCU (MSBCU) and departmental-level data as an aid to identifying good practice. Teams of staff are sent to different forces on a monthly basis, specifically for the purpose of harvesting good practice. Tasked from the force's OPM, staff have recently been sent to Lancashire, Essex and Avon and Somerset to seek sustainable activity against acquisitive crime, particularly vehicle crime and distraction burglary.

Hertfordshire Constabulary has developed an organisational strategic assessment and control strategy to augment and integrate with the existing operational documents. Produced on a rolling six-monthly cycle, these give consideration to the local and national position, drawing from National Intelligence Model (NIM) products at a local level, together with a wide external scan co-ordinated through the operational intelligence development department (OIDD) working to the deputy chief constable (DCC). There is a clear citizen focus to activity; indeed operational control strategies specifically detail reassurance priorities for each activity strand.

Hertfordshire Constabulary has a clearly articulated vision and strategy with which staff are reasonably familiar. They are set out through the force's strategic plan for 2005–08 and the annual policing plan. They are broadly consistent with the National Community Safety Plan and are linked to partnership targets such as those for the Hertfordshire criminal justice board and the county LAA.

The heads of finance, human resources (HR) and information and communications technology are standing members of the force's chief officers' meeting (COM) and as such influence and ultimately are a party to the sign-off on strategic assessments and control strategies. They or their nominated deputies are also standing members of all force developmental boards on which they are not the natural project lead.

The force is currently engaged in a number of existing collaborative ventures and has committed to the appointment of a full-time project officer to develop new opportunities. A 'demonstrator site' bid in respect of a joint major crime investigative unit with Bedfordshire Police has been successful. A number of recent investigations demonstrate Hertfordshire's commitment to meeting policing demand beyond its boundaries. Hertfordshire led a combined team including Essex and Kent officers in Operation Movement, leading to 19 offenders facing trial for robbery, burglary and vehicle crime.

In the region, the ACC (Operational Support) has led the development of the regional intelligence cell at Royston, and staff and other resources have been contributed to counter-terrorism work in the regional intelligence cell.

The force enjoys a mature relationship with its police authority, while clear demarcation of roles remains in place. From force-level strategic planning, local and national priorities are considered, and through this gaps and tensions are identified, including those in respect of resources. Local consultation with key stakeholders, partners and others also feeds the process. The DCC takes the force lead in liaising with the policing plan working group of the police authority, supported by the OIDD and relevant professional leads. The working group makes documented decisions against force recommendations to provide a 'best fit' in balancing competing demands.

Effective governance structures are well developed both within the force and at a strategic partnership level. At county level, there is a chief officer group involving the Chief Constable and chief executives, which is underpinned by a performance management group responsible for partnership delivery and chaired by the ACC (O).

Police authority members and representatives of local and county partnerships are involved in the development of the control strategy, with ratification taking place through the wider force-level COMs. The force performance management board is held on a monthly basis and considers performance across the entire policing plan and risk and control strategy progress. The OPM is held the following week, timed to coincide with the release of national statistics.

The OPM brings together BCU commanders, departmental heads and professional leads. Successes are celebrated and poor performance challenged; however, the process is supportive and contributory, allowing good practice to be promulgated. The chair of the police authority performance scrutiny committee is a standing member, with a second member in attendance as part of a rolling programme of members contributing to the meeting.

Policing plan priorities are driven through projects led at chief officer level. Project methodology is applied with project management support provided through the OIDD. All significant projects are opened to police authority membership at board level and are co-ordinated through quarterly reports to COMs, chaired by the Chief Constable.

Performance management structures extend to BCU level, with morning tasking and co-ordination meetings every day of the year, filling the gaps between formal level 1 tasking and co-ordination group meetings. Daily meetings are normally chaired by the deputy area commanders. Formal performance structures follow a monthly cycle akin to the force-level model.

Consultation and engagement is an established process in the development of the local policing plan. Staff, partners, the community and the police authority are involved in the process, with the final stages of target setting being worked through in focus groups at a seminar for that purpose. Persistent young offenders specifically feature in the plan for 2007/08 as a result of a request from the Crown Prosecution Service following a review of the Hertfordshire criminal justice board (see 'Areas for improvement').

The force has mature and established performance structures in place that extend from the force lead, through BCU and departments, to an individual level. Quality internal performance information is available in a timely fashion to support accountability processes, and this is augmented by a range of external data such as iQuanta.

The force has recently implemented the IPP framework for intervention (response) and neighbourhood constables, which attempts to deliver a balanced scorecard of quantitative and qualitative measures at individual level. It is intended that this will be linked to the PDR process and will be capable of identifying the best officers for debrief, together with those who are underperforming for support or ultimately sanction.

The force operates unsatisfactory performance procedures in which the HR department is involved. Staff associations have seen a demonstrable level of support to staff from the force, in respect of both capability and unsatisfactory performance procedures, and indicate their support of the force's fair usage of these procedures. One officer and three staff members have now reached the formal stages of the process (see 'Areas for improvement').

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The OIDD carries out internal and external customer surveys at a level that ensures statistical significance. Satisfaction survey data in particular features regularly in OPMs and the performance management board and was a driver for the development of area service desks and changes to call-handling practice.

The IPP framework, recently introduced for neighbourhood and intervention constables, is populated through line managers surveying victims and is directly linked to a performance measure. Learning therefore continually feeds service delivery and drives activity towards meeting the local policing plan priority of raising levels of customer satisfaction.

British Crime Survey and local survey data, together with other statistical information, are used as baseline measures for relevant LAA targets.

During the inspection year, the force has reached the final stages of a major recalibration project intended to provide a better fit of resources to demand. Within the recalibration, consideration was given to priorities, partners and risk, as well as workload demand. Review processes are built in through the head of workforce planning and the DCC.

Although the product of the recalibration review is at a relatively early point of implementation, no significant disparities in resource levels were identified.

While the police authority and the police executive enjoy a mature and supportive relationship, there remains a clarity of role. The police authority performance committee holds the force directly accountable for performance against policing plan targets and is appropriately challenging in the discharge of this function. Police authority members take specific lead responsibility for each plan area, as is the case for the chief officer team. Periodically, thematic reports are required from the force concerning other areas of business in which interest has been raised. Meetings follow recognised business practice with records prepared in the form of minutes. Managers at all levels have SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely) targets.

Evidence was obtained across the organisation that indicated that staff at all levels knew what was expected of them and that they would be held to account. Established and comprehensive performance structures exist at force level through the performance management board and the OPM and follow through at departmental, BCU and CDRP level. Each department undergoes a quarterly intelligence-led planning (ILP) review by the relevant lead chief officer, holding it to account for achieving the departmental plan and other organisational objectives. ILP integrates performance with effective management of budgets, resource usage and the outcomes of inspection and audit.

Individual performance monitoring at neighbourhood and intervention constable level broadens from quantitative into qualitative monitoring. Staff are able to access live performance data via a force-wide website.

The OIDD co-ordinates three levels of inspection and review process – at BCU level (through BCU-based audit and evaluation managers); impacting on BCU or HQ; and force-level thematic inspections – commissioned generally by chief officers. Together these underpin the performance management process. The risk management forum meets on a quarterly basis to assess and maintain the corporate risk register and this document is used to drive thematic inspections.

PDRs are generally up to date and contain SMART targets. However, overall the credibility of the process has suffered somewhat as a result of the force rightly withdrawing an unsuccessful electronic PDR system around 18 months prior to the inspection visit.

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The force has well documented processes for recognising good performance and good work. This ranges from local schemes nominating individuals for local recognition through 'Good Work' minutes and commendations by BCU commanders/heads of department to Chief Constable commendations. Formal local and force ceremonies are held in which individual, team and force performance and success is recognised and details published in the local press. The processes and ceremonies include awards to partners and members of the public.

On Central BCU, staff are awarded a small silver clothes pin in the shape of a starfish for the first 'quality of service' letter from a member of the public. Subsequent letters receive a BCU commander's letter for their personal file. The award is based on a story attributed to Loren Eiseley (1907–77) of a small boy systematically returning to the sea some of the thousands of starfish washed up by a storm, pointing to the truth that each small deed makes a difference. The scheme, initiated by the BCU commander, has captured the imagination of staff and genuinely promotes a customer-focused approach.

It is clear that managers at all levels feel empowered to make decisions appropriate to their role. Performance processes such as OPM drive the direction of travel and pick up poor performance; however, these are constructive vehicles where good practice is shared. A clear vision for the force, underpinned by audit and inspection, ensures that delivery is made within accepted parameters.

The ACC (O) is the force director of performance. Chief officers are actively involved in performance review processes, notably with significant presence at OPMs. Each weekend, BCU-level daily tasking is co-ordinated by the duty chief officer by way of a formal meeting at HQ (or at a BCU) one day and a telephone conference the next. Quarterly ILP meetings are held by the relevant ACC lead and BCU/departmental heads.

In addition to planning arrangements at force level, planning days are held at BCU level to ensure staff consultation. The CDRP-linked chief inspector role, coupled with some quality engagement at neighbourhood level, ensures that community and partner agendas feed into and influence the planning process.

The policing plan is fully costed. Performance review functions and corporate planning are integrated within one department. The wider COM has monthly updates on budgeting and resource management and this is integrated in the approach to strategic assessments and control strategies.

Quarterly ILP meetings with BCU commanders and heads of department formally link performance with planning, budgets and the effective use of resources. BCU commanders and departmental heads have specific PDR objectives relating to the use of resources and budgets.

The force and police authority have a mature and constructive operating relationship. Members have access to the force's performance management website. The authority is actively involved in the business-planning cycle and in all significant force boards. Members describe their access to force-level data as open, and there is a willingness to provide additional material as required. In April a protocol was signed with the authority undertaking to make regular visits to specialist PVP locations.

The force has a NIM-based strategic planning cycle leading to operational and organisational strategic assessments and control strategies. The process adequately considers risk in the selection of priorities. Management of priorities takes place through daily, weekly and monthly tasking arrangements.

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Staff PDR objectives are linked to force, BCU or departmental plans as appropriate – and beyond that are generally tailored to role, ie the PDR objectives of neighbourhood staff reflect their unique purpose.

Performance data is widely captured and available through a bespoke force web page. Monitoring data is captured at force, BCU/department, team and individual level, as is the case through the IPP framework for constables. Structured management meetings, including the performance management board, OPM and ILP, follow through into BCUs, and then feed down through CDRP chief inspectors to team and individual level.

Junior managers receive a limited input on managing performance. This comes through the Chief Constable-led leadership sessions aimed at reaching every sergeant, inspector and chief inspector in the force and all police staff equivalents. A new programme of leadership sessions is developed and delivered annually. Key inputs have included managing stress, tackling poor performance, mentoring and coaching, SN and the IPP framework. The eight sessions held between January and March 2007 reached 75% of chief inspectors, 81% of inspectors and 51% of sergeants.

Chief inspectors are encouraged to attend senior leadership development programme modules that include performance management. During 2006, managers were provided with an open invitation to two 'twilight' seminars addressing managing change and getting the best out of staff. The latter, which had the best attendance, attracted only 11% of inspectors and just 7% of sergeants.

The force uses comparative data to actively benchmark performance levels. Data drawn from across the force is available at performance meetings and monitored trends are used to identify opportunities and threats.

There is a culture of learning and improvement within the organisation. The OPM specifically targets the identification of internal best practice and in addition co-ordinates visits to other forces each month based on MSF data and other intelligence. Documented debriefing processes following a major operation or critical incident are also an established part of force culture. Examples were provided demonstrating how force processes had developed following critical incidents.

The force sponsors an annual problem-solving conference where good practice is showcased and the best is rewarded by the opportunity to visit police forces in the USA. The force suggestions scheme, 'Herts and Minds', provides a mechanism to harvest the best ideas from the whole of the organisation.

There is a clear focus on customer service. Area service desks have been developed to assist in meeting quality of service commitments and staff across the force cited 'the way victims are dealt with' as being the most important part of their job. The IPP framework focuses significantly on quality of service, as do the supervisory dip checks of victims, which underpin the process.

Requirements for core performance data are met in a timely, accurate and appropriate manner.

Work in progress

Hertfordshire Constabulary and Bedfordshire Police are at an advanced stage in developing a co-located major crime investigative unit and have been awarded 'demonstrator site' status. Other collaborative opportunities are being considered in the region, in addition to the existing arrangements in respect of crime and firearms training and the Chiltern air

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consortium. Agreements have now been reached to join the Chiltern fleet consortium and to collaborate on mobile data work with Essex.

Building on a successful project that targets, investigates and interviews prolific offenders, the rehabilitation strand has been strengthened through the development of a Choices and Consequences programme supported by senior judges, which has attracted £500,000 of government funding and over £200,000 of partnership funding over a three-year period. In essence, the choice is to completely disclose offending history in return for an extended conditional sentence and a meaningful programme of support. The consequence of failing to engage with the programme or of further offending is a return to court and deterrent sentencing.

The force has also developed novel uses for the PCSO role, with a number of specialisms being developed. Notably, 38 match-funded PCSOs have been aligned to the 38 hub schools within the HESC.

A model is now in use that profiles the achievable sanction detection rates by CDRP area, based on the crime mix, demographic data and force average. This should enable more effective identification of good practice and the need for challenge where underperformance is found.

Joint tasking and co-ordination exists at CDRP level throughout the force through JAGs. These are fully established in some areas of the force while elsewhere the arrangements are still developing.

The fairly rigid shift roster developed for Neighbourhood Policing constables was identified as a specific impairment to neighbourhood constables fulfilling their Neighbourhood Policing role. Although BCU commanders could vary shifts, this was seen as an overly bureaucratic process, with examples provided of officers wishing to work traditionally anti-social shifts to meet community demand being prevented from doing so. The force and the Police Federation are currently considering a range of shift options to resolve the situation (see also Neighbourhood Policing 'Work in progress').

The strategic programme board co-ordinates the work of all other board structures in delivering the outcomes of the local policing plan. At the time of the field visit, accountability was notionally clear; however, restructuring of portfolio responsibilities among the chief officer team in anticipation of the DCC's departure had created some flux in ownership. This has now been resolved through a number of permanent appointments completing the chief officer team.

Areas for improvement

Support groups representing the diverse nature of the force did not feel consulted in the development of new force policy, except in respect of diversity impact assessments, and with few exceptions did not feel consulted in the development of the local policing plan.

Chief officers and the police authority recognise that relevant performance information pertaining to the range of PVP disciplines is currently weak. These critical areas do not feature with significance within local or force-level performance structures and represent a clear area for improvement (see 'Strengths').

RECOMMENDATION 3

That the force continues to develop its performance management arrangements for protecting vulnerable people disciplines from chief officer level, through basic command unit/departmental level, to practitioners.

Developing Practice

INSPECTION AREA: Performance management

TITLE: Operational performance meetings

PROBLEM:

There is a need to sustain the drive for continuous improvement in force performance, delivery of service and quality of service.

SOLUTION:

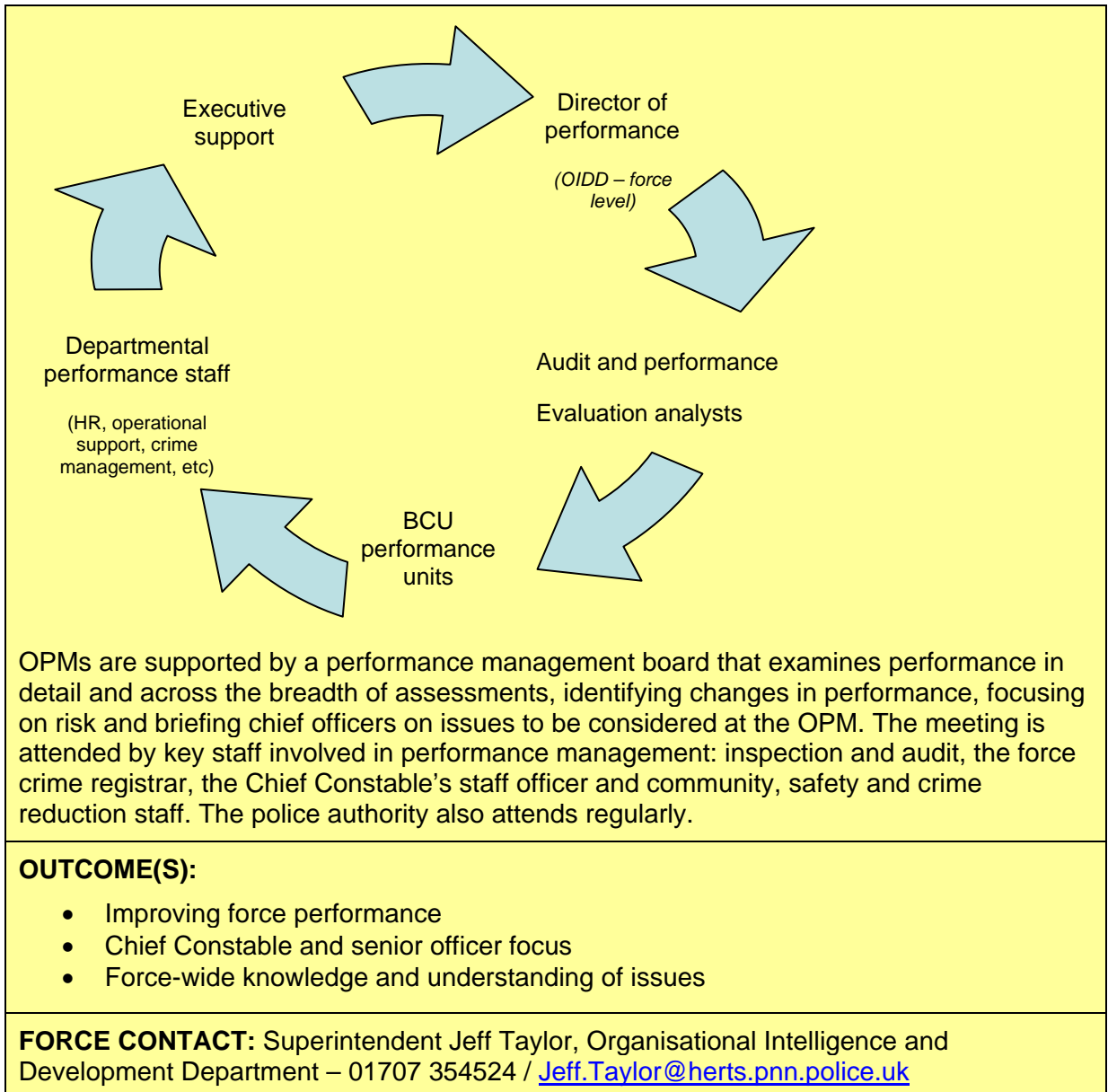
The force established OPMs, which have been in place for over two years. These are held monthly and are chaired by a chief officer – the ACC (O) – and attended by the police authority, other chief officers, BCU commanders and heads of department. Force performance is analysed and discussed at the meetings. BCU commanders and heads of department are held to account for performance and other departmental heads are tasked with support activities to help achieve goals.

The purpose of OPMs is to focus on business and operational performance processes that require improvement, to identify and tackle risks, and to identify and spread good practice – past, present and future.

For example, the OPM highlights crime issues at CDRP, BCU and force level, allowing the force as well as the BCU response to be initiated, and compares performance with both MSFs and MSBCUs. The force performance analyst informs the meeting of emerging performance trends, enabling the force to identify good practice from around the country, eg a greater use of penalty notices for disorder reflecting directly on sanction detection rates.

‘Search and Question’ allows a clear examination of performance in a supportive manner.

The force has a director of performance role (a superintendent), who maintains an overview of force performance and co-ordinates activity between the force, audit and evaluation, force performance analysis, BCU performance units, departmental staff and executive support.



Protecting Vulnerable People – Overview

National contextual factors

The assessment framework for Protecting Vulnerable People was first developed in 2006 as part of HMIC's baseline assessment programme. It replaced two existing frameworks – Reducing/Investigating Hate Crime and Crimes against Vulnerable Victims – which focussed on hate crimes (predominantly racially motivated), domestic violence and child protection. Following consultation with practitioners and ACPO leads, a single framework was introduced with four components – domestic violence, the investigation and prevention of child abuse, the management of sex and dangerous offenders, and vulnerable missing persons. Although the four areas are discrete, they are also linked and share a common theme – they deal with vulnerable victims where there is a high risk that an incident can quickly become critical, and where a poor police response is both life-threatening and poses severe reputational risks for the force.

This year's inspection has been carried out using similar assessment standards as those in 2006. These highlight the importance of leadership and accountability; policy implementation; information management; staffing, workload and supervision; performance monitoring and management; training; the management of risk; and partnership working.

The work carried out by forces to protect the public, particularly those most vulnerable to risk of serious harm, is complex and challenging. No single agency, including the police, has the capacity to deliver the required response on its own. Success is therefore, dependent on effective multi-agency working and there are a number of established partnerships, involving a wide range of services and professionals, aimed at ensuring that an integrated approach is adopted to protecting those most vulnerable to risk of serious harm.

Contextual factors overview

Hertfordshire Constabulary received a Fair grading for the PVP framework in the 2005/06 HMIC baseline assessment. Notwithstanding the acceptable level of service that this represents, the force has signalled its intention to develop its capability in this area of business. This is now reflected within the force organisational control strategy. A PVP project board has been established under the line management of the ACC (O), driving a number of integrated workstreams as represented by the project's interlinked jigsaw branding.

A thorough process of self-inspection and audit, including external scrutiny where appropriate, as in the case of the Violent and Sex Offenders Register (ViSOR), has enabled the force to define its own strengths and vulnerabilities and develop meaningful strategies for progress. For example, domestic violence emergency response officers (DVEROs) are to deliver expert level interventions at the first point of contact when dedicated domestic violence staff are not available.

Strengths

- Staff who participated in interviews were positive and professional, displaying considerable knowledge and commitment.
- There is clear evidence that progress is being made across all four areas of PVP, and clear recognition of the interrelationship between the areas.

Work in progress

- A number of accountability frameworks and policies for PVP – ie domestic violence, public protection and missing persons – are currently being reviewed to ensure that new structures and systems are incorporated into guidance.
- A robust audit process is being developed to ensure that standards are rigorously maintained across each of the four disciplines. There is clear evidence that this approach has already generated an improvement in the investigation of missing persons.
- An overarching written accountability framework is being developed under the direction of the PVP project board. This was expected to be ratified at the COM on 27 September 2007.

Areas for improvement

- The OPM provides a platform for and includes some PVP-specific performance information, while the crime management department ILP meeting provides another opportunity to discuss performance. However, HMIC fieldwork and the examination of further documentary evidence demonstrated little in the way of a performance framework at force level, and particularly at BCU level, sufficient to enable swift identification and diagnosis of problems, or indeed the identification of good practice.
- There is some evidence of proactive work taking place, particularly when co-ordinated at force level, eg Operation MUSO (an international investigation run jointly between the paedophile investigation unit (PIU) and the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)) and the commitments made to the surveillance of sex offenders (detailed elsewhere). However, within the day-to-day activity of units and at a BCU level, there appears little capacity for proactive work across all four disciplines.

RECOMMENDATION 4

That the force utilises National Intelligence Model products to prioritise activity within protecting vulnerable people disciplines.

Protecting Vulnerable People – Child Abuse

GRADE

GOOD**National grade distribution**

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
3	17	21	2

National contextual factors

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on the police to ‘safeguard and promote the welfare of children’; safeguarding children, therefore, is a fundamental part of the duties of all police officers. All police forces, however, also have specialist units which, although they vary in structure, size and remit, normally take primary responsibility for investigating child abuse cases. Officers in these units work closely with other agencies, particularly Social Services, to ensure that co-ordinated action is taken to protect specific children who are suffering, or who are at risk of suffering, significant harm. The Children Act 2004 also requires each local authority to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). This is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how the relevant organisations in each local area will co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in that locality, and for ensuring the effectiveness of what they do.

Membership of LSCBs includes representatives of the relevant local authority and its Board partners, notably the police, probation, youth offending teams, strategic health authorities and primary care trusts, NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts, the Connexions service, Children and Family Courts Advisory and Support Service, Secure Training Centres and prisons.

Contextual factors

The force currently has two distinct area-based but centrally managed child abuse investigation units (CAIUs) and a PIU under the line management of the detective chief inspector (DCI) for major crime specialist investigations (MCSI).

The CAIU based at Letchworth covers Eastern BCU as well as Welwyn–Hatfield CDRP. The CAIU based in Oxney covers Western BCU as well as St Albans and Borehamwood CDRPs. Both units are led by detective inspectors (DIs) supported by a number of detective sergeants (DSs). Staffing levels within the units remain historically based; this is currently the subject of review. Notwithstanding this, caseloads have remained largely manageable, but there remains little capacity for proactive work.

With the completion of building work (expected in November 2007) it is intended that the CAIUs will move to a single centralised unit, based at the force HQ.

Strengths

The ACC (OS) is the chief officer lead for child abuse investigation and chairs the PVP project board, driving delivery of the PVP strategic plan. The project is branded with a

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jigsaw motif, recognising the interconnectivity of the four strands. Representation on the Hertfordshire safeguarding children board (HSCB) is at detective chief superintendent level on behalf of the ACC (O). Development of the PVP action plan specifically considered NCPE guidance.

The force has recognised child abuse investigation as a priority, alongside the other PVP disciplines, and this is reflected in the April–September 2007 organisational strategic assessment and control strategy, which refers to developing capability through the work of the PVP project board.

The profile of all PVP disciplines has been substantially elevated since the implementation of the PVP project board and the overarching work area being rebranded as MCSI. Substantial marketing has taken place, including through articles in *Herts Beat*, a PVP newsletter, CAIU and PIU web pages.

Child abuse investigation is under the operational control of the HQ criminal investigation department (CID), with a dedicated DCI having ownership of the two CAIUs in the east and west of the county. Day-to-day management of the two units is carried out by DIs located in the units. The linked PIU, which deals largely with computer-based investigations, is managed by a DI and run on a day-to-day basis by a DS.

A comprehensive programme of training for child abuse investigators is set out within the PVP training plan. CAIUs are staffed by a mixture of experienced detectives and those developing through the Initial Crime Investigators' Development Programme (ICIDP). All staff are trained in Achieving Best Evidence (ABE) or were scheduled for training through the HSCB by July 2007. Other training delivered to staff includes level 2 sexual offences and local training to access ViSOR.

Hertfordshire Constabulary has been awarded a licence to deliver Specialist Child Abuse Investigator Development Programme courses (incorporating ACPO 2005 guidance on investigating child abuse and safeguarding children) and two two-day courses were scheduled for June and October. The force has worked with partners in developing appropriate policy; in fact the protocol for dealing with children missing from care was jointly written with CSF and implemented within residential care homes across the county.

Child abuse investigation policy is applied consistently across the force. It is readily accessed via the CAIU web page of the force intranet. The policy, together with standard operating procedures, is in the process of review to ensure that it meets current ACPO guidance.

Workloads for CAIU investigators appear reasonable, with the average annual caseload estimated at around 20.

Units work extended office hours with out-of-hours provision being accommodated through the on-call senior detective rota.

DSs attend all case management discussions, with investigators attending if appropriate. They also assist with investigations and interviewing.

Dedicated police staff posts exist in each CAIU and are committed to collating all relevant information for attendance at initial case conferences. DSs also attend strategy meetings, as do investigators, where appropriate. Meetings are minuted and records maintained with case files. Both the HSCB and the force monitor attendance by way of regular performance monitoring (see also 'Work in progress').

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All child abuse investigation job descriptions were reviewed and updated in April 2007 to ensure that they reflected reality. This work was completed with the involvement of practitioners and HR professionals.

Supervision is clearly intrusive but supportive. DSs develop initial written strategies for urgent investigations. Significant investigations are committed to policy books. Cases are regularly reviewed and actions set. Caseloads are considered within daily management meetings and allocated to ensure an equitable spread.

The community safety suite (CSS) system is utilised to record core investigation information and actions. It provides a means for supervisors to track cases. Likewise, information is recorded on the crime investigation system (CIS) and the information management system (IMS). The CSS is not integrated into other force systems; however, this limitation is partially overcome in that the IMS accessible through the CCR is capable of cross-searching all five Bichard areas and drilling into OASIS and CSS.

Protocols for the handling of cases fitting any one PVP discipline direct the cross-checking of all other PVP databases. Domestic violence risk assessment booklets prompt referral to CAIUs in appropriate cases. Staff are able to make electronic referrals to the CAIUs and this has proved both effective and popular (see 'Areas for improvement' and 'Work in progress').

The jigsaw branding of the PVP project is a clear statement about the interconnected relationship between its disciplines. Protocols are in place to ensure that cross-checking of databases takes place between disciplines and practical documents and processes trigger referrals. A practical example is the child abuse referral risk assessment document for grading initial referrals. This flags the need for assessing other PVP risks.

The ACC (OS) represents the force on the HSCB and the ACC (O) represents the force on the Hertfordshire Children's Trust Partnership executive group. The DCI (MCSI) attends the HSCB operational board, the performance board, the rapid response to child deaths working group and the serious case reviews (child deaths) working group.

The two CAIU DIs attend the local practice forums, the serious case reviews and the policy and procedures group. The police domestic violence and child abuse co-ordinator attend the domestic violence subgroup of the HSCB and the force training manager attends the training subgroup.

Work in progress

The force is actively developing its overarching PVP arrangements under the ACC-chaired project board. The two CAIUs will be merged into a centralised unit in autumn 2007.

The force and social services were working towards a co-location of child abuse professionals in June 2007.

At the time of the inspection field visit, no written accountability framework existed for child abuse investigation. This has, however, been remedied as part of the ongoing project work. An appropriate framework document was expected to be ratified at the COM on 27 September 2007.

Likewise, standard operating procedures for child abuse investigation have been drafted and are expected to be ratified shortly.

CAIUs are staffed equitably across the force and, where vacancies periodically emerge, there is evidence that the force addresses the gaps appropriately. Investigators are generally well motivated but remain sensitive to the impact of vacancies, however short-

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lived, within small units. Overall staffing levels are historically based. The force is currently utilising a model developed by the Metropolitan Police Service to review this position. It was anticipated that CAIUs would be merged into a single unit in around September 2007, improving resilience.

CAIU staff related directly to their immediate supervisors and managers; however, there was the suggestion that strategic-level visibility within the units was limited. In April, a joint protocol was signed with the police authority that will see combined visits to each PVP unit at least once every six months.

Workload monitoring is carried out in CAIUs by line supervision using wall boards for oversight. IT systems are currently incapable of providing a full picture as only live investigations are reflected within the CSS system.

Despite the overall healthy caseload picture, the processing of computer images was, at the time of the field visit, backlogged by about nine months. The long lead time before the nature of offending was truly known presented a challenge in managing the risk that the offender or associates presented in the community. In response, the force has installed new C4P software enabling up to 63,000 hard drive stored images to be viewed and categorised in a morning's work; previously this would have taken weeks. Furthermore, the software creates a library of images, allowing instant automated recognition of images that appear on subsequent hard drives without the need for operator viewing. By July 2007, the backlog had been reduced to around three months.

Officers from the PIU and CAIUs and area Sexual Offences Liaison Officers were to receive training at the NPIA in September 2007 on a one-day 'Preview' course. This will enable officers at the scene to boot up a suspect's computer and check for indecent material, removing the need to submit computers to the computer crime unit for speculative searching. Investigative bail conditions are now routinely utilised with the intention of reducing the risk posed by suspects.

CAIU DIs dip sample ten files every month to ensure that quality standards are met. However, at present no other auditing takes place. The OIDD is currently developing a regular programme of audit and inspection for all PVP disciplines.

A programme of regular audits is planned for PVP disciplines and it is anticipated that this will ensure that policy remains contemporary with developments (see 'Strengths').

Functionality of the CSS system is currently under review and a working group has been established to progress user-led changes to the system.

Areas for improvement

Limited reference is made to responding to the special needs of victims of child abuse in the policing plan; however, this is not carried through into the force's operational control strategy.

PVP tasking and co-ordination arrangements operate on a two-weekly cycle to link with level 2 arrangements. Minutes of these meetings are passed to areas for consideration in their tasking processes. Despite this, direct evidence did not demonstrate how the relationship was influencing decision making. Child abuse investigation does not feature in level 1 or 2 operational control strategies. An intelligence cell that existed within the Letchworth CAIU was dissolved, but the force has signalled its intention to reintroduce these arrangements when a centralised unit is implemented in autumn 2007.

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Child abuse investigations are fundamentally paper-based, limiting the level of access that can be achieved remotely, or indeed immediately in the case of an out-of-hours incident. Likewise, audit and inspection functions require site visits.

Currently CAIUs are purely reactive with no capacity for proactive work.

New staff joining CAIUs enter a structured mentoring process, though the experience of individuals indicated that this petered out over time rather than reaching a scheduled conclusion.

Supervisors assist in investigations and sit in on interviews. However, the PDR objective of sampling three suspect interview tapes and three ABE interviews per officer per annum is not being met due to competing demands on time.

Some CAIU cases are described as high risk, but staff were not aware of any formal mechanism for the identification of high-risk cases, nor had they received specific training to make a determination. Additionally, there is no mechanism for flagging risk within the CSS.

A range of performance management information is available for CAIUs. This is focused solely on the quantitative, encompassing, for example, detection rates, charges, ABE interviews conducted, referral numbers and meetings attended. This data is used largely for tactical management. CAIU performance is now superficially linked to the monthly force OPM, with a report being provided on the level of outstanding CAIU and PIU arrests. The force could do more to develop qualitative measures and integrate wider strategic measures into force performance structures.

CAIUs receive referrals of all cases of domestic violence where children are part of the family. However, staff interviews indicated that relationships with domestic violence liaison officers were ad hoc at best, with specific adverse mention being made in respect of the availability of domestic violence liaison officers, particularly during school holiday periods. Some joint training has previously taken place, the most recent of which was in March 2006, and a similar event was scheduled for September 2007. It is too early to say whether this frequency of event and the chosen agenda will address the issues identified.

Staff are currently required to undergo a six-monthly occupational health psychological assessment linked to a counselling programme. Attendance is apparently monitored for compliance. While staff recognised the existence of the policy, attendances had been missed with no follow-up. Outside the mandatory programme, staff have access to services on demand.

RECOMMENDATION 5

That the force considers developing integrated IT support for child abuse investigations.

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Protecting Vulnerable People – Domestic Violence

GRADE	FAIR
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National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1	13	27	2

National contextual factors

There is no statutory or common law offence as such of ‘domestic violence’; the term is generally used to cover a range of abusive behaviour, not all of which is criminal. The definition of domestic violence adopted by ACPO does, however, take account of the full range of abusive behaviour as well as the different circumstances in which it can occur:

‘any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 18 and over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality’.

As with the investigation of child abuse, responding to and investigating domestic violence is the responsibility of all police officers. Again, however, forces have dedicated staff within this area of work, although their roles vary. In some forces staff undertake a support/liason role, generally acting as a single point of contact for victims and signposting and liaising with other agencies and support services; in others, staff have responsibility for carrying out investigations.

Irrespective of who carries out the investigation in domestic violence cases, an integral part of every stage is the identification of risk factors, followed by more detailed risk assessment and management. In 2004, HMIC, together with HMCPSI, published a joint thematic inspection report on the investigation and prosecution of domestic violence. At that time, risk identification, assessment and management were in the early stages of development throughout the service. Since then, there has been considerable progress in developing formal risk identification and assessment processes and - in a number of forces - the implementation of multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs). Other improvements include the introduction of specialist domestic violence courts and the strengthening of joint working arrangements.

Contextual factors

Responsibility for the investigation of domestic violence in Hertfordshire is split, with ownership of policy and compliance held within MCSI and delivery held at BCU level. Tactical delivery is further divided, with risk management and victim care being the responsibility of dedicated specialists, while the actual responsibility for investigating cases falls to a variety of investigators depending on the gravity of the case, available staff and competing non-domestic violence caseloads.

Recognising the particular gap between the intervention of response officers and the constrained operating hours of domestic violence specialists, the force has developed the role of DVERO and has provided training commensurate with the role.

Strengths

The ACC (O) is the chief officer lead for domestic violence and chairs the PVP project board, driving delivery of the PVP strategic plan. The project is branded with a jigsaw motif, recognising the interconnectivity of the four strands. Development of the PVP action plan specifically considered NCE guidance. A number of meaningful references are made within the policing plan in respect of improving the quality of domestic violence investigations and responding to the special needs of victims of domestic violence. Domestic violence delivery is owned at BCU level, while policy is owned by MCSI under the detective chief superintendent (crime management). The force and police authority signed a joint leadership agreement in April 2007. Wide-ranging strategic commitments have been made, including six-monthly visits to all PVP-related units (see also 'Areas for improvement').

Responsibility for domestic violence investigation is at BCU level. DVOs have a liaison and risk management role, while investigations are conducted as part of volume crime work by LCIUs, case investigation teams and area crime units. Managerial arrangements vary slightly across the three BCUs with no obvious adverse effect.

The local policing plan contains two core targets relating to domestic violence: a sanction detection rate of 54% and a reduction in repeat victimisation levels. At the time of inspection, repeat victimisation was being tracked through the use of a spreadsheet. The force-level OPM monitors two aspects of domestic violence performance: the adherence to positive arrest policy, and the number of outstanding domestic violence risk assessments. Tactical information relating to domestic violence is addressed by BCUs in their daily management meetings (see also 'Areas for improvement').

There is clear energy being applied to improving the service provided to victims through the various workstreams of the PVP project. A large number of worthy developmental initiatives have been progressed rapidly. A variety of communication tools have been used to inform the force of the changes (see also 'Work in progress').

The force recognises domestic violence as a priority, alongside other PVP disciplines, and this is reflected in the April–September 2007 organisational strategic assessment and control strategy, which refers to developing capability through the work of the PVP project board (see also 'Areas for improvement').

Under the PVP board, the force has a comprehensive and actively monitored action plan to drive improvement.

Domestic violence policy was published in February 2006, and reviewed and republished in February 2007 to ensure that it is in keeping with ACPO guidance. A dedicated domestic violence policy unit within MCSI is responsible for ownership and maintenance of policies. These are promulgated through their web page on the force intranet and promoted through emails, general orders, force-wide campaigns, etc. Campaigns in 2006 included a Christmas campaign focusing on children, and one to coincide with the World Cup. Constables have a good level of awareness of force policy and recognise and support the positive arrest policy. Policy compliance is addressed through two routes: local compliance through area-based DCIs, and force-level audit driven through the PVP project board. Indeed, it was this latter mechanism that identified the continued use of domestic violence risk assessment forms that had been superseded.

Harassment policy, together with policy relating to forced marriages, can be accessed via a link on the force intranet. ACPO policy relating to officers committing domestic violence may also be found on the intranet.

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Domestic violence policy is applied consistently across the force, with response and intervention staff demonstrating good levels of awareness.

Hertfordshire Constabulary is actively involved in the spectrum of domestic violence forums across the force area, at force and local level. The domestic violence co-ordinator attends all, while the DCI (MCSI) attends the county-level meeting. The force is also represented within linked work areas, such as the strategic partnership alcohol strategy group. Domestic violence forums attract BCU-level representation, generally at DVO level, as well as the domestic violence co-ordinator.

A PVP training plan owned by the project board establishes a broad training requirement that considers the diverse needs of differing staff groups. Bespoke Centrex training products are being used with these groups. The ACC (O) together with the police authority lead member and all senior managers have completed the module 1 workbook. Specialist DVOs are in the process of completing modules 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7. CCR staff have received training in modules 1 and 2. Some staff in post attended a course at Teesside University in 2005, and those who did not attend this will receive a similar in-house course once the programme of DVERO training is complete. A specific four-day course was developed for DVEROs. All front-line staff are currently completing a Centrex workbook on understanding domestic violence. This was sent out together with related material in April, with monitored completion scheduled for September 2007.

Hertfordshire Constabulary has a proactive approach to the management of domestic violence risk. Ultimately, the force aims to ensure that risk is managed in the same way as a critical incident. Until April 2007, the force was using a risk assessment model that evaluation had demonstrated was insufficiently discriminatory. This has now been superseded by the SPECCS+ model. An OIDD audit at the time of the inspection visit identified that old books (some three years out of date) were still being used and took robust action.

Initial investigating officers will complete with the victim a booklet and the initial risk assessment, which is then supervised by line managers. Where immediate steps are required to mitigate risk, this is the responsibility of line supervision. In all cases the risk assessment is then telephoned to the force contact centre for addition to the CIS record. A more thorough risk assessment is subsequently completed by a DVO, together with the creation of a safety plan and a risk management plan filed in the domestic violence offices alongside the risk assessment documentation.

DVOs broadly work office hours. In response to this, the force has taken the step of training a significant number of intervention officers across the force as DVEROs to ensure an equitable standard of service throughout the 24-hour period. Fifty-four officers had received a four-day Centrex-based course by June.

Clear procedures are in place to ensure that details of children living in domestic violence households are passed to CAIUs. The domestic violence risk assessment book uses the 'CHILDREN' mnemonic to flag risk. DVOs transfer details of those children electronically to CSF and health. The same information is passed to CAIUs and, where appropriate, strategy meetings are convened in accordance with the doctrine of working together. Joint protocols between the police, CSF and health guide activity where referrals are made relating to children exposed to domestic violence. Regular meetings take place with client services, CSF and health to ensure best practice. The domestic violence and child abuse co-ordinator is a member of the domestic violence subgroup of the HSCB.

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Embedded within the domestic violence risk assessment process is the requirement for cross-checking and linking to other PVP disciplines. Supervisory sign-off ensures compliance.

Officers attending domestic violence incidents who note particular concerns can make immediate referrals to CAIUs via the intranet or, out of hours, direct to the on-call duty officer.

The force uses the Hertfordshire CIS for the recording of all domestic violence-related crimes and incidents. All investigative details are recorded on the system, together with the domestic violence risk assessment. Although directions from case conferences attended by DVOs are recorded on the system, full notes and other background records relating to support and risk management are not transcribed onto the database due to the system's inherent limitations. A working group has been established to examine the use of the CSS to overcome this particular shortfall.

All domestic violence incidents are flagged as such and receive an emergency/immediate deployment from the CCR. They are brought to the attention of CCR supervision and cannot be downgraded or closed without supervisory input. Drop-down menus are not in use within the CCR, but staff have ready access to policy via the force intranet, have received a training input from a domestic violence specialist, and have completed domestic violence CBT in the last year. The force employs a quality review team within the force contact centre, which ensures ongoing audit and inspection of process. Additionally, National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) compliance is audited by the force crime registrar and overarching domestic violence audits, driven through the PVP strategy, are carried out on a quarterly basis.

Within the CCR, previous incidents are flagged within the OASIS command and control system. Street index gazetteer and other markers may be added in appropriate cases. A 24-hour intelligence cell operates within the CCR to ensure that officers are routinely provided with a full intelligence picture before reaching the incident, including 'child at risk', bail conditions, injunctions and other risks.

Two areas of domestic violence activity are monitored at the monthly OPM, namely application of the positive arrest policy and outstanding risk assessments.

The force has a current homicide reduction strategy, with clear links to domestic violence.

Role profiles of specialist DVOs are up to date, having been reviewed in April 2007. Role profiles for other specialist staff, including the county domestic violence co-ordinator, remain current.

Supervisory levels for domestic violence specialists appear adequate (see also 'Areas for improvement').

The intention for structured supervision is evident in many aspects of incident recording, attendance and investigation. All domestic violence incidents are flagged to CCR and local supervision. Control logs cannot be closed without supervisory review. Risk assessment booklets are supervised locally, with further supervisory input following the DVOs' formal process of risk assessment. Force policy directs positive arrest and compliance is supervised at inspector level, with the OPM receiving a monthly report by area. Crime desks monitor and review crime investigations.

Ongoing audit and inspections by the CCR quality review team ensure that flagging and other qualitative aspects of call handling are met. The crime registrar likewise audits and

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inspects compliance with NCRS/Home Office Counting Rules. The PVP project has set in train a regular audit cycle for all PVP disciplines (see also 'Areas for improvement').

Work in progress

The force is actively developing its overarching PVP arrangements under the ACC-chaired project board. At present, no written accountability framework exists for domestic violence investigation; however, this is being progressed as part of the ongoing project work.

Recently, funding has been obtained from the Government Office for the East of England (GO-East) to support a multi-agency risk assessment conference pilot on Central BCU, with an envisaged roll-out to the other BCUs by the end of 2007. Independent domestic violence advocates are being provided through partnership funding. The project itself is being driven by a joint agency steering group.

The force is currently developing the CSS for integration with CIS and OASIS for the use of specialist DVOs.

It is anticipated that the programme of domestic violence audits arising from the PVP project will provide information to drive improvement activity. In addition, the force is currently developing a template for enhanced data capture to improve diagnostic capabilities and inform strategic development.

A gender equality strategy action plan has been implemented to address the gender imbalance of the heavily female-weighted domestic violence units and CAIUs.

Areas for improvement

Domestic violence is not treated as an investigative specialism. Instead, a variety of individuals with various skill sets and operating from three core units in three separate BCUs are engaged in domestic violence investigation.

Domestic violence cases for investigation are allocated by the relevant unit supervisor, balancing the skills available with the crime and prisoner workload for the day. Not all officers who are in the investigative pool are ICIDP trained, nor have they received specific Centrex training in the investigation of domestic violence. This approach inevitably leads to variations in investigative quality. Two examples were provided where very inexperienced uniformed constables were left to deal with domestic violence prisoners alone when no investigators from dedicated teams were available. This indicates that supervision alone is ineffective in mitigating the position and ensuring consistency.

Investigators do not always liaise at an early stage with DVOs who may have extensive knowledge of the victim and perpetrator.

Domestic violence policy and audit is owned at HQ level, while delivery is owned at BCU level. As a consequence, the shape of the delivery model varies between BCUs.

Hertfordshire operates a domestic violence model that functionally separates risk management and support from investigation. DVOs responsible for the former are the dedicated specialists, while investigation is the responsibility of trained general purpose investigators within LCIUs, case investigation teams and area crime units.

DVOs work office hours, Monday to Friday, which evidently does not meet the demand profile. In response, the force has developed the role of the DVERO. Early indications are that this has gone some way to closing the gap. Nonetheless, from the point of view of

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providing existing victims with the best possible service, consideration should be given to extending some form of office coverage at least into the weekends.

Policy has existed for some time to ensure mandatory occupational health referrals on a six-monthly basis; however, it was clear that this is not being fully complied with.

There was little evidence that the force is using NIM processes to improve the strategic priorities for the investigation of domestic violence. Domestic violence does not feature in force or local control strategies, and does not routinely feature in formal tasking and co-ordination processes. There was no evidence provided to indicate the use of problem profiles in this context, and there was only limited evidence of proactive policing in this field. On a more positive note, tactical focus was applied to domestic violence issues in daily tasking meetings with regard to arrests, risk assessments and high-risk cases. The force violent crime lead was about to commence a piece of generic work around victimology. The submission of specific intelligence relating to domestic violence was described as limited.

Domestic violence does not feature in operational control strategies at either level 1 or 2.

It was originally envisaged that risk assessments would be reviewed every two months; however, this has proved impractical within domestic violence offices. Assessments are therefore not truly dynamic, in that they are only reviewed following a further incident.

During the inspection visit, the OIDD completed a 'reality check' audit of domestic violence processes. While good practice was evident in a number of areas, it was clear that the intention for structured supervision was not always carried through into practice, with evident gaps in the risk management process.

Contact details for Man2Man (for male victims of domestic violence) and Broken Rainbow (a 24-hour helpline for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender domestic violence victims) are included on a tear-off agency information slip in the risk identification booklet. A number of media campaigns have been run and, in addition, the county independent advisory group has a specific adviser on same-sex matters. Notwithstanding this, focus group evidence suggested a perceived weakness in the force approach to same-sex domestic violence, particularly male-on-male violence.

RECOMMENDATION 6

That the force reviews the delivery model for the further investigation of domestic abuse, thereby ensuring an equitable level of service to victims.

Protecting Vulnerable People – Public Protection

GRADE	FAIR
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National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
2	16	23	2

National contextual factors

The Criminal Justice and Courts Services Act 2000 led to the formation of the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements, commonly known as MAPPA, requiring the police and probation services to work together as the Responsible Authority in each area of England and Wales to establish and review the arrangements for the assessment and management of sexual and violent offenders. Subsequent legislation brought the Prison Service into the Responsible Authority arrangements and also requires a range of social care agencies to co-operate with the Responsible Authority in the delivery of the assessment and management of risk in this area. These agencies include health, housing, education, social services, youth offending teams, Jobcentre Plus, and electronic monitoring services.

Under MAPPA, there are three categories of offender who are considered to pose a risk of serious harm:

Category 1 – Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs)

Category 2 – violent and other sex offenders

Category 3 – other offenders (with convictions that indicate they are capable of causing, and pose a risk of, serious harm).

To be managed under MAPPA, offenders must have received a conviction or caution. However, there are some people who have not been convicted or cautioned for any offence, and thus fall outside these categories, but whose behaviour nonetheless gives reasonable ground for believing a present likelihood of them committing an offence that will cause serious harm. These people are termed Potentially Dangerous Persons (PDPs).

Following risk assessment, risk management involves the use of strategies by various agencies to reduce the risk, at three levels:

- Level 1 offenders can be managed by one agency;
- Level 2 offenders require the active involvement of more than one agency;
- Level 3 offenders – the ‘critical few’ – are generally deemed to pose a high or very high risk and are managed by a multi-agency public protection panel (MAPPP).

In 2003, the Home Secretary issued MAPPA guidance to consolidate what has already been achieved since the introduction of the MAPPA in 2001 and to address a need for greater consistency in MAPPA practice. The guidance outlines four considerations that are key to the delivery of effective public protection.

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- defensible decisions;
- rigorous risk assessment;
- the delivery of risk management plans which match the identified public protection need; and,
- the evaluation of performance to improve delivery.

Contextual factors

Public protection policy and compliance is owned at force level, while operational accountability rests with BCU commanders. The absence of a written accountability framework and a cohesive performance management framework at BCU and force level has allowed a disconnect between strategy and action to develop.

A variety of staff at all levels of the organisation were unable to identify where risks were owned. Clear gaps in training, particularly among line supervisors, has created a situation where in some places only the practitioners have received core CEOP courses, appropriate training to update the ViSOR system, or indeed training to use the RM2000 risk management tool.

Units do not have dedicated line management, and the small size of the individual BCU units creates resilience and efficiency issues, particularly when visits to subjects require two trained staff.

Notwithstanding the structural issues mentioned, practitioners are dedicated and knowledgeable, even developing good practice such as the registered sex offender (RSO) contracts in use on Central BCU.

Strengths

The ACC (OS) is the chief officer lead for public protection and chairs the PVP project board, driving delivery of the PVP strategic plan. Public protection projects within the PVP action plan are tracked by the board. The project itself is branded with a jigsaw motif, recognising the interconnectivity of the four strands. Both the DCC and the ACC (OS) attend the strategic management board (SMB), chaired by John Hughes of the probation service. Strategic priorities regarding the development of capability in respect of public protection arrangements are referred to in both the organisational control strategy and the strategic assessments for April–September 2007. The local policing plan likewise reflects this aspiration.

The force has identified the need to improve its capability in public protection arrangements. This is established at the strategic level through the NIM business-planning arrangements, particularly the force-level organisational and operational control strategies for April–September 2007 and the local policing plan for 2007/08.

The profile of public protection has been raised, particularly through the overarching PVP project, linked to the organisational strategic assessment and control strategy. Various articles have also appeared in special editions of *Frontline* and *Herts Beat*. An introduction to public protection also features in community profiling and problem solving (COMPASS) training for student officers and in the custody sergeants' course.

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Public protection arrangements are owned at BCU level, while policy is controlled by MCSI. Strategic links to operational delivery are maintained through the force OPM, where the number of outstanding home visits by risk and unit is tracked monthly.

The force and police authority signed a joint leadership agreement in April 2007. Wide-ranging strategic commitments have been made, including six-monthly visits to all PVP-related units.

The multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) annual business plan is a joint partner document setting out strategic objectives for the year. This is reported on annually and published by the Home Office.

The SMB annual business plan is developed by the partners to the arrangements and outcomes reported as required by regulation. The SMB's audit subgroup, which involves, among others, the health service, CSF, victim support and lay members, sits on a bi-monthly basis. Each session reviews a number of random cases, looking for lessons learnt. These are fed back to the SMB for wider action. As a matter of course, the SMB will direct case reviews in the event of an offender or potentially dangerous person reoffending.

Minutes of SMB meetings and all MAPPA meetings are prepared by dedicated administrative support, checked for accuracy and circulated within ten days. Responses to actions are required within four weeks.

The force is contributing appropriately at all MAPPA levels. The police, probation, prison service, mental health and CSF attend as core members, with other representation as required. Level 3 MAPPA meetings are held monthly, chaired by a probation service assistant chief officer. The detective chief superintendent head of crime management chairs these meetings in the ACC's absence. The public protection unit (PPU) DCI attends, with area representation at DCI/DI level. Police and probation jointly fund a MAPPA manager who attends all multi-agency public protection (MAPP) meetings and chairs the level 2 arrangements.

PPU supervisors attend level 2 MAPP meetings and sometimes accompany the DCI/DI to the level 3 meetings.

Area DCIs/DIs attend level 3 MAPP meetings in accordance with the force model. This provides a direct link to resources and area-based tasking arrangements. Conversely, however, this arrangement potentially reinforces a disconnection between public protection risk and the BCU commander as the officer who holds that risk. (see also 'Work in progress' with reference to the absence of a written accountability framework).

The MAPPA manager describes police attendance and preparation as excellent. An attendance register is used to monitor commitment.

The force MAPPA co-ordinator is responsible for championing public protection work on behalf of the three BCUs and the work area has gained a significant profile, particularly through the overall PVP project.

The force MAPPA co-ordinator, based at PPU HQ, centrally co-ordinates and monitors activity at BCU level. A ViSOR-led audit was completed in March, with a second due no later than September 2007 leading into an ongoing schedule of audits.

Potentially Dangerous Offenders are identified on a single agency basis by means of that agencies own threshold criteria. Their adoption is ratified at the relevant MAPP meeting.

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Minutes of MAPP meetings set out agreed offender management activity, and this is input onto ViSOR in the case of RSOs. Activity is tracked within the log section of the system.

The PVP project is branded with a jigsaw motif, recognising the interconnectivity of the four strands. Operational processes within each discipline direct appropriate links to be made with the others. The St Albans-based public protection team has made particular operational links with DVOs in acknowledgement of the large number of domestic violence subjects who are addressed through level 2 MAPP meetings.

ViSOR is being used corporately across the force and is delivering business benefits, specifically the operational access of records, ie CCR 24-hour intelligence cell, PIU, CAIU and supervisory/audit access.

The MAPP policy and standard operating procedures were reviewed in April 2007, to incorporate the draft ACPO guidance. These are available on the PPU web page on the force intranet. Specialist staff are generally well trained.

Home visits to RSOs are carried out as follows (see also 'Areas for improvement' and 'Work in progress'):

- Low risk – yearly
- Medium risk – six-monthly
- High risk – three-monthly
- Very high risk – at least three-monthly, based on risk.

Where the use of different risk assessment tools generates different risk levels, the higher level is used until an accepted position is negotiated and recorded in MAPP meeting minutes. Risk is reviewed as a matter of course following each home visit, an offence or the submission of intelligence.

Although no written risk assessment is conducted ahead of RSO home visits, the initial risk management plan identifies key standing risks and how they should be managed. There is an expectation on staff that before any visit all force systems are interrogated and a view taken on how the results affect risk (see also 'Areas for improvement' and 'Work in progress').

Both RSOs and other dangerous offenders are addressed through the Hertfordshire MAPP arrangements. Other dangerous offenders and unconvicted sex offenders are proactively managed. Management plans may include local tasking, and there is the potential to nominate an individual for surveillance in the one day per month set aside at level 2. In the case of unconvicted sex offenders, the force has a track record of seeking Sexual Offences Prevention Orders and Risk of Sexual Harm Orders.

With the exclusion of the supervisory issues mentioned as an area for improvement, ViSOR training has been delivered widely. Relevant staff also receive training in MAPP and participate in courses run by the HSCB, various locally arranged courses and national conferences. Sex offender awareness is also provided to student officers as part of the force's COMPASS programme.

Information is regularly contributed by the youth offending team, prison service and probation service, together with that garnered from scheduled home visits.

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RSO information is theoretically passed to PPU by means of IMS, CIS, ViSOR and the PNC. The information flow is good in response to particular targets where their profile has been raised, for example through tasking. Public protection officers recently spent some time giving familiarisation training within the CCR, which again improved the intelligence flow. The Eastern PPU described the intelligence flow as excellent.

Other examples provided demonstrated that there was still room for improvement. In one case, public protection officers only became aware that there was a major crime team interest in a number of their subjects as a result of calls from the subjects themselves. A sex offence-related enquiry was being conducted and RSOs visited as potential suspects without reference to the PPU. Public protection officer support was offered but not taken up. ViSOR was not updated and intelligence was not forthcoming. A number of risks were created by this, including the possibility that the action altered the offending risk of the subjects themselves.

Although public protection work does not specifically feature within force or local control strategies, activity against appropriate public protection subjects is considered within tasking, as was seen in the Central BCU tasking and co-ordination group meeting.

Limited management information is used by senior managers to monitor performance at the monthly OPM. This amounts to outstanding visits and RSO numbers at liberty by BCU and risk level. Audit findings are reported to the ACC (O) PVP project lead as they emerge, from which robust actions are tasked.

A training strategy has been developed as part of the overarching PVP project.

All public protection officers and staff are vetted to the agreed level by the Hertfordshire Criminal Records Bureau.

Staff within the Central PPU have devised a written contract for use where a RSO has legitimate access to certain high-risk locations, such as schools or churches. Setting out agreed constraints between the subject, institution and police, these contracts are not legally binding but do set clear parameters. Any breach of these can then be cited when applying for a relevant restraining order.

Work in progress

The core responsibilities of specialist officers are detailed in the force standard operating procedures for public protection officers. Public protection officer and ViSOR officer job descriptions are up to date and reflect their roles; however, that of the police MAPPA co-ordinator is currently being developed with the HR department.

Most PPU officers are trained in the use of Thornton's RM2000. In-house training to ensure that all staff are trained was postponed in May but was then scheduled for August 2007.

The force is actively developing its overarching PVP arrangements under the ACC-chaired project board. At present no written accountability framework exists for public protection arrangements; however, this is being progressed as part of the ongoing project work. This had manifest consequences in that a number of staff at all levels with direct involvement in public protection were unable to identify where risks were owned.

A series of audit and inspections of public protection through ViSOR took place in early 2007. These are being further developed as part of the PVP project and were due to commence by September. The audits included the commendable practice of seeking external review. The audits identified a number of important themes, including a series of

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recording practice errors, together with visit timeliness issues. The errors have since been corrected, additional guidance given and training commissioned.

Currently there are no mandatory arrangements for public protection staff to be referred to occupational health; however, consideration is being given to moving to a position of risk assessment-based medical examinations.

Areas for improvement

Public protection capability features within the April–September 2007 organisational strategic assessment and control strategy under the PVP umbrella, but not the operational control strategies at either level 1 or 2. The force has not developed problem profiles or other analytical work in relation to public protection.

Public protection officers are alert to the potential dangers of carrying out home visits with RSOs, or indeed with other dangerous offenders; however, no formalised process of risk assessment takes place prior to a visit taking place.

Currently the force records only RSOs within ViSOR. Paper records are currently in use for the management of people who fall outside this process.

PPUs across the force currently have their full complement of staff. The Eastern PPU has three officers and one part-time staff member; Western has two officers and one staff member; and Central has two officers. Staff levels are historic, having been determined on a BCU basis at a ratio of one per 50 RSOs.

Staff are generally very well motivated and professional, yet the units struggle to keep pace with scheduled visits. A July snapshot indicated Eastern BCU managing 172 RSOs at liberty, Western with 144 RSOs at liberty, and Central with 112 at liberty. Even discounting the additional work associated with managing other dangerous people and offenders visiting from other forces, it is clear that the staff-to-offender management ratio is at the upper end of the force limit. This is particularly acute on Central BCU, where the number has been exceeded, exacerbated by the unit's inherent lack of resilience.

Each of the PPUs endeavours to engage in the proactive management of offenders. This, however, creates a particular tension with the ability of units to maintain scheduled home visits in a timely manner. The Central PPU acknowledges that there is almost no capacity for proactive work there.

None of the PPUs have dedicated supervision. Instead, this function is carried out by the DS with responsibility for overarching offender management, including prolific and other priority offenders, and, in the case of Central BCU, the tactical CID. This has a direct bearing on the amount and quality of intrusive supervision that is given.

Good practice was evident on Eastern BCU, where because of local circumstances the offender management DS works within the PPU and can devote almost 100% of his time to this activity. The individual was previously a PPU detective constable, and even now actively engages in visits (this is not replicated universally across the force). The DI was formerly the unit DS and therefore understands the business. BCU-level support was described as excellent.

All supervisors should be involved in endorsing and reviewing risk levels, monitoring home visits and reviewing actions and risk management plans. However, this is not universally carried through into practice.

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Despite having been in post since September 2006, one DS had not received any formal training except in the use of ViSOR. Although a CEOP foundation course in public protection was scheduled for May 2007, this was cancelled. RM2000 training was scheduled for August 2007.

A similar picture emerges on Central BCU, with neither the DS nor the DI trained in RM2000 and with only view-level access to ViSOR. This must call into question their ability to meaningfully and intrusively supervise in a way that would be auditable through ViSOR. The situation was to be remedied by 11 September 2007.

At present the force OPM monitors outstanding visits by area and offender category, together with the total number of RSOs who are resident in the county. In practice, however, workloads are higher as public protection officers supervise a number of other dangerous offenders who are not recorded on ViSOR, including cases where they are partners in an offender's management (eg for those offenders who visit Hertfordshire). On Central BCU, two staff are responsible for monitoring 112 resident sex offenders, manage over 15 other dangerous offenders and are partners in the management of others. The unit has no administrative support and no inbuilt resilience. As a result, visits are only kept up to date by the use of 'station visits' or joint visits with probation when one of the public protection officers is absent.

CEOP training, comprising five two-day modules – public protection foundation, internet sex offenders, Sex Offences Act 2003, management of sex offenders, and interviewing sex offenders – is seen as essential to the role. As a result of an administrative issue, courses scheduled for May were cancelled. The Western DS line supervisor has been in post since September 2006; however, as at July 2007 he had received no CEOP training. Most staff are RM2000 trained, but training was not due to be completed for all constables and police staff until August 2007. This again left the line supervisor without a core skill since coming into post. The DS was due to receive training with staff in the August tranche of training.

Relationships between related disciplines are triggered by the cross-referencing required in various risk assessment processes and through other operational and intelligence drivers. CAIU and PIU staff have access to ViSOR. However, structured relationships could potentially be further improved through the development of periodic area-based PVP professional meetings.

RECOMMENDATION 7

That the force examines its delivery model for public protection arrangements at basic command unit level, with particular consideration to the number and risk level of subjects, resilience of staffing and availability of dedicated intrusive supervision.

RECOMMENDATION 8

That the force ensures that public protection unit line supervisors, particularly at sergeant and inspector level, receive core training specific to their role in a timely fashion.

RECOMMENDATION 9

That the force sets clear expectations in regard to the auditable supervision of the Violent and Sex Offenders Register and other associated records.

Protecting Vulnerable People – Missing Persons

GRADE	GOOD
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National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1	21	21	0

National contextual factors

Each year, thousands of people are reported to police as missing. Many have done so voluntarily and are safe from harm, whether or not they return home. But a number are vulnerable, because of age or health concerns, and the police service has developed well-honed systems to respond swiftly and effectively to such cases. For obvious reasons, missing children arouse particular concern, and many forces deploy 'Child Rescue Alert' to engage the media in publicising such cases. Key good practice in this framework are early recognition of critical incident potential, effective supervision of enquiries, the use of NIM problem profiles and other intelligence techniques to analyse repeat locations (eg, children's homes), and the use of an IT-based investigation tracking system such as COMPACT.

Contextual factors

Missing persons investigations are owned at BCU level, while policy and accountability are owned at force level.

The force has invested in the community policing and case tracking (COMPACT) database in which all enquiries are now recorded. This provides a useful tool for managing investigations and, more particularly, a vehicle for intrusive supervision and review.

Regular audits reported through the OPMs have led to significant improvements in compliance; these are to be broadened to encompass the qualitative aspects of investigation.

At BCU level, a number of discrete pieces of work have been carried out, demonstrating that demand can usefully be reduced in this area of business. A more comprehensive force-level analysis may well identify further opportunities for proactive work, both at an institutional level and potentially within communities.

Strengths

The ACC (O) is the chief officer lead for missing persons and chairs the PVP project board, driving delivery of the PVP strategic plan. The project is branded with a jigsaw motif, recognising the interconnectivity of the four strands. Strategic priorities are recorded in the NCPE action plan, which is progressed through a quarterly meeting. Development of capability in respect of missing persons investigations, particularly of high-risk cases, is referred to in both the organisational control strategy and the strategic assessments for April–September 2007.

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The force and police authority signed a joint leadership agreement in April 2007. Wide-ranging strategic commitments have been made, including six-monthly visits to all PVP-related units.

Missing persons investigations are owned at BCU level, while policy is controlled by MCSI under the detective chief superintendent (crime management). Strategic grip of operational delivery is maintained through the force OPM, where quarterly audit data produced by the OIDD, particularly focused on recording compliance and risk assessment, is translated into a benchmark compliance score. At a tactical level, missing persons are reported at daily management meetings and actioned as appropriate.

Each of the three BCUs has dedicated missing persons officers: on Central BCU there is a DS, while on the other two BCUs the role is fulfilled by a constable.

Managerial structures for missing persons officers differ significantly between the three BCUs, with one officer working within a harm reduction unit, the second in a vulnerable persons unit, and the third working to three CDRP-based DIs. Although no obvious disparities in performance were identified during the inspection, it would be surprising if one or other working arrangement failed to deliver advantages over the others.

Area-based senior investigating officers take responsibility for all high-risk missing persons, with out-of-hours reports being taken on by the on-call duty DI.

Policy and procedures that incorporate ACPO guidance set out the recording process, risk assessment, tactical options, supervisory responsibilities and review requirements. These have been published in the form of force policy and standard operating procedures. Both are accessible from the PVP web pages. Specific reference is made to the potential escalation into a critical incident. A good level of knowledge was found among staff at all levels, including in the CCR. Staff at all levels were confident in the force's robust approach to the investigation of missing persons.

Force policy refers to multi-agency approaches in the resolution of missing persons investigations, and identifies a range of specific partner organisations. The force has recently developed a protocol with CSF, 'Children Missing from Care', to differentiate between an unauthorised absence and missing. The practical import of the policy is a reduction in demand, while ensuring the protection of children. Western BCU is currently working with Watford Hospital Mental Health Unit to develop a similar protocol, which will reduce police demand in responding to absconders while ensuring the safety of the patient and the public.

The policy for 'Children Missing from Care' has been circulated and published through general orders.

The COMPACT database provides an effective tool to facilitate the active supervision, review and audit of the conduct of investigations. Review processes and their timetables are clearly set out within force policy and standard operating procedures.

Action in missing persons cases is commensurate with risk. High-risk cases are immediately allocated to a senior investigating officer, with a graduated response applied to lower-risk cases as directed by the relevant area crime unit. BCU daily management meetings track the progress of all live investigations.

Initial risk assessment in missing persons cases is made by the first officer in attendance using the guidance contained in the missing persons form. High-risk cases are immediately drawn to the attention of line management, which allocates first lines of enquiry. Once the

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initial report is transcribed into the COMPACT database, a risk level is generated by the system and remains dynamic throughout the life of the enquiry, determined by input.

Return interviews are completed as a matter of routine.

ACPO guidance defines the process of review that is set out in force policy. Area DIs carry out reviews on the COMPACT database; reviews are prompted by the system when they are due.

Reviews of long-term missing persons are carried out by area DCIs, provided they are not the investigating officer. Compliance with reviews forms part of the quarterly audit inspection process. Audit results are reported in the monthly force OPM chaired by the director of performance, the ACC (O).

Missing persons feature within daily management meetings on all three BCUs and in the operational support department, from which appropriate tasking or other intervention may be directed. High-risk missing persons are highlighted in the Chief Constable's return through the county communications room, are routinely monitored, and are an agenda item at force-wide management meetings held at weekends.

Work in progress

The force is actively developing its overarching PVP arrangements under the ACC-chaired project board. At present, no written accountability framework exists for missing persons investigation; however, this is being progressed as part of the ongoing project work.

Western BCU is currently working with Watford Hospital Mental Health Unit to develop a protocol that will reduce police demand in responding to absconders while ensuring the safety of the patient and the public.

Hertfordshire Constabulary uses the dedicated COMPACT database for the recording and management of all missing persons investigations. It is not yet integrated with the OASIS command and control system, although work is in progress to develop this functionality. At present, therefore, basic details must be manually input into both systems.

The four OIDD audits of the COMPACT database undertaken between June 2006 and April 2007 identified issues including poor levels of DI supervision at 48 hours and poor conversion of records from OASIS to COMPACT. Trends have shown marked improvement, with the July audit (albeit only 50% complete at the time of writing this report) showing 100% compliance in these areas.

Investigation quality in missing persons enquiries is monitored through routine supervision of enquiries and the structured review process established in force policy. At present, missing persons audits focus largely on process and risk assessment but do not assess investigation quality. The force intends to adapt the audit process to include this aspect by the end of 2007.

The force is currently developing a process to measure and benchmark repeat cases in order that strategies for reducing absconding can be evaluated.

Staff were prepared for the introduction of the COMPACT database and risk assessment; however, the force recognises that there is an issue with compliance. This is being addressed through a live input to new recruits and transferees and the proposed development of a new CBT package for students on the COMPASS developmental programme.

Areas for improvement

Evidence of multi-agency work was limited. The development of a meaningful problem profile would be likely to provide the catalyst for dialogue in respect of reducing through proactive interventions the numbers of people who go missing.

The force has identified opportunities for reducing police demand and has responded to these. This is evidenced by the protocol addressing children missing from care and the ongoing work with Watford Hospital. Despite the merit of this work, it did not arise from the development of a problem profile. The creation of a meaningful problem profile may well point to further opportunities for intervention, leading to greater public safety and/or demand reduction.

All officers have received diversity training; however, awareness of diversity issues in the context of missing persons investigation was limited.

The force-level OPM considers missing persons audit performance by BCU on a quarterly basis. Additionally, BCU management meetings consider on a daily basis all live missing persons enquiries. No performance management framework – qualitative or quantitative – exists beyond this.

There does not appear to be a structured review process in place to review unsolved missing persons enquiries that pre-date the COMPACT database.

Recommendations

Neighbourhood Policing

Recommendation 1

That the force develops and maintains high-quality neighbourhood profiles using a range of available data, thereby enabling their use within National Intelligence Model products such as strategic assessments.

Recommendation 2

That the force develops joint partnership strategic assessments.

Performance management

Recommendation 3

That the force continues to develop its performance management arrangements for protecting vulnerable people disciplines from chief officer level, through basic command unit/departmental level, to practitioners.

Protecting vulnerable people

Recommendation 4

That the force utilises National Intelligence Model products to prioritise activity within protecting vulnerable people disciplines.

Recommendation 5

That the force considers developing integrated IT support for child abuse investigations.

Recommendation 6

That the force reviews the delivery model for the further investigation of domestic abuse, thereby ensuring an equitable level of service to victims.

Recommendation 7

That the force examines its delivery model for public protection arrangements at basic command unit level, with particular consideration to the number and risk level of subjects, resilience of staffing and availability of dedicated intrusive supervision.

Recommendation 8

That the force ensures that public protection unit line supervisors, particularly at sergeant and inspector level, receive core training specific to their role in a timely fashion.

Recommendation 9

That the force sets clear expectations in regard to the auditable supervision of the Violent and Sex Offenders Register and other associated records.

Appendix: Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

A

ABE	Achieving Best Evidence
ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
ACC (O)	Assistant Chief Constable (Operations)
ACC (OS)	Assistant Chief Constable (Operational Support)
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers

B

BCU	Basic Command Unit
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C

CAIU	Child Abuse Investigation Unit
CBT	Computer-based Training
CCR	County Control Room
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CEOP	Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CIS	Crime Investigation System
COM	Chief Officers' Meeting
COMPACT	Community Policing and Case Tracking
COMPASS	Community Profiling and Problem Solving
CSF	Children, Schools and Families Department
CSS	Community Safety Suite

D

DCC	Deputy Chief Constable
DCI	Detective Chief Inspector

DI	Detective Inspector
DS	Detective Sergeant
DVERO	Domestic Violence Emergency Response Officer
DVO	Domestic Violence Officer

H

HESC	Hertfordshire Extended Schools Consortium
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
HSCB	Hertfordshire Safeguarding Children Board

I

ICIDP	Initial Crime Investigators' Development Programme
ILP	Intelligence-led Planning
IMS	Information Management System
IPP	Improving Personal Performance

J

JAG	Joint Action Group
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L

LAA	Local Area Agreement
LCIU	Local Crime Investigation Unit

M

MAPP	Multi-agency Public Protection
MAPPA	Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements
MCSI	Major Crime Specialist Investigations
MIDAS	Multi-agency Information and Data Access System

MSBCU Most Similar Basic Command Unit

MSF Most Similar Force

N

NCPE National Centre for Policing Excellence

NCRS National Crime Recording Standard

NIM National Intelligence Model

NPIA National Policing Improvement Agency

NPT Neighbourhood Policing Team

O

OASIS Operational and Support Information System

OIDD Operational Intelligence Development Department

OPM Operational Performance Meeting

P

PCSO Police Community Support Officer

PDR Personal Development Review

PIU Paedophile Investigation Unit

PNC Police National Computer

PPU Public Protection Unit

PVP Protecting Vulnerable People

R

RSO Registered Sex Offender

S

SARA Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment

SGC Specific Grading Criteria

SIU Specialist Interview Unit

SMART Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely

SMB Strategic Management Board

SN Safer Neighbourhood

T

TAPS Tasking and Problem-solving Database

V

ViSOR Violent and Sex Offenders Register