

**Inspection of Sunderland BCU
Northumbria Police
November 2005**



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Introduction

1. Between 14 and 18 November 2005 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary conducted the Inspection of Sunderland Basic Command Unit (BCU).
2. There are over 300 basic command units (BCUs) in England and Wales and no two are alike. They vary in size from a little over 100 officers to over 1,000; some serve densely populated, ethnically diverse inner cities, while others cover vast tracts of sparsely populated countryside. What they do share are some key aims and objectives, specifically to work with partner agencies on reducing crime in their areas, and to do so with integrity.
3. Scrutiny of police performance is shifting from aggregate force outcomes to the performance of individual BCUs, with the recognition that policing is essentially a locally delivered service. However, BCUs are not islands – they operate within a framework of policy and support determined by headquarters based chief officer teams. The precise configuration of policing units and the balance of resources between HQ and BCUs varies across the 43 forces in England and Wales.
4. The focus on performance in reducing crime and disorder is likely to be relentless. Forces and police authorities, working with local authorities and other community safety partners, will need to raise their game year after year. Indeed, the statutory regime of Best Value demands 'continuous improvement' and an array of sanctions exist if authorities fail to deliver this.
5. The Government recognises the need for additional resources in the fight against crime, and the 2004-07 comprehensive spending review (CSR) settlement is acknowledged to be the most generous the police service has received for many years.
6. More police officers, better communications and information technology, and ever more sophisticated forensic techniques should all enhance police effectiveness. However, the potential for the service as a whole to deliver better results in crime reduction and detection cannot conceal an inescapable fact – that performance between BCUs operating in similar policing environments and with comparable resources varies to a degree that is, at times, remarkable.
7. Leadership by BCU commanders is probably the single most important determinant of BCU effectiveness. The responsibilities of command are significant, and some superintendents are not well supported in terms of the strength of their management teams and/or the quality and quantity of support from headquarters. Without exception, staff in pilot sites wanted their management teams to be more visible and accessible. One outcome from BCU inspections should be a better understanding of the practical manifestations of effective leadership.
8. In trying to make sense of the variations in operational performance that exist – to differing degrees – in every force, a key ingredient is *focus*. The best performers focused efforts of their staff through timely, dynamic local briefings that are supported by a well managed intelligence system. They set targets and make sure that

staff are aware of them, they communicate results and celebrate success. They define responsibilities and hold individuals to account for how they have used their time.

9. In some BCUs this performance culture is absent, reflected in the fact that the performance development review (PDR) system of setting and monitoring individual goals is in abeyance. A nationwide rolling programme of inspections that focus upon performance and leadership is thus likely to produce an upturn in results.

Note: For consistency the term Basic Command Unit (BCU) will be used throughout this report, although within Northumbria Police, local policing is delivered through an area command structure.

Overview

1. The Northumbria Police senior command team consists of the Chief Constable Mr Mike Craik supported by the following:

- deputy chief constable;
- director of finance and resources;
- assistant chief constable (area operations and management services);
- assistant chief constable (crime); and
- assistant chief constable (central support).

2. The Chief Constable was appointed in April 2005 and announced that his aim for the Force was 'to build trust and confidence in the community and reduce crime and disorder'.

3. Mr Craik said that he intended to progress six main areas of reform over the next five years in order to deliver a force that is 'second to none, day in, day out' and that provides a total policing service. The areas of reform are:

- leadership;
- performance management;
- marketing;
- partnership;
- training (for the above); and
- strategic resource management.

4. The Police Authority comprises nine councillors, three magistrates and five independent members. The chair of the Authority, Councillor Mick Henry was appointed in April 2002. The annual revenue budget for Northumbria Police for 2005/06 was set at £249.8 million.

5. The Force vision is:

'To build on our success in making Northumbria a better place to live, work and visit by reducing crime and the fear of crime.'

6. The policing plan priorities for the period 2004-07 are:

- to reduce crime and disorder and make our communities safer;
- to release the potential of our personnel;
- to improve the quality of life through working in partnership with the community and public, private and voluntary bodies; and
- to ensure that all of our activities support front line policing.

7. Northumbria Police is currently the sixth largest force in England and Wales with 4,200 police officers and 1,500 police staff, including 94 police community support officers (PCSOs). The Force covers an area of approximately 5,550 square kilometres encompassing 599,174 households and a population of 1.4 million.

8. The Force area is one of contrasts, combining the geographically remote rural area of Northumberland with densely populated inner city areas along the river corridors of the Tyne and Wear. It contains areas of relative prosperity contrasted with areas of significant deprivation. The economy draws heavily upon new forms of manufacturing employment (light engineering, electrical and electronic industries, clothing and food) and a range of service sector jobs (retail, leisure, call centres, business and financial services).

9. There has been a long-term shift of population away from inner city areas to suburbs and more rural areas; however, there are signs that a recent rise in the popularity of city centre living might reverse this trend. The Force has a small minority ethnic population (3.8%), with most non-white groups concentrated in areas where there are strong ethnic communities, most notably Newcastle and Sunderland.

10. In April 2004 the Force underwent a significant restructure, reducing the number of BCUs from 15 to 6. The current BCUs are based on local authority boundaries and are as follows:

- Sunderland;
- South Tyneside;
- Gateshead;
- North Tyneside;
- Newcastle; and
- Northumberland.

11. Total recorded crime fell across the Northumbria Police area by 9.5% in 2004/05. The total number of offences recorded dropped from 157,051 to 142,122. Burglary dwelling dropped by 23% and there were also significant reductions in vehicle crime, robbery and racist offences. The detection rate across the Force dropped from 30.3% in 2003/04 to 28.6% in 2004/05.

Sunderland BCU

12. Sunderland BCU is coterminous with the boundaries of Sunderland City Council. The BCU covers an area of 137.3 square kilometres and the area has a resident population of 289,500 (2005 mid-year estimate) and 119,699 households.

13. The black and minority ethnic population make up 1.9% of the total population of the city (Office of National Statistics 2001). Whilst this is a comparatively small figure in comparison to the North East region (2.4%) and nationally (9.1%), the figure has increased significantly over the last 10 years and has become more dispersed across the city.

14. Over the past 20 years the city has undergone a marked economic and social transition following the decline in the traditional industries of mining, shipbuilding and heavy engineering. Employment in the area has seen a large scale shift towards automotive manufacturing and call centres.

15. The population of the area is in decline. This is predominantly due to outward migration and poses a major challenge in tackling skills shortages. The elderly population is growing and causing a strain on the local economy.

16. The BCU has a police officer establishment of 686 of which 146 are female officers. The police staff establishment is 110 of which 63 are female. There are 12 police officers of black and minority ethnic origin representing 1.7% of the establishment.

17. In April 2004 Northumbria Police underwent a significant restructure in its delivery of territorial policing. During this process the BCUs of Washington, Sunderland North and Sunderland West amalgamated to form the current Sunderland City BCU.

18. The BCU Commander is a chief superintendent. He is supported by a senior management team (SMT) that consists of:

- superintendent (operations);
- superintendent (operations support);
- chief inspector (partnership and criminal justice);
- chief inspector (operations);
- chief inspector (operations support);
- detective chief inspector (crime);
- detective chief inspector (crime support);
- business manager; and
- two support services managers.

19. The inspection process is focused around leadership and performance. The Inspection commenced with an analysis of documents and data obtained from various sources, coupled with visits to the assistant chief constable (area operations and management services) and various specialist departments at Force headquarters. The documents, data and other BCU issues were explored through an initial meeting with the BCU Commander.

20. The issues were further explored through a series of interviews, meetings, focus groups and unscheduled visits, during the week of the field Inspection. A total of 171 people were seen and involved in this process. A number of reality checks (discussions and unscheduled meetings with staff) were performed during this period, which included a visit to an outlying police station.

21. The BCU inspection process concluded with a verbal debrief to the BCU Commander and his senior management team. A further debrief was conducted with the assistant chief constable (area operations and management support).

22. The inspection team would like to thank the BCU Commander and all the staff in Sunderland City BCU for the co-operation and assistance afforded them during the course of the Inspection.

Part One – Leadership

The BCU Management Team

BCU Commander

1.1 The BCU Commander has 22 years' police service including four years with the Royal Hong Kong Police. He was appointed as area Commander in September 2005 having previously been the Commander in South Tyneside BCU for two years. He has broad operational experience in crime investigation, operational support and personnel. One of his principal areas of expertise is public order policing.

Superintendent (Operations)

1.2 The superintendent (operations) was the BCU Commander at Washington for almost four years. Following the restructure of territorial policing he took up his current post in April 2004. He also has previous experience as a superintendent whilst head of communications. He has served in a number of BCUs within Northumbria Police and also in corporate development. As an inspector, he was seconded to the Home Office for three years to develop the training strategy for the Phoenix Project. Recently he has worked closely with other agencies on drug intervention.

Superintendent (Operations Support)

1.3 The superintendent (operations support) has 27 years' police service and has been in his current post since August 2005. He has a broad range of experience in the Force communications centre, professional standards, race relations, performance review, personnel and events planning. He has experience in handling grievance procedures (stage three), the national competency framework, national PDR process, promotion board selection process, management of the Force establishment, the crime-fighting fund and HPDS.

Business Manager

1.4 The business manager joined Northumbria Police in June 1992 as a divisional administration officer before becoming an administration service manager in 1994. He took up his current post in April 2004. His professional background is in public sector management including finance, human resources and administration. He is qualified in public sector administration and holds a B.Sc (Hons) in social sciences.

Detective Chief Inspector (Crime)

1.5 The detective chief inspector (crime) has 25 years' police service, 13 of which have been in the Sunderland area in various roles. In his current post he has responsibility for reactive CID and front line crime related matters. He has held the rank of chief inspector for seven years, all of which have been as a crime manager. Prior to this, he served for four years as an inspector in professional standards, a BCU detective inspector and a uniformed inspector. He is a qualified and experienced senior investigating officer (SIO).

Detective Chief Inspector (Crime Support)

1.6 The detective chief inspector (crime support) has 23 years' police service, 17 of which were with the Metropolitan Police Service. He has a diverse policing

background, although the last 10 years have been predominantly in CID with an emphasis on intelligence and source handling. He has developed expertise in CCTV systems and in automated number plate recognition (ANPR).

Chief Inspector (Partnership and Criminal Justice)

1.7 The chief inspector (partnership and criminal justice) has 29 years' police service. Prior to the restructure in territorial policing in Northumbria Police he was the operations manager at Sunderland West and became the chief inspector (community) within the new Sunderland City BCU. He has only recently transferred to his current post. His service has been mainly operational although he does have experience in personnel.

Chief Inspector (Operations)

1.8 The chief inspector (operations) has 14 years' police service, 11 of which were with Cambridgeshire Police. She took up her current post in April 2005 and has responsibility for response policing, the area support group (ASG), dogs and motor patrols. Her previous postings within Northumbria Police have been in the central support unit and the personnel department. She is trained as a public order commander, football match commander, negotiator and negotiator co-ordinator.

Chief Inspector (Operations Support)

1.9 The chief inspector (operations support) has 19 years' police service. His experience is mainly in uniformed operational roles and includes response policing, motor patrols and dogs. His previous postings as a chief inspector have been in the central support unit and in major events planning. He took up his current post in September 2005. He is one of only two accredited security co-ordinators (SECCO) in Northumbria Police and is a trained football match commander.

Support Services Managers

There are two support services managers:

1.10 One of the support services managers has 22 years' experience within the police service having started with Durham Constabulary before transferring to Northumbria Police. Prior to taking up his current post he has been senior administration officer in the policy support unit, the administration services manager in the Sunderland West area, the administration services manager in the Newcastle North area and a member of the public service and performance review (PS&PR) project team.

1.11 The other support services manager joined Northumbria Police in June 1992 working within the finance department. She was promoted to the post of operational support administrator in 1996. In 1998 she was promoted to the post of administration support manager in the personnel department. Whilst within the personnel department she managed a number of projects including the procurement of a computerised personnel system. In June 2002 she was promoted to the post of area support manager in Sunderland City BCU, and following the restructure in territorial policing took up her current post.

Strategic Management

1.12 The assistant chief constable (area operations and management services) holds monthly operational performance meetings (OPMs) with the six BCU commanders. He is supported in this process by data contained in an area command profile produced by the HQ performance unit.

1.13 The assistant chief constable (ACC) had instigated a number of significant changes to the command team approximately three months prior to the visit by HMIC. The BCU Commander, the superintendent (operations support) and the chief inspector (operations support) having all joined the BCU at that time.

1.14 Whilst responsibility for the two custody suites within the BCU has recently passed to the HQ criminal justice department, clearly issues within the units have a direct impact upon the performance of the BCU.

1.15 Resilience within the two custody suites is a significant operational and health and safety concern. The issues identified are as follows:

- multi-occupancy is the only method by which the custody suite at Gill Bridge police station can attempt to meet the demand for cell space at peak periods. Prisoners are risk assessed prior to multi-occupancy being considered and as a result it rarely occurs. Therefore at busy periods demand significantly outweighs availability;
- the second custody suite within the BCU is located at Washington. When the suite at Gill Bridge reaches capacity it quickly fills and, as a result, officers are required to transport prisoners to neighbouring BCUs. The transport of detainees over significant distances in the back of caged carriers prior to an assessment by a custody officer, has significant health and safety implications; and
- every weekend a considerable number of prisoners are transported in this way. A journey to a custody facility in a neighbouring BCU abstracts two officers and a valuable vehicle for approximately two hours. In most instances, they will also be required to return later in their tour of duty to process the detainee.

1.16 This situation can only be exacerbated in the short term by the current operation designed to tackle disorder and anti-social behaviour (DVD2). An increase in the use of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) for disorder would assist in speeding throughput.

1.17 The resilience within the custody suites was the greatest frustration referred to by operational managers, supervisors and staff across the BCU.

1.18 The inspection team was pleased to hear that the number of detention officers/custody assistants at Washington and Gill Bridge is to be increased, this will:

- speed prisoner processing, thereby reducing the overcrowding issues;
- remove the burden of taking DNA samples and fingerprints from operational officers. This will ensure that they are always taken where appropriate and thereby improve quality; and
- reduce the drain on operational staff under the ‘care protocol’.

1.19 Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary is aware that Northumbria Police is piloting a management of offenders unit. Experience in other forces suggests that such a unit quickly becomes an indispensable resource and would undoubtedly assist in both the timeliness of prisoner processing and file quality in Sunderland BCU.

1.20 The inspection team is aware that additional cell capacity exists at Southwick police station and is currently being used as a Force resource to house remand prisoners (Operation Extract). They are also aware that the cells are to be closed for refurbishment and may not therefore provide a resolution to the issue of cell resilience in the BCU in the short-term.

1.21 Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary is aware that resolution of this problem falls to chief officers and the head of criminal justice, however, the staff within the BCU are the main recipients of the outcomes. The current position has major implications for health and safety, the efficiency of prisoner processing, file quality and staff morale within the BCU.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary recommends that, as a priority, the BCU Commander seeks the support of chief officers and the head of criminal justice to address the issue of cell resilience within the BCU.

1.22 The BCU has the worst criminal justice performance in the Force area. There are issues with both file quality and timeliness. Currently the BCU is only able to provide minimal criminal justice support for officers.

1.23 In consultation with the Home Office, under the workforce modernisation programme, Northumbria Police is in the process of introducing a criminal justice unit (CJU) structure within three of its BCUs. **The creation of a modern CJU in Sunderland and particularly the introduction of case progression officers could only serve to improve its current criminal justice performance.**

1.24 A local criminal justice delivery group met for the first time in April 2005 and the members agreed an action plan to improve criminal justice delivery across the agencies. The group has had no further meetings and the action plan remains undeveloped. **Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary would encourage the BCU to take the lead in rejuvenation of the group and the review and progression of the action plan.**

Operational Leadership

1.25 The new BCU Commander has developed an area command visibility statement and is putting in place structured arrangements for SMT visibility. This is to address a perception amongst staff outside Gill Bridge police station that SMT visibility is poor.

1.26 As previously referred to, Sunderland BCU was formed following the amalgamation of three smaller BCUs in April 2004. The current BCU has been divided into two areas known as 'inner' and 'outer'. Staff in focus groups expressed the opinion that divisions within the BCU were being perpetuated by the current structure.

1.27 The BCU has a member of staff responsible for producing a weekly 'resourcing schedule', but the data contained within the schedule is heavily reliant upon officers directly inputting details relating to their own duties. The inspection team would invite the BCU Commander to consider whether the efficient co-ordination of staff deployment would be better served by the creation of a resourcing unit responsible for the oversight of all matters pertaining to leave, courses, sickness, duties, court attendance etc.

1.28 The crime desk is currently managed by the DCI (crime support) although the unit has little contact with him. The DCI (crime) has responsibility for crime performance within the BCU and has daily contact with the crime desk. It would seem logical that line management responsibility for the unit should pass to the DCI (crime).

1.29 The management of prolific and priority offenders (PPOs) is still developing within the new BCU structure and a corporate approach is required that should take account of the following:

- the Probation Service informed the inspection team that they were prepared to co-locate with police in drug intervention programme (DIP) premises. Such a commitment is a significant precursor to the development of a multi-agency 'Tower' or 'Pier' style initiative;
- the local authority in dialogue with the inspection team, expressed a desire to assist with housing, employment and diversionary activities for PPOs. This represents a significant commitment to a more holistic approach to PPOs;
- there is a need to incorporate DIP staff at Pallion in any multi-agency initiative to handle PPOs; and
- the Washington integrated project (WIP) is a well established scheme that targets persistent offenders without the use of a PPO matrix. Whilst the initiative is commendable, it should now be incorporated into the overall PPO structure.

1.30 Until consideration can be given to co-located, multi-agency management of PPOs, the BCU Commander needs to consider if PPO management should be the responsibility of the partnership and criminal justice team or the area intelligence unit (AIU). Effective PPO management is reliant upon constant access to intelligence data

about their 'clients' and the free flow of information may be better facilitated by co-location with the AIU.

1.31 Currently there is no established safe crewing policy within the BCU and ordinarily Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary would advocate the introduction of such a policy. However, the inspection team has been informed that the creation of a corporate policy is at an advanced stage and therefore they would anticipate seeing this policy introduced within the BCU in the near future.

Organisational Culture

1.32 The inspection team witnessed, amongst the staff interviewed, a great deal of loyalty to Northumbria Police and particularly to the BCU. There is a strong work ethic and an obvious pride in their achievements. During interviews and focus groups, staff were generally open, honest and transparent.

1.33 During all the focus groups, but particularly during those with supervisors and first line managers, there was an obvious desire to sustain and to improve service to the public.

Operational Policing

1.34 The BCU has formed an investigative support unit (ISU) consisting of experienced detectives drawn mainly from the specialist investigations unit. The unit consists of a detective sergeant and eight detective constables. Its function is to improve the quality of volume crime investigations by assisting junior officers through the investigative process.

1.35 Despite the potential benefits, the unit attracted a lot of criticism during focus groups, which is summarised as follows:

- supervisors felt it was a reflection on their perceived lack of ability to guide their staff;
- some experienced officers saw it as a reflection on their perceived lack of ability;
- the partnership and criminal justice unit has received criticism from magistrates in cases where the ISU has been involved;
- response officers spoke of 'friction' with the ISU; and
- due to the hours worked by the ISU they are regularly unavailable at peak periods.

1.36 The BCU has the worst performance within the Northumbria area for turning forensic identifications into primary detections. The inspection team was therefore concerned to learn that the ISU was also used to perform 'converter' duties, processing forensic identifications.

1.37 The inspection team does not support the current methodology for handling forensic identifications and would make the following observations:

- upon arrival in the BCU, forensic identifications should go to the AIU and not to the supervisor in the converter team/ISU;
- whilst accepting the necessity for a single point of contact, this role was previously performed by a local intelligence officer (LIO) and should still rest with the AIU;
- an untrained officer from the ISU is currently developing the forensic identifications. In the absence of a forensic analyst, this role should be performed by someone with analytical training sitting within the AIU;
- the forensic identifications should be prioritised based upon considerations such as PPO status and involvement in National Intelligence Model (NIM) control strategy crime groups; and
- where possible, the resultant target profiles should be prioritised/allocated via NIM daily tasking or the tactical tasking and co-ordinating group (TCG).

1.38 The ISU has obvious potential benefits, but these are currently being undermined by the dual role of the unit and perceptions/misconceptions that exist amongst uniform response officers. The SMT needs to consider further marketing of the unit if it is to achieve its desired objective.

1.39 The existence of the unit will only have validity whilst the BCU cannot call upon a management of offenders unit and case progression officers within a CJU. Once these units are introduced the future of the ISU would require review.

1.40 It is the view of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary that the 'converter' function is far too important to be diluted by other duties. However, the inspection team was informed that chief officers are currently considering a corporate template for converter teams. The inspection team has no wish to undermine or pre-empt these considerations **and would therefore suggest that the BCU establishes the likely outcomes prior to introducing any changes to the manner in which it processes forensic identifications.**

1.41 Response teams within the BCU currently work a five-shift rota. The rota encompasses 8, 9 and 10 hour shifts. The shift pattern did not appear sufficiently flexible to meet changes in the BCU demand profile identified via intelligence and incident data, this is exemplified by all officers commencing their day shift at 7.00am. This situation is further exacerbated by the lack of a resource unit within the BCU (referred to previously).

1.42 The inclusion in the pattern of a period where an officer performs seven night shifts followed by six rest days has a detrimental effect on contact with victims and witnesses, and upon the timeliness of file submission. During a focus group with response supervisors the inspection team was informed that the rota 'doesn't serve the public'.

1.43 There are 14 community beat teams (CBTs) within the BCU working approximately seven separate shift patterns. This does not aid the BCU when trying to identify resources for a corporate response to a major incident, nor does it aid in tracking officers when control room staff receive enquiries from victims and witnesses.

1.44 The shift patterns provide insufficient cover during unsocial hours and at weekends. In addition, there should always be at least one CBT inspector available whilst their staff are on duty. Northumbria Police are currently at an advanced stage of creating a corporate shift pattern for CBTs which will address this situation.

1.45 The SMT should consider the introduction of a single shift pattern for reactive CID in the 'inner' and 'outer' parts of the BCU. The inspection team would also ask it to consider whether either of the current patterns provides sufficient cover, particularly in light of the current budgetary situation.

1.46 When considering the criminal justice and forensic performance of the BCU, the inspection team is surprised that there is currently no night duty detective to aid in scene preservation and immediate enquiries during the 'golden hour'.

1.47 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary is aware of work currently being undertaken at a corporate level into shift patterns and also of the ongoing Best Value Review of neighbourhood policing. The inspection team has no wish to provoke the BCU into activity that may contradict any corporate outcomes and would therefore ask the BCU Commander to be cognisant of work currently being undertaken at HQ when addressing any of the above observations.

1.48 During focus groups, the inspection team became aware of a considerable amount of apprehension over changes to shift patterns for response officers, CBTs and CID, and would encourage the SMT to enter into regular and meaningful dialogue with its staff in order to address this apprehension.

1.49 The inspection team heard anecdotal evidence that tutor detective constables are regularly being abstracted to major enquires. If this is occurring then clearly there will be a detrimental effect on initial crime investigators development programme (ICIDP) students and the SMT should take measures to reduce these abstractions to a minimum.

Community Policing

1.50 As previously referred to, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary is aware of the current Northumbria Police Best Value Review of neighbourhood policing and any amendment to service delivery within the BCU must dovetail with the outcomes of the review.

1.51 There was evidence within the BCU that community beat managers (CBMs) were being utilised as an addition to existing response policing resources and not being allowed the scope to develop multi-agency problem oriented policing (POP) solutions to intransigent community problems. There was a strong feeling during focus groups that CBMs were being judged on arrest figures.

1.52 The inspection team noted that there was a clear disparity in the way the teams operate and a more corporate approach needs to be developed.

1.53 CBMs said that they rarely attended briefings, tending to self-brief. If this is routinely true across the BCU, then it will limit the opportunities for the CBMs to

interface with colleagues, to exchange information and may perpetuate the misunderstanding of their role that currently exists amongst a number of response officers.

1.54 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary applauds the current efforts within the BCU in developing community engagement meetings. These should not replace structures that may already exist within communities but, where possible, should take advantage of structures that already exist.

1.55 A clear link between this meeting structure, through the local multi-agency partnership (LMAP) structure to the crime and disorder reduction partnership (CDRP), known locally as 'Safer Sunderland', must be developed. The community engagement meetings will identify neighbourhood policing priorities that should be used to influence local crime and disorder initiatives.

1.56 The BCU has 14 externally funded bases for CBMs in schools and other public buildings and more are programmed.

1.57 The initiative by the chief inspector (operations support) to develop a community contacts directory is a laudable endeavour and, providing it is kept up-to-date, should improve efficiency and continuity in contact with community leaders.

Community Safety Partnerships

1.58 The drug and alcohol action team (DAAT) and the CDRP merged earlier this year to form the 'Safer Sunderland Partnership'. The Government Office North East (GONE) has commended the structure and processes within the partnership.

1.59 The inspection team was impressed with the partners' commitment and support for the police. They did, however, make comment that the changes in key positions within the SMT has been 'disruptive' and had 'checked further progress'.

1.60 Sunderland City Council is on the verge of making a major commitment to the creation of further PCSO posts within the BCU. They have identified a substantial sum from the neighbourhood renewal fund (NRF) that will be used to fund the posts.

1.61 Each CBT supports a local multi-agency partnership (LMAP) forum and when linked with the community engagement meetings a structure will exist to support neighbourhood policing.

1.62 The inspection team was informed that the partners had attempted to form a multi-agency intelligence sharing and tasking forum, commonly known as a joint agency group (JAG) and whilst an initial meeting had taken place in April 2004 the attempt was unsuccessful. Such a group, supported by analysts from the BCU and the local authority, would sit comfortably within the Safer Sunderland structure informing the executive body of the CDRP. A JAG would be the ideal tasking body for the CDRP task groups and the LMAPs.

1.63 The inspection team was impressed with Operation Gryphon, an initiative to address low-level nuisance and to deflect children and young people away from becoming involved in anti-social behaviour, but was unable to find any form of

evaluation. **Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary holds the opinion that there is scope for developing the operation further but would encourage the SMT to evaluate the success of the operation so far, prior to considering its continued development.**

1.64 The BCU has not yet explored the potential of police service volunteers, and the inspection team would encourage the SMT to examine its potential to cement further links with the community and to provide assistance to the BCU in various areas of their business.

1.65 The inspection team was pleased to hear of the initiative to develop seven themed independent advisory groups (IAGs) and will watch their development with interest.

Financial Management

1.66 Northumbria Police has devolved most budget heads to the BCU, aside from police pay. The business manager has day-to-day responsibility for the management of the budget and the SMT conducts a monthly review. The current BCU Commander has made budgetary management a PDR objective for a number of his senior staff.

1.67 The devolved budget is currently overspent on:

- vehicle maintenance;
- police reactive overtime;
- police staff overtime;
- fuel; and
- vehicle hire.

1.68 The business manager has projected a £47,000 overspend at the end of the fiscal year, although this will be covered by funds they have carried over from the previous fiscal year. To achieve this position the BCU Commander has been required to introduce strict financial controls.

1.69 The inspection team was disappointed at the level of responsibility shown by reactive CID in the management of its reactive overtime budget.

Health and Safety

1.70 The inspection team noted that there were three separate quarterly meetings based upon the geographic boundaries of the former BCUs. This does not support the development of a singular culture within the BCU.

1.71 The inspection team was informed that a strategic health and safety group chaired by the business manager had been formed, and that the first meeting had taken place. It applauds this initiative.

Absence Management

1.72 The business manager chairs a monthly health management group, however, the inspection team was also made aware of the existence of a resource management

group that met every two weeks and was chaired by the superintendent (operations support). The inspection team is aware that the BCU Commander has instigated a review of the meeting structure and would ask him to consider whether a single forum could be devised to cover all personnel issues within the BCU.

1.73 Sickness performance within the BCU is generally good and the inspection team was impressed by the robust application of Force policies by the business manager and the support services managers. The inspection team feels this has been the principal factor in sustaining good sickness performance through a period of significant change.

Training and Development

1.74 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary applauds the measures taken by the BCU Commander since his arrival to demonstrate support and commitment to locally based training; designed to handle locally identified training needs. The inspection team is confident that these measures will significantly improve the capacity of the area training officers to satisfy these training needs.

1.75 The BCU has a training priority group that meets on a quarterly basis and prioritises training needs identified via the PDR process.

1.76 The BCU has a dedicated tutor unit, which has responsibility for all new police constables (PCs) throughout their probationary period. The unit comprises one sergeant, eight tutor constables and a liaison officer. Additionally, there are four officers assigned to the patrol teams who work with the unit as required.

1.77 There is a structured programme of attachments for all probationers to develop their skills for policing during their first two years. The unit has also invested a great deal of effort in identifying and developing suitable locations for the community placements required within the initial police learning and development programme (IPLDP). As a result it now has a broad range of local agencies involved in this important stage of students' training.

1.78 The unit has extended its role to include training for officers returning to core policing, as well as those with specific developmental needs. The unit provides bespoke training to meet the needs of the individuals who are identified through the area resource management group.

Performance Development Review (PDR) - Audit

1.79 The BCU Commander is in the process of reinvigorating the use of the PDR process as a means of ensuring accountability for clearly articulated areas of the BCU's performance amongst the SMT. The inspection team commends his endeavours but would encourage other members of the SMT to ensure that their staff have a current PDR.

1.80 The inspection team was informed that a corporate poster had been circulated and displayed sometime prior to the Inspection in anticipation of the new ICF based PDR process. The posters had depicted PDRs crumpled up and put in a waste paper bin and rather than being a sign of transition to a new system, some staff saw this as encouragement to 'throw away' their current PDRs. The posters proved to be

premature as the ICF PDR system will not be introduced until April 2006 and they caused significant problems for the BCU in attaining a satisfactory completion rate.

1.81 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary was informed that there were currently three PDR tracking systems in existence based upon the three former BCUs. **The SMT should seek to replace the current systems with a single process as soon as practicable.**

1.82 During the course of the Inspection process, the inspection team examined a sample of 50 personal development journals (PDJs) and questioned over 100 BCU staff members regarding their views of the process.

1.83 Of the PDJs examined:

- 49 (98%) contained evidence from the individual;
- 31 (62%) contained evidence provided by the supervisor;
- only 27 (54%) contained a current PDR and the standard of report was varied;
- 24 out of the 27 completed PDRs contained action plans (48% overall), of which only 13 (26% overall) could be described as containing SMARTS objectives; and
- there were an additional 14 PDRs which, although a timely review had not been conducted, contained action plans relating to the present time. Seven of these appeared to have been set by the individual.

1.84 It was obvious from the audit and the focus groups that the general opinion of the existing PDR/PDJ was poor. It was seen as time consuming, with little in the way of a positive product, unless the individual was applying for promotion.

1.85 The inspection team would encourage the SMT to consider how best it can rejuvenate the PDR process in preparation for the introduction of the ICF system.

Special Constabulary and PCSOs

1.86 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary is aware that the Northumbria Police Best Value Review of neighbourhood policing will encompass issues relating to special constables (SCs) and PCSOs, and any amendment to service delivery within the BCU must dovetail with the outcomes of the review.

Special Constabulary

1.87 The inspection team conducted a focus group with five SCs and a separate interview with the area manager.

1.88 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary has received various figures for the current establishment of the Special Constabulary. The area manager believes there are 54 SCs, many of whom are not active. The fact that it is not possible to obtain a definitive figure is indicative of the level of focus in this area. In any case, the inspection team considers this number to be small for the size of the BCU.

1.89 The inspection team would make the following observations about the management of the Special Constabulary within the BCU that may, in part, account for the small number:

- there is a structured tutoring programme but there are no trained tutors amongst the SCs. The probationer development unit is to be commended for its offer of assistance in this area;
- the SCs informed the inspection team that they have a pool of radios but that they are constantly being removed. Although they have access to the area command pooled radios, frequently, they find that none are available when they parade for duty. Many SCs are now ringing to establish if a radio is available before they attend for duty;
- the Special Constabulary area manager does not produce a weekly duty roster. Operational supervisors are generally unaware and unprepared for the attendance of a special constable;
- the area manager now has designated SMT liaison, and there are biannual programmed meetings for SCs to meet the designated SMT representative. There also needs to be regular programmed meetings between the area manager and SMT representatives as part of the performance framework;
- the focus group was not complementary about the level of support it receives from administration staff when submitting expense claims. It would benefit from an input on their completion;
- there is no room set aside for the use of the SCs and no secure storage. The inspection team was informed that this resulted in equipment, PDRs and paperwork regularly going missing. As the corporate neighbourhood model aligns SCs to the neighbourhood policing teams and accommodates them alongside CBTs, some provision needs to be made to address this issue;
- PDRs exist but are not being used; and
- the use and deployment of SCs varies considerably across the BCU.

1.90 The inspection team wishes to commend the actions of the area training officer who has produced a training plan for the SCs and attends the weekly training evenings to carry out the training.

1.91 General liaison between the Special Constabulary and the BCU is conducted through a CBT inspector. Whilst this may be appropriate for administrative purposes, (although there is a question regarding the effect on the officer's responsibility towards the CBT), the lack of contact between the SC hierarchy and the SMT is construed by SCs as indicative of the general apathy towards them within the BCU.

1.92 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary suggests that the SMT considers the following measures:

- formulate performance targets for the SCs, as they do not currently feature in the BCU matrix of performance;
- commence a programme of monthly structured meetings between an SMT member and the SC area manager where he should be held accountable for performance;

- ensure the production of a weekly SC duty roster;
- address the tutoring and PDR issues;
- where possible, align the SCs with CBTs;
- the designated SMT member and the area manager should agree challenging recruitment targets, and the area manager should be charged with producing an action plan to attain these targets;
- accommodation should be identified, including secure storage;
- positive steps should be taken to remove from the establishment those SCs who fail to fulfil attendance criteria; and
- the perception regarding the shortfall in radio provision should be investigated and rectified if necessary.

Police Community Support Officers

1.93 Currently PCSOs are deployed from Gill Bridge, Southwick and Farringdon police stations. The inspection team conducted a focus group with four PCSOs who, despite the lack of a clear, structured approach to their deployment, were enthusiastic and knowledgeable. They were a credit to the BCU. Questions regarding the PCSOs were also incorporated into focus groups with response officers and CBMs.

1.94 The inspection team would make the following observations based upon these focus groups:

- opinions amongst operational officers about the value of PCSOs vary wildly. The negative opinions appear to be based on ignorance, whilst those who work with them value their contribution;
- PCSOs regularly self-brief and self-task. None of the PCSOs in the focus group had received a briefing from a supervisor in the last three months;
- the PCSOs provided anecdotal evidence of their deployment alone in the city centre until midnight without personal protective equipment;
- PDRs have, until recently, all been the responsibility of a city centre PC, although a number had not received a PDR for over a year;
- the permanent 4.00pm to 12 midnight shift pattern is inhumane and does not meet the demand profile of the BCU. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary was pleased to learn that the shift pattern is currently being reviewed at a corporate level, as it is having a negative effect on the morale of PCSOs;
- the PCSOs deployed to the city centre are not aligned with the city centre CBT who finish at 7.00pm;
- the PCSOs informed the inspection team that they submit intelligence daily and are disappointed at the lack of response, however, the intelligence unit say they rarely see anything from them;
- generally PCs are not aware of the powers of PCSOs, leading to negative opinions about them;
- the PCSOs are not being tutored on their arrival in the BCU;
- there was no evidence of risk assessments being undertaken prior to deployment; and
- the control room is now generally sending PCSOs to appropriate details.

1.95 SCs and PCSOs are undervalued. There is a significant amount of untapped potential within both groups, however, they lack support and strategic direction.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends the creation of an action plan aimed at integrating the extended police family (including police service volunteers) within the BCU and realising their potential.

Domestic Violence

1.96 The BCU has a public protection unit (PPU) based on a corporate template. The inspection team found no performance issues within the unit.

Part Two - Performance

Performance Management

2.1 The accountability processes currently being introduced by the BCU Commander and his SMT appear clear and robust. Their structure and speed of development impressed the inspection team.

2.2 The team performance meetings are developing well amongst the uniform arm. They occur once every five weeks for response teams and once every seven weeks for each CBT. The access given to the meetings for operational officers provides a good feedback loop/reality check for the SMT. Team performance meetings have not yet begun within the CID but the inspection team is aware that the performance measures necessary for the meetings are currently being developed.

2.3 The BCU has developed a local performance framework known as the 'performance matrix'. The document is extremely bulky and the inspection team feels there is scope for it to be rationalised. Operational inspectors took issue with the accuracy of the statistical data contained within the matrix document and questioned how the data had been obtained. The inspectors felt that in many instances the data did not reflect the performance of their teams.

2.4 The SMT performance meetings were initially held every fortnight but this is to alter with the intention that they should be held on a monthly basis. The BCU Commander holds the SMT to account at the meetings for:

- crime performance;
- sickness;
- finance;
- criminal justice performance; and
- area command plan targets.

2.5 The inspection team would ask the BCU Commander to consider whether performance against the National Intelligence Model (NIM) control strategy should be added to the agenda.

2.6 The BCU is to be commended on its National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) compliance. This has been aided by internal audits conducted by Northumbria Police, but principally it has been due to SMT focus and the role played by the BCU NCRS liaison officer.

2.7 The NCRS liaison officer sits within the crime desk and along with a colleague they have developed a role much wider than intended. In addition, one of the posts is supernumerary. The unit plays a pivotal role in NCRS compliance and crime performance in general, but this is based primarily on the ability and professionalism of these two individuals. The SMT needs therefore to consider:

- a contingency plan should staff from the crime desk be transferred to the crime recording bureau (CRB) located at Cramlington;
- its recipe for success, which should be transferred into processes; and
- succession planning should either officer be posted or retire.

2.8 The inspection team commends the decision to give the chief inspector (criminal justice and partnership) a clear mandate to improve criminal justice performance (post arrest).

2.9 The BCU has introduced ‘criminal justice performance managers’ on each response team (inner and outer). A sergeant, who would ordinarily be a shift supervisor, performs the role. Whilst the inspection team applauds the initiative, it would ask the SMT to consider the following issues:

- how the performance managers are chosen and whether they have the skills to add value;
- how the supervisory ‘hole’ is to be filled; and
- how best to ensure their most efficient use within a large area containing a number of deployment bases.

2.10 The working relationship with CPS at both strategic and tactical level is not that which Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary would expect to find. Despite efforts made within the BCU, there is a lack of co-operation and understanding at both the strategic and tactical level.

2.11 The situation is impacting upon performance in the following key areas:

- the ‘no further action’ (NFA) rate;
- file quality;
- the speed of throughput of detainees in custody;
- statutory charging; and
- lawyers in police stations.

2.12 An improvement in dialogue would also aid in obtaining consistency in CPS requests for full tape transcriptions.

2.13 The BCU Commander has taken personal responsibility for the relationship between all criminal justice agencies, and within the first 4 weeks of taking up his post had personally met senior representatives of all criminal justice agencies and arranged for the local criminal justice board (LCJB) local delivery group to be reconvened in December 2005. Whilst acknowledging that the BCU Commander has given the chief inspector (partnership and criminal justice) responsibility for formulating an action plan with CPS for operational level activities, the inspection team considers that a sustained effort is required, due to the significant detrimental effect the situation is currently having on operational performance.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the BCU Commander takes personal responsibility for dialogue with the CPS and thereafter personally oversees measures designed to address those areas of BCU performance adversely affected by the current lack of co-operation.

2.14 The BCU has experienced a problem with resilience amongst record of tape-recorded interview (ROTI) clerks. This has been a contributory factor in the BCU's under performance in criminal justice file timeliness. Northumbria Police is to centralise ROTI clerks in January 2006 in order to alleviate this problem.

2.15 Poor management of the Livescan facility, combined with an insufficient number of staff trained in its use, has led to the loss of fingerprints and to the potential loss of detections. The inspection team was pleased to note that three of the additional detention officers are to be trained as Livescan managers.

2.16 The inspection team attended one of the newly formed performance meetings, during which two of the 24/7 patrol inspectors were questioned regarding the performance of their respective teams. They would make the following observations about the process:

- consideration should be given to mirroring the agenda of the SMT performance meetings. There did not appear to be any reference to finance or a link to the area command plan/control strategy;
- time could be saved if the inspectors were trusted to self-brief. The chair went through the performance matrix at length rather than focusing on pertinent areas of the document;
- the process appeared to be tactically oriented with reference made to the performance of individual PCs. The inspection team felt that a more appropriate approach would be to concentrate on outcomes allowing the inspectors the scope to manage;
- there was a lot of latitude for discussion and an apparent lack of focus; and
- the meeting covered attendance/sickness but neither of the support services managers were present.

Performance

2.17 The current fiscal year has seen an impressive reduction in the number of dwelling burglaries. The detective chief inspector (crime) attributes this to good use of intelligence, hot spot targeting and increased availability of staff, following a series of major incidents, allowing them to focus on persistent offenders.

2.18 There has been a significant improvement in the sanction detections achieved for the offence of robbery. The inspection team wishes to commend the detective

chief inspector (crime) for his 10-point template to assist the first officer at the scene of a robbery, his work to ensure appropriate crime recording and his crime reduction initiative at the university.





2.19 Northumbria Police does not employ volume crime scene investigators but currently the BCU has the benefit of two such investigators, funded from the Home Office forensic intervention strategy.

2.20 These crime scene investigators are the key to Operation Avinit, an initiative designed to tackle thefts of motor vehicles, but they are only funded for a period of six months. Whilst the investigation team may be pre-empting the evaluation of the operation, it would suggest that the BCU requires an exit strategy to cater for the dip in performance that may follow their departure.

2.21 When examining crime performance over the latest 12 months (October 2004 to September 2005), the following can be noted:

Crime Performance table: Performance data – 12 months to September 2005				
	Performance Oct 04 to Sept 05	% Change from same period the previous year	MSBCU group mean	MSBCU group ranked position (out of 15 BCUs)
Recorded crime 1,000 population	101.42	-13.02%	123.12	5
% Recorded crime detected	29.48%	1.41 p.p.	27.73%	4
% Recorded crime sanction detects	26.60%	2.19 p.p.	23.29%	1
Domestic burglaries 1,000 households	12.40	-33.66%	17.32	3
% Domestic burglaries detected	15.90%	0.26 p.p.	13.53%	6
% Domestic burglary sanction detects	14.82%	2.17 p.p.	12.40%	4
Recorded robberies/ 1,000 population	1.04	-0.68%	1.59	5
% Robberies detected	23.21%	7.28 p.p.	23.19%	8
% Robbery sanction detects	22.87%	9.31 p.p.	21.88%	7
Recorded vehicle crime/1,000 population	12.16	-19.76%	16.25	4
% Vehicle crime detected	11.09%	-0.52 p.p.	10.97%	6
% Vehicle crime sanction detects	9.17%	-1.48 p.p.	10.05%	8
Recorded violent crime/1,000 population	21.14	-3.08%	26.23	3
% Violent crime detected	53.52%	1.42 p.p.	52.34%	8
% Violent crime sanction detects	46.38%	5.55 p.p.	40.57%	4

Note: This data is out of 15 BCUs. It is not validated and therefore only provisional.

<p><u>Good – Getting Better</u> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recorded crime/1,000 population • % Recorded crime detected • % Recorded crime sanctioned detects • Domestic burglary/1,000 households • % Domestic burglary detected • % Domestic burglary sanctioned detects • Robbery/1,000 population • % Robbery detected (slightly higher than MSBCU group mean) • % Robbery sanctioned detects • Vehicle crime/1,000 population • Violent crime/1,000 population • % Violent crime detected • % Violent crime sanctioned detects 	<p><u>Good – Getting Worse</u> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % Vehicle crime detected
<p><u>Poor – Getting Better</u> </p>	<p><u>Poor – Getting Worse</u> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % Vehicle crime sanction detections

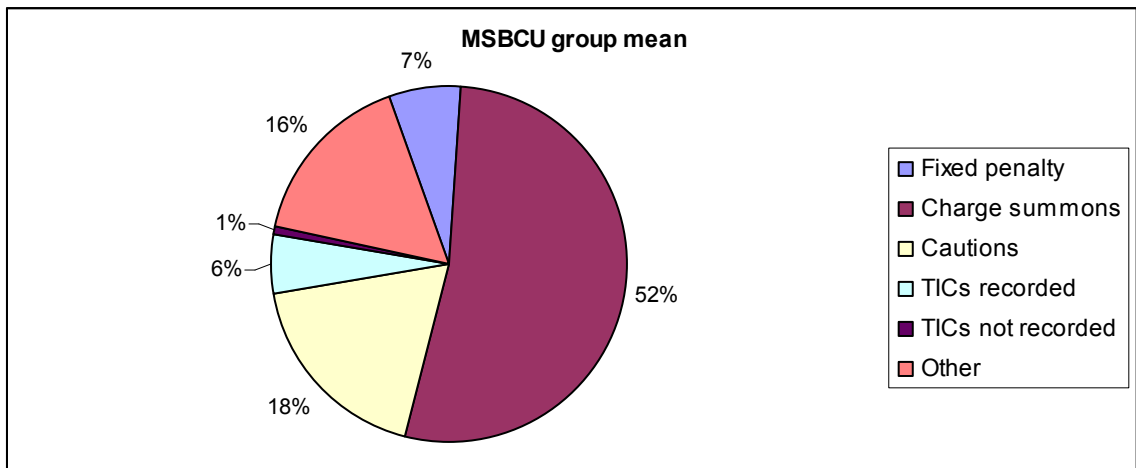
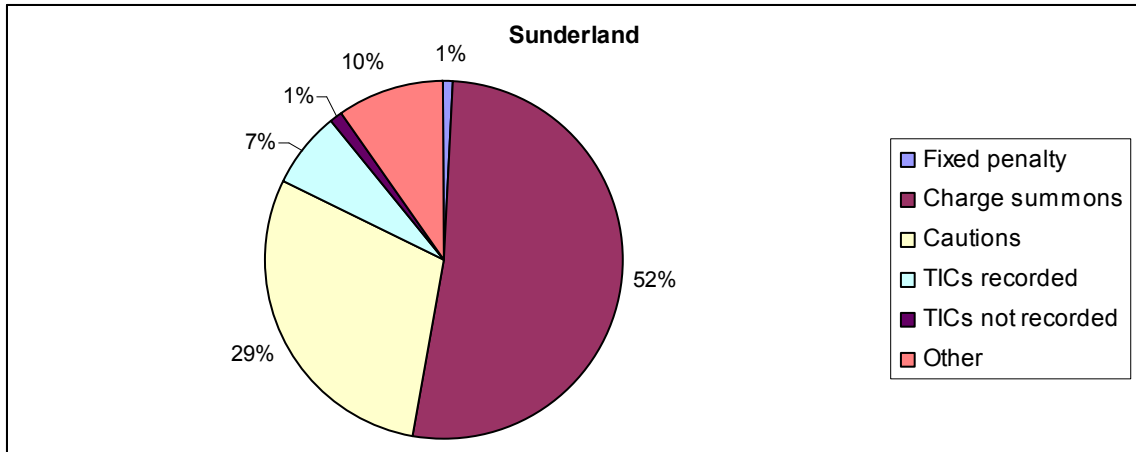
2.22 It is obvious from the data that crime performance within the BCU is improving in almost every category, the one exception being vehicle crime.

2.23 The inspection team wishes to congratulate the BCU on its sanction detection performance and to encourage them to maintain its current focus.

2.24 The execution of warrants has improved but the inspection team would encourage the BCU towards sustained effort. It is evident that there is an issue with recording/monitoring, as Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary was informed at HQ that there were 145 arrest warrants, whilst the BCU has provided a figure of 84.

2.25 In January 2006 the administration of warrants passes from the BCU to the CJU.

2.26 The following pie charts provide a breakdown of the types of detection method used within the BCU, contrasted with the detection methods employed amongst the MSBCUs for the period October 2004 to September 2005:



2.27 As can be seen, the BCU has a significantly greater proportion of detections achieved by way of caution than the MSBCUs. The inspection team did not find any evidence that there was a single cause for the disparity in the use of this method of disposal, but would draw attention to the greater use of fixed penalty notices by the MSBCUs. **Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary would encourage the SMT to examine the use of cautions as a means of disposal to satisfy itself that their use was appropriate in all cases. Further, it would encourage the BCU to make greater use of fixed penalty notices particularly for offences involving disorder.**

Proactive Capability

2.28 The two proactive teams, known locally as the ‘targets teams’, are newly formed units. Such a proactive capability is an essential prerequisite to good crime performance and the inspection team commends the SMT for its creation. They would, however, ask the SMT to resolve the following issues:

- there are two teams each with an establishment of a supervisor, five detectives and five uniformed officers. Currently each team is missing five officers. This situation should be resolved if the units are to be effective;
- deployment should be undertaken via the NIM meeting structure; and
- staff from the proactive teams should be ‘ring-fenced’ to prevent their deployment on reactive duties.

2.29 The area support group (ASG) provides additional proactive support. The unit comprises 2 supervisors and 18 officers and whilst it does have a corporate role, it is available for regular deployment within the BCU.

National Intelligence Model

2.30 The inspection team attended a tasking and co-ordinating group (TCG) meeting and a daily tasking meeting whilst in the BCU. From its observations it would make the following comments:

Daily Tasking

2.31 There is a need to differentiate between a briefing for senior staff on crimes and incidents within the previous 24 hours and a NIM tasking process. The level of attendance would have been appropriate for a NIM tasking meeting, but most attendees were superfluous and generally made no contribution to the meeting. The meeting would benefit from a succinct document produced by the intelligence unit (IU) allowing participants to self-brief beforehand.

2.32 The inspection team made the following observations during the meeting:

- no problem or target profiles were provided for allocation;
- there did not appear to be any accountability mechanism, or review of TCG actions;
- there was no link to the recently appointed SMT ‘champions’; and
- there were no outcomes.

Tasking and Co-ordinating Group

2.33 The tactical assessment largely contained reactive data, with very little in the way of a predictive element. The document referred to ‘community tensions’ but contained no community intelligence.

2.34 The IU detective inspector took the meeting through the tactical assessment at some length. Time could have been saved if the participants had been trusted to self-brief, allowing the meeting to concentrate on pertinent areas of the document.

2.35 The inspection team made the following observations:

- the meeting content was too tactical;
- it was unclear at the time whether there were any target or problem profiles for allocation. There was reference to a DNA identification but no package was produced;
- no actions were raised and there was no apparent tasking of the participants;
- two drugs operations were sanctioned although the crime group is not contained in the control strategy;
- there was no obvious method of tracking tasks allocated at previous meetings and therefore no accountability process; and
- there was no reference to the recently appointed SMT champions.

2.36 Having been informed that attendance at the TCG was a PDR objective for the scientific support supervisor, the inspection team was disappointed that he was not present at the meeting.

2.37 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary would encourage the BCU Commander to take a critical look at the NIM meeting structure and content to increase the level of intelligence-driven activity within the BCU, and to put in place mechanisms to hold to account individuals who are allocated packages or tasks.

2.38 Single regeneration budget (SRB) funding is supporting a multi-agency intelligence database developed for Operation Gryphon. CBMs and staff from partner agencies are placing a significant amount of intelligence relating to anti-social behaviour onto the database, however, this information is, regrettably, not available to the intelligence unit. **This is a significant loss and the position should be rectified as a matter of priority.**

2.39 The BCU has a dedicated source unit (DSU). Currently, covert human intelligence sources (CHIS) are predominantly providing intelligence on level one drug-related crime. As a result there are significant gaps in CHIS intelligence for certain control strategy crime groups. It is essential that the BCU CHIS plan identifies these gaps as well as geographic gaps.

2.40 In the focus group the inspection team was informed that some CHIS were refusing to provide any further intelligence as previous submissions had not been acted upon and therefore they had not received a gratuity. If this intelligence falls outside the control strategy then hard decisions will need to be taken. It is essential that the DSU concentrates its endeavours on recruiting CHIS who can provide intelligence to support activity against BCU priorities.

Briefing

2.41 The inspection team attended only one response briefing at Washington. Whilst the intelligence unit was not represented, the briefing officer was well informed, the officers were attentive and contributed additional intelligence to support the items provided in the PowerPoint presentation. Conversation with the officers revealed that two pieces of intelligence in the presentation had been there for some time. Aside from that, the intelligence was timely and generally actionable.

2.42 The SMT should explore the possibility of introducing more flexible working within the intelligence unit in order to provide timely briefing data seven days a week. The briefing process is effective, but its validity in the eyes of response officers is being compromised by intelligence that is out of date and appears at several briefings.

2.43 The intelligence unit is still utilising the three servers from the BCUs that comprise the current BCU. This leads to repetition, is time consuming and inefficient.

DNA Sampling, Custody and Forensic Management

2.44 Based upon data provided by the Force, the BCU has the poorest forensic performance of all the BCUs in the Northumbria Police area. From the number of

positive searches and consequently the number of DNA/fingerprint lifts to the number of positive identifications and primary detections, the BCU is the worst in the Force.

2.45 The BCU was described by staff at Northumbria HQ as being “far less forensically aware” than other BCUs. Whilst the inspection team commends the package on forensic awareness delivered by the detective chief inspector (crime) in January 2005, the BCU should consider:

- further forensic awareness training particularly for response officers. Use should be made of the qualified trainers available at HQ scientific support;
- structured attachments to the scientific support officer (SSO) ‘depot’; combined with the;
- review of the role of the ISU.

2.46 Whilst the inspection team is not entirely sure that the data is reliable, it was informed whilst in the custody suite at Gill Bridge police station, that there are currently 207 people who have failed to respond to their police bail. **Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Constabulary would encourage the SMT to verify the accuracy of this data and if it proves to be correct, take immediate action to tackle the situation.**

Summary

2.47 Approximately three months prior to the Inspection of Sunderland BCU, three new members of the senior management team, including the area Commander, joined the BCU. Whilst a number of areas for improvement have been identified by the SMT, not all of the necessary changes have become embedded within the BCU.

2.48 BCU performance is good, and improving in all areas, with the exception of vehicle crime. Conversely, criminal justice performance is an area of concern. With the worst criminal justice performance in the Force, there is a need to improve file quality and timeliness as well as relations with the local CPS. Northumbria Police are in the process of introducing a CJU structure within the Force and clearly Sunderland BCU would benefit from a modern CJU, and particularly the introduction of case progression officers.

2.49 There are concerns that the two custody suites in the BCU do not have the resilience to handle the large number of prisoners, with multi-occupancy being the only alternative to transporting prisoners to neighbouring BCUs for processing. Whilst each option poses potential health and safety risks, the transporting of prisoners outside the BCU creates additional operational implications.

2.50 Whilst responsibility for the custody suites lies with the HQ corporate development department, there are a number of issues within the units which have a direct impact upon the performance of the BCU.

2.51 The extended police family has been neglected and, in consequence, does not provide a significant contribution to the overall performance of the BCU. SCs are undervalued and unsupported, and as a result a crucial link to the local community is missing. A considerable effort is required to rejuvenate the SCs and PCSOs and to recruit police service volunteers.

2.52 The shift structures for response officers, community beat teams and reactive CID all require attention; none are currently fit for purpose.

2.53 Under the previous BCU Commander insufficient attention was paid to management of the devolved budget. The current Commander has had to take some painful decisions in order to rectify the position.

2.54 The structures for the delivery of neighbourhood policing are in place but development is required to ensure a uniform and high quality of delivery. The structures linking the CBTs to the CDRP are also in place but are not, as yet, driving activity or supporting multi-agency problem solving initiatives.

2.55 The new BCU Commander has already taken significant strides in addressing many of the issues raised during the Inspection. The inspection team was impressed with his focus and direction and his accomplishments in such a short time frame. The report will aim to support the Commander in sustaining these efforts.

Recommendations

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary makes three recommendations:

1. That, as a priority, the BCU Commander seeks the support of chief officers and the head of criminal justice to address the issue of cell resilience within the BCU.
[Para 1.21 refers]
2. The creation of an action plan aimed at integrating the extended police family (including police service volunteers) within the BCU and realising their potential.
[Para 1.95 refers]
3. That the BCU Commander takes personal responsibility for dialogue with the CPS and thereafter personally oversees measures designed to address those areas of BCU performance adversely affected by the current lack of co-operation.
[Para 2.13 refers]

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