



**HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
South of England Region**

**Follow up/ Monitoring visit to Oxfordshire BCU
Thames Valley Police**

BCU Inspection Conducted - January 2005

Monitoring Visit Conducted - February 2006

Date of Inspection	HMIC Revisit Inspector	BCU Commander	Date of final report	Date of monitoring visit
17th - 21st January 2005	Chief Inspector Bill Halsey	Chief Supt David McWhirter	April 2005	14th February 2006

Introduction

There are approximately 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. However, they share some key aims and objectives, specifically to work with partner agencies on reducing crime in their areas, and to do so with integrity. Scrutiny of police performance has moved from aggregate force outcomes to the performance of individual BCUs, with the recognition that policing is essentially a locally delivered service. But 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.

The focus on performance in reducing crime is likely to be relentless. Forces and police authorities, working with local authorities and other community safety partners, will need to raise performance outcomes year upon year. Indeed, the statutory regime of Best Value demands 'continuous improvement' and an array of sanctions exist if authorities fail to deliver. 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.

The purpose of the revisit process is to monitor the progress of the BCU against the recommendations and action plans produced following the full BCU inspection. This report concerns itself with that monitoring process. It is not a further inspection report and makes no further recommendations.

Methodology

Apart from analysis of data prior to and during the inspection, the BCU Commander, 2 local policing area (LPA) commanders, the head of intelligence (DCI) and a constable from an intelligence unit were interviewed. The day concluded with a debrief with the BCU Commander.

Significant developments since the original inspection

The command team has been increased with the appointment of a DCI responsible for intelligence who at the time of the revisit had only been on the BCU for 2 months but already had some commendable plans in place to introduce improvements to the delivery of the National Intelligence Model (NIM).

West Oxfordshire LPA is piloting the national Neighbourhood Policing project and introduced neighbourhood policing teams (NPTs) in July 2005 with a force-wide implementation planned for 2007. This has presented significant challenges to the BCU, not least of which has been the need to strike a balance between adequate resourcing of the teams and maintaining an effective response function whilst ensuring performance is sustained. Since the beginning of 2006 it would appear that the NPTs are beginning to have an affect with reductions reported in some priority crime areas, most notably criminal damage.

As a result of a number of high profile domestic violence incidents across the Force the BCU's domestic violence team has been increased to make it more dynamic and offender focused. The team operates a risk management and assessment matrix which drives activity with the aim of reducing the numbers of domestic violence offences and a more coordinated management of high risk offenders.

Original Recommendations

The final BCU inspection report in April 2005 made nine recommendations:

1. The BCU Commander considers developing BCU strategic portfolios for the LPA commanders.
2. The BCU Commander appoints a deputy.
3. Training is integrated into CID and police staff shift patterns.
4. The contract with the providers of custody assistants is reviewed now, with a view to ensuring consistency of provision across the BCU.
5. The SMT ensures that the Oxfordshire BCU introduces an intrusive performance management regime in respect of the dedicated source unit, in order to demonstrate integrity and monitor outcomes against control strategy priorities.
6. The SMT conducts a review of briefing processes to ensure the quality of the Oxford briefing is replicated across the BCU.
7. The SMT benchmarks key crime and intelligence processes and systems against those found in forces with similar size BCUs.

8. The SMT creates a more effective process for recognising and rewarding the consistently challenging work undertaken by crime scene examiners.
9. The SMT reviews the approach taken to managing outstanding crime reports and holds the LPA commanders to account for performance.

Performance

Due to the recent formation of Oxfordshire BCU there were no yearly figures for comparative data on performance available at the time of the follow-up visit. However, detection rates and levels of recorded crimes for April - December 2005, compared with the average for similar sized BCUs, are shown below.

Performance Table

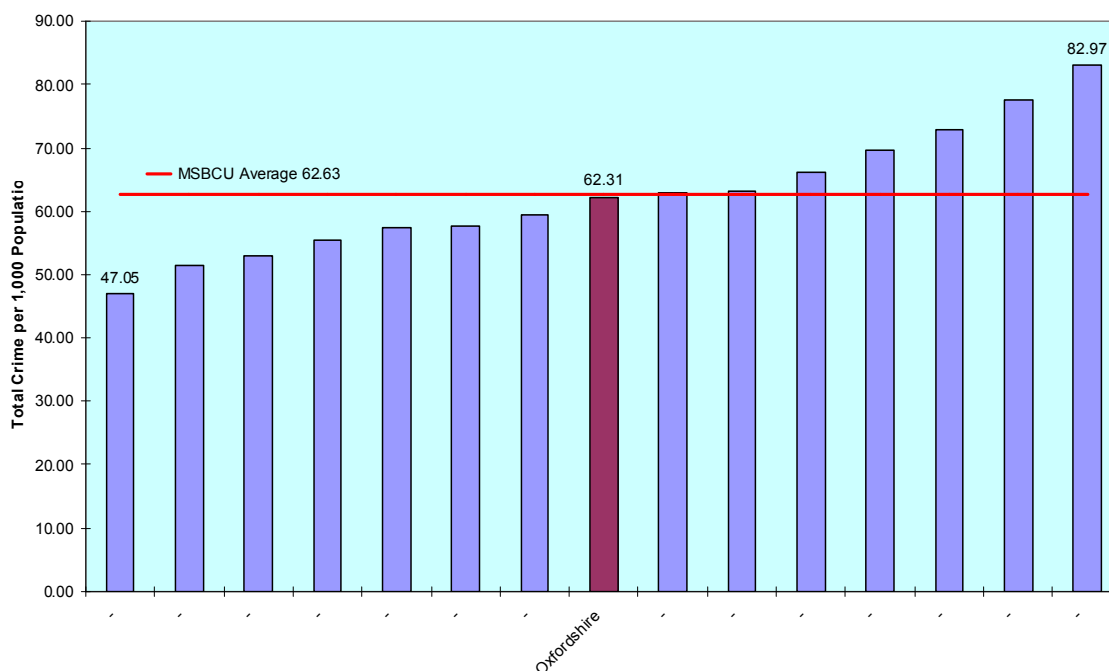
Crime Levels and Detections	April to December 2005	MSBCU Average April to December 2005
Total recorded crime	38,616	-
Number of crimes detected	12,143	-
% Crimes detected	31.45%	28.20%
Total recorded crime per 1,000 population	62.31	62.63
Total residential burglary	1,719	-
Number of residential burglaries detected	444	-
% Residential burglaries detected	25.83%	18.86%
Total residential burglaries per 1,000 households	6.86	6.66
Total vehicle crime	3,982	-
Number of vehicle crimes detected	722	-
% Vehicle crimes detected	18.13%	12.04%
Total vehicle crime per 1,000 population	6.43	7.51
Total violent crime	7,918	-
Number of violent crimes detected	4,640	-
% Violent crimes detected	58.60%	56.12%
Total violent crime per 1,000 population	12.78	12.57
Total robbery	323	-
Number of robberies detected	96	-
% Robberies detected	29.72%	28.82%
Total robbery per 1,000 population	0.52	0.46

Total Crime

For the period April to December 2005 total recorded crime per 1,000 population was **62.31**, this is in line with the MSBCU average 62.63. The BCU ranked **8th out of 15** for total crime per 1,000 population in their MSBCU group. Projections based on the last 12 and 6 months data show the level of crime **remaining at the current level** but projections based on the last 3 months data shows the level of crime **decreasing slightly**.

For the period April to December 2005 the overall detection rate for the BCU is **31.45%**. The BCU is ranked **3rd out of 15** in the MSBCU group, and is **above** the MSBCU average detection rate of 28.20%. Projections based on the last 3 data show the detection rate **decreasing**, but projections based on the last 6 and 12 months data show the detection rate **increasing**.

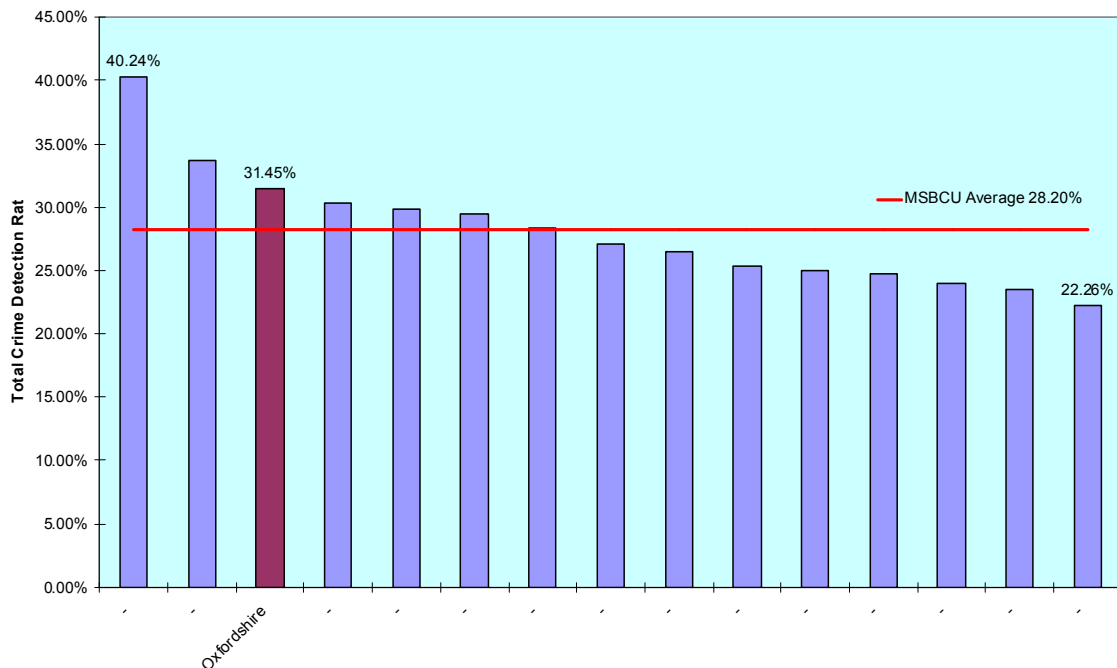
Total Crime per 1,000 Population April to December 2005



Source: HMIC South of England Region – RDS Crux Matrix 2005

(Only Oxfordshire BCU have been identified as the 2005/06 data has not been validated or published; this is in accordance with HMIC data release guidelines)

Total Crime Detection Rate April to December 2005



Source: HMIC South of England Region – RDS Crux Matrix 2005

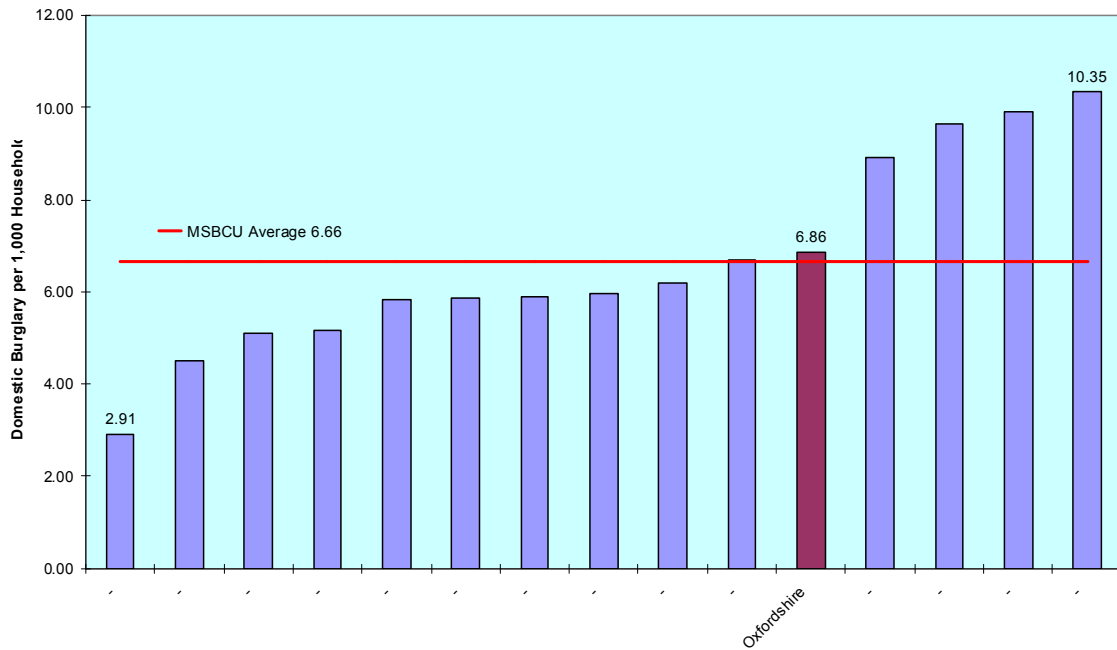
(Only Oxfordshire BCU have been identified as the 2005/06 data has not been validated or published; this is in accordance with HMIC data release guidelines)

Domestic Burglary

For the period April to December 2005 total recorded domestic burglaries per 1,000 households was **6.86**, this is in line with the MSBCU average of 6.66. The BCU ranked **11th out of 15** for total crime per 1,000 population in their MSBCU group. Projections based on the last 3, 6 and 12 months data show the level of crime **remaining around the current level**.

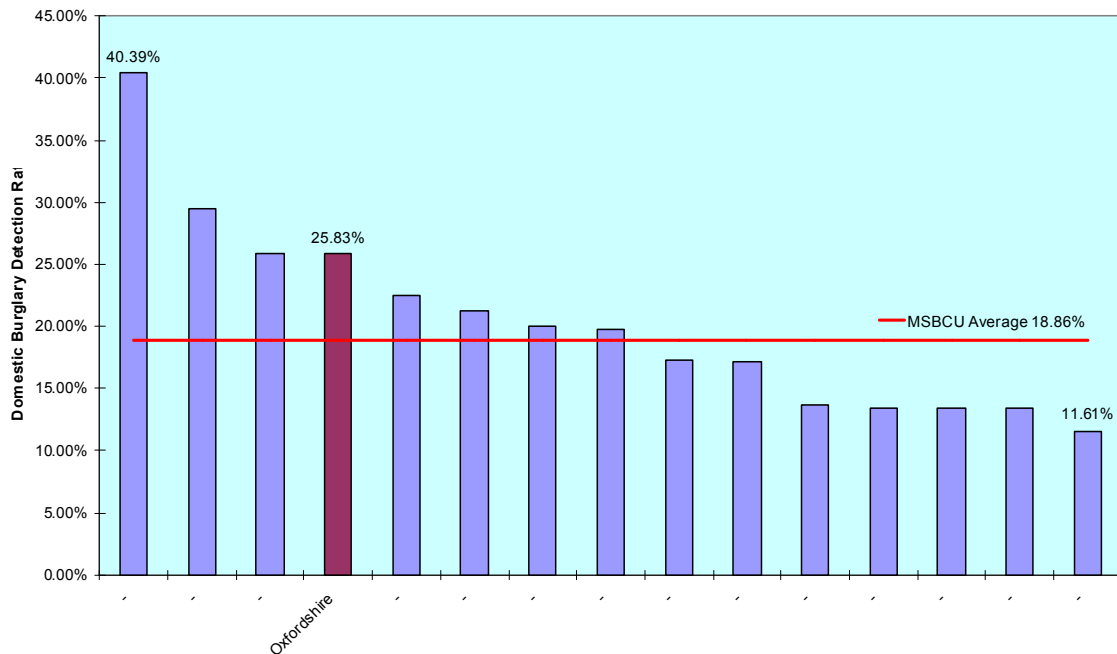
For the period April to December 2005 the overall detection rate for the BCU is **25.83%**. The BCU is ranked **4th out of 15** in the MSBCU group, and is **above** the MSBCU average detection rate of 18.86%. Projections based on the last 6 and 12 months data show the detection rate **decreasing**, projections based on the last 3 months data show the detection rate **increasing**.

Domestic Burglary per 1,000 Households April to December 2005



Source: HMIC South of England Region – RDS Crux Matrix 2005
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Domestic Burglary Detection Rate April to December 2005



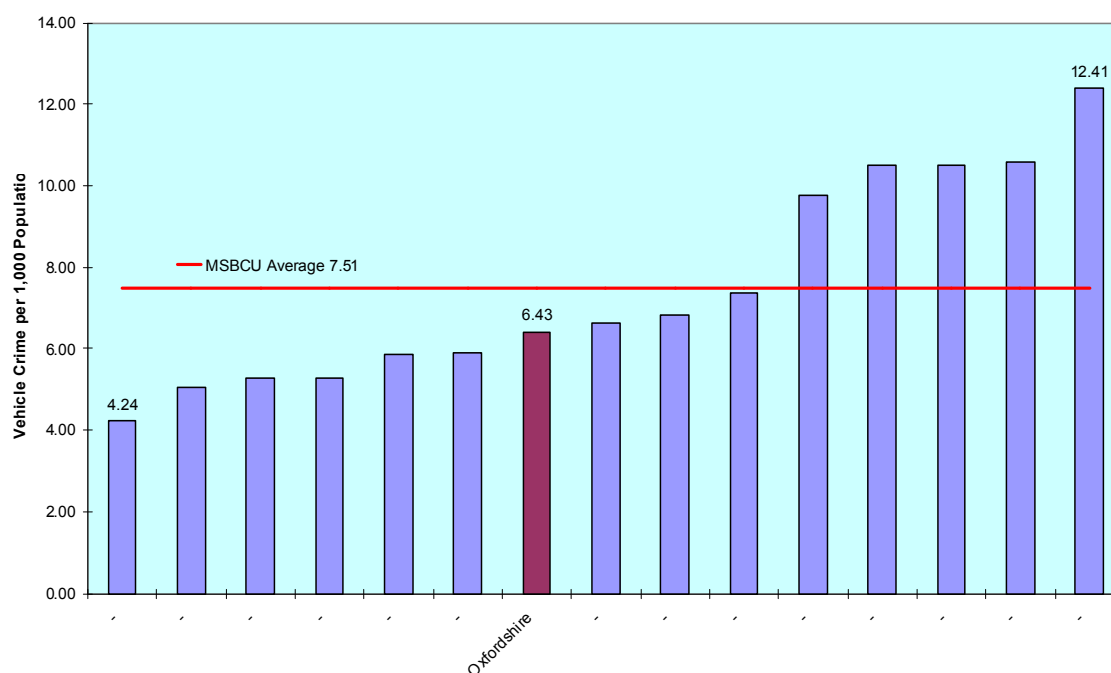
Source: HMIC South of England Region – RDS Crux Matrix 2005
 (Only Oxfordshire BCU have been identified as the 2005/06 data has not been validated or published; this is in accordance with HMIC data release guidelines)

Vehicle Crime

For the period April to December 2005 total recorded vehicle crime per 1,000 population was **6.43**, this is just below the MSBCU average 7.51. The BCU ranked **7th out of 15** for total crime per 1,000 population in their MSBCU group. Projections based on the last 3 and 6 months data show the level of crime **remaining at the current level** but projections based on the last 3 months data shows the level of crime **decreasing**.

For the period April to December 2005 the overall detection rate for the BCU is **18.13%**. The BCU is ranked **2nd out of 15** in the MSBCU group, and is **above** the MSBCU average detection rate of 12.04%. Projections based on the last 3 data show the detection rate **decreasing**, but projections based on the last 6 and 12 months data show the detection rate **increasing**.

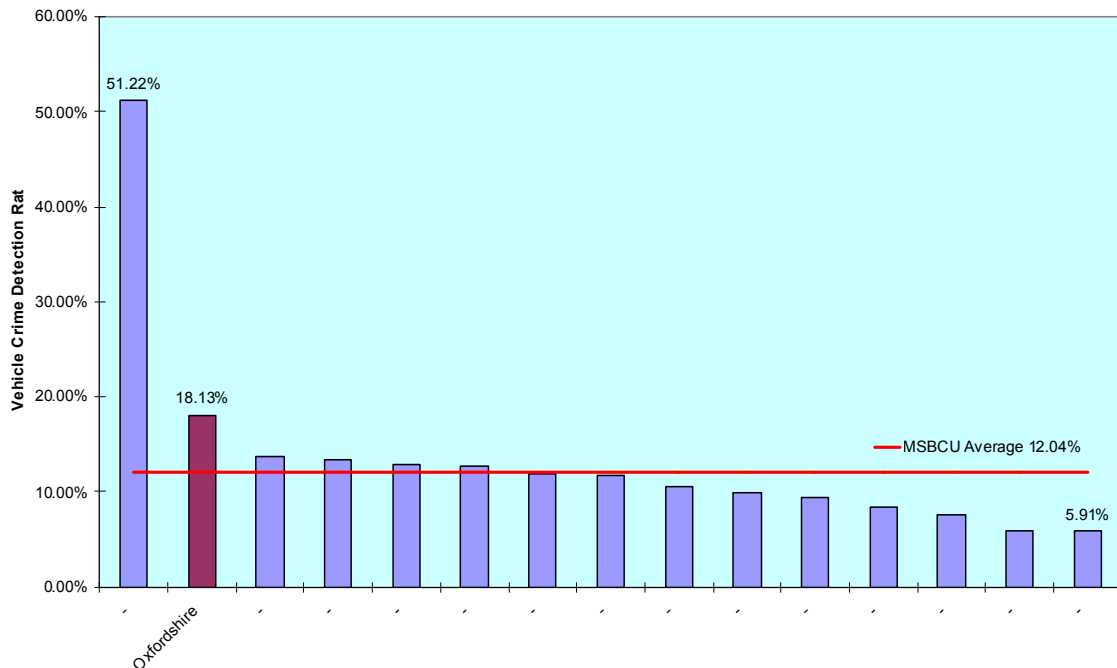
Vehicle Crime per 1,000 Population April to December 2005



Source: HMIC South of England Region – RDS Crux Matrix 2005

(Only Oxfordshire BCU have been identified as the 2005/06 data has not been validated or published; this is in accordance with HMIC data release guidelines)

Vehicle Crime Detection Rate April to December 2005



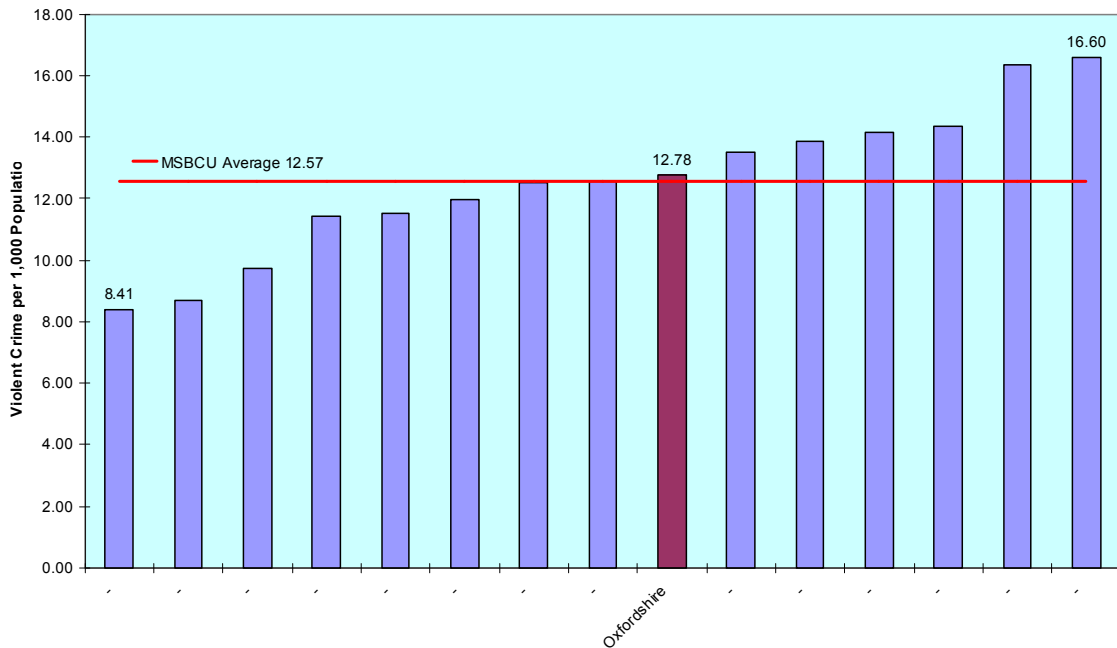
Source: HMIC South of England Region – RDS Crux Matrix 2005
(Only Oxfordshire BCU have been identified as the 2005/06 data has not been validated or published; this is in accordance with HMIC data release guidelines)

Violent Crime

For the period April to December 2005 total recorded violent crime per 1,000 population was **12.78**, this is in line with the MSBCU average 12.57. The BCU ranked **9th out of 15** for total crime per 1,000 population in their MSBCU group. Projections based on the last 6 and 12 months data show the level of violent crime **increasing** but projections based on the last 3 months data shows the level of violent crime **decreasing**.

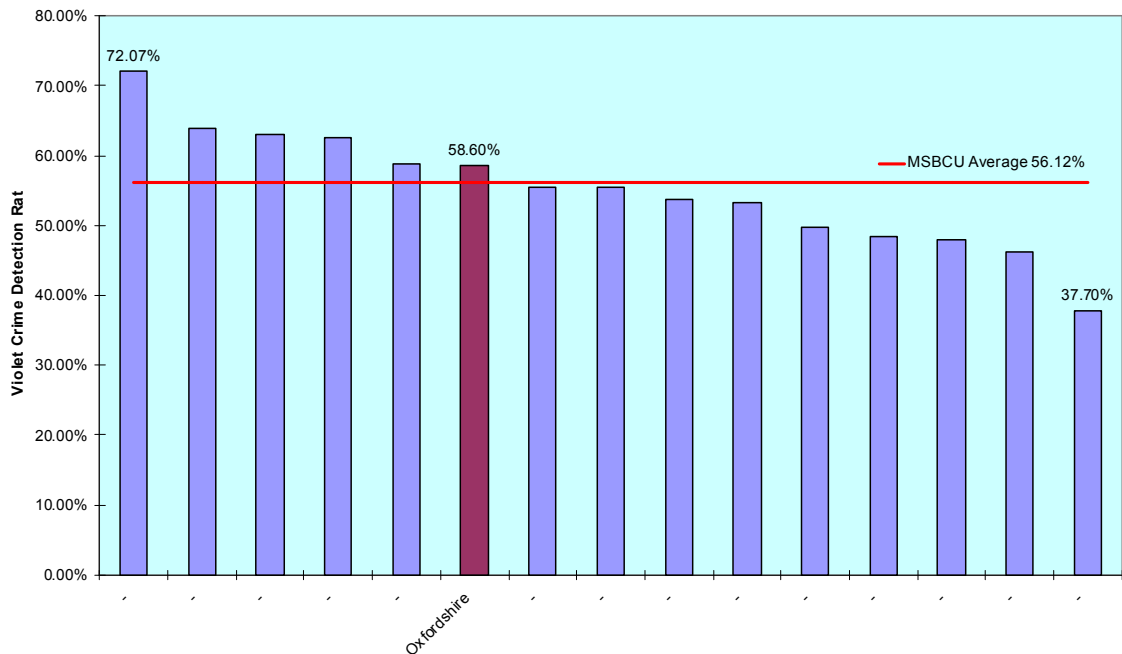
For the period April to December 2005 the overall detection rate for the BCU is **58.60%**. The BCU is ranked **6th out of 15** in the MSBCU group, and **in line with** the MSBCU average detection rate of 56.12%. Projections based on the last 3 data show the detection rate **decreasing**, but projections based on the last 6 and 12 months data show the detection rate **increasing**.

Violent Crime per 1,000 Population April to December 2005



Source: HMIC South of England Region – RDS Crux Matrix 2005
 (Only Oxfordshire BCU have been identified as the 2005/06 data has not been validated or published; this is in accordance with HMIC data release guidelines)

Violent Crime Detection Rate April to December 2005



Source: HMIC South of England Region – RDS Crux Matrix 2005
 (Only Oxfordshire BCU have been identified as the 2005/06 data has not been validated or published; this is in accordance with HMIC data release guidelines)

Inspection recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Action taken by BCU</i>	<i>Measurable impact</i>
That the BCU Commander considers developing BCU strategic portfolios for the LPA commanders.	Every LPA commander now has a number of strategic portfolios.	There is clear accountability and ownership by LPA commanders of BCU issues such as health and safety and public order operations.
The BCU Commander appoints a deputy.	The Superintendent with responsibility for partnerships deputises in the BCU Commander's absence.	There is no specific measurable impact; however, issues of succession planning have now been addressed.
Training is integrated into CID and police staff shift patterns.	A training plan has been drawn up by the BCU Training Manager which will be introduced in April 2006.	N/A
That the contract with custody assistant providers is reviewed now with a view to ensuring consistency of provision across the BCU.	The BCU has submitted a bid to headquarters for extra funds for more custody assistants.	Current contract for the BCU is for 32 jailers. At the time of the revisit there were 29.5. A decision from headquarters is expected in March 2006.
The SMT introduce an intrusive performance management regime in respect of the DSU to demonstrate integrity and monitor outcomes against control strategy priorities.	The DSU now has a comprehensive range of performance indicators which are being refined to ensure their contribution to BCU priorities.	The BCU now measures the number of times the DSU are tasked to make contact with CHISs in relation to a target, hot spot, a series and high risk issues identified in the tactical assessment. Costs are monitored and the DSU held to account at the monthly BCU performance group meeting.
The SMT conducts a review of briefing processes to ensure that the quality of the Oxford briefing is replicated across the BCU.	The BCU has implemented the national briefing model which is now used at all stations.	Every station within the BCU delivers staff briefings via power point with electronic archiving facilities.
The SMT benchmarks key crime and intelligence processes and systems against	The DCI (intelligence) has visited Bristol BCU and studied intelligence	A new tactical assessment document has been designed to ensure

<p>those found in forces with similar size BCUs</p>	<p>processes, particularly those relating to the criminal use of firearms, gangs and the supply of class A drugs. Visits have also been made to Cardiff and Birmingham to examine tactics to reduce violent crime.</p>	<p>standardisation and NIM compliance across the BCU. A "hot" intelligence database has been introduced. There is on-going work to link tasking with tactical assessments.</p>
<p>The SMT creates a more effective process for recognising and rewarding the consistently challenging work undertaken by crime scene examiners.</p>	<p>Each LPA now has a good work committee through which CSIs' work is recognised and this now forms a formal part of the BCU's performance group meetings.</p>	<p>In the last year there have been several nominations for Chief Constable's commendations and 2 departmental commendations have been awarded.</p>
<p>The SMT reviews the approach taken to managing outstanding crime reports and holds LPA commanders to account for performance.</p>	<p>The BCU has introduced a policy requiring all outstanding crimes to be reviewed by LPA commanders at 42 days, the crime manager at 72 days, with a further review by a senior officer at 90 days. LPA commanders are held to account on numbers of outstanding crimes at monthly BCU performance group meetings.</p>	<p>There has been a significant reduction in outstanding crimes held by officers with 1270 in January 2005 to 214 in January 2006.</p>

Monitoring assessment & follow-up action

Strategic Portfolios For LPA Commanders

At the original inspection it was identified that the BCU would benefit from a more structured approach to succession planning amongst the new command team through the delegation of strategic portfolios which would also make individuals responsible for specific matters.

All LPA commanders now have a portfolio of strategic responsibilities which reflects their experience and identifies them as being the SMT lead on specific operational and management issues. Two out of the five LPAs are commanded by chief inspectors and the BCU Commander feels that they in particular have benefited from holding the

portfolios in terms of their strategic development which has helped them manage the changes of the last year.

CID and Police Staff Training Days

During the BCU inspection it was noted that uniform officers had one training day per five-week shift cycle, but that no training timetable existed for detectives or police staff. The BCU's training development manager has drawn up a formal training programme for CID and police staff which will commence in April 2006.

Provision of Custody Assistants

The BCU has custody units at Abingdon, Banbury, Witney and Oxford police stations, all of which are staffed by custody assistants on contracts negotiated centrally by the Force's criminal justice department. The original inspection found that whilst Oxford had adequate staffing levels for custody assistants a shortage elsewhere frequently resulted in officers with prisoners being turned away and having to travel to Oxford. Given the geography of the BCU this is likely to have a direct impact on performance.

Due to custody assistants leaving and a delay in recruiting replacements, at the time of the revisit the BCU was operating with 29.5 custody assistants although the contract is for 32. The HMIC staff officer was informed that measures were in place to recruit more custody assistants and that the contracted number of 32 would be met. The BCU has submitted bids for extra funds to be made available for more custody assistants which are currently being considered at headquarters, but the indications are that the BCU will only receive 2 extra staff for 2006/7. There is concern on the BCU that the problem over availability of custody assistants will be exacerbated once they are required to drug-test all prisoners which is to be introduced imminently.

Performance Management of the DSU

The formation of Oxfordshire BCU led to the merging of dedicated source units into one BCU function with a clear need for the SMT to ensure accountability and monitor outcomes.

The SMT has moved away from a system of counting contacts with CHISs against priority crimes to a more sophisticated process whereby they measure the number of times the DSU are tasked to make contact with CHISs in relation to the main headings in the tactical assessment considered by the fortnightly tasking process - targets, priority locations (hot spots), series crimes and high risk issues. The system is still in its infancy, but it is envisaged that it will ensure that tasking is strictly intelligence based.

The BCU rigorously monitors costs incurred by the DSU and they are required to account for their activity at the monthly BCU performance group meeting. The recent appointment of a DCI to oversee intelligence across the BCU should ensure that changes within the DSU and the intelligence function in general should quickly translate into tangible results.

Briefing Practices

In order to ensure that shift briefings are of an equally high standard across Oxfordshire the BCU has introduced the principles of the national briefing model at all stations. All shift briefings are now given using power point presentations with appropriate taskings which are resulted using the electronic archiving facility.

Briefings are updated 7 days a week and good use is made of telephone conferencing facilities to link with intelligence officers and BCU managers. The HMIC staff officer viewed a recent briefing from West Oxfordshire LPA and noted the excellent quality of intelligence available on targets with clear instructions for patrol staff and individual officers given personal ownership of problems and tasks. It was noted that the head of intelligence has played a key role in improving the quality of briefings and he is keen to ensure that intelligence processes and products adequately service the requirements of neighbourhood policing.

Benchmarking of Crime and Intelligence Processes

It was evident at the time of the original inspection that the new BCU structure created complex issues around the design of the intelligence system to ensure that it fully met operational requirements and it was recommended that good practice be viewed in similar size BCUs.

The head of intelligence recently visited Bristol BCU and examined processes to capture intelligence in relation to drugs, gangs and the use of firearms which he intends to adapt to meet Oxfordshire's needs. Work is currently in hand to improve the management of persistent and prolific offenders with improved links to the area intelligence team, the early identification of drug markets where firearms are likely to be a factor and firearms intelligence. There is a detailed plan to implement changes which are linked to the management of the DSU and NIM processes described above.

The BCU has sent staff to Cardiff and Birmingham to examine approaches to policing city centre night time economies with a view to introducing different methods to tackle late night disorder and drink-related violence in Oxford. Ideas and lessons from this area are being developed by the SMT, but have yet to be implemented.

Recognition of Work by CSIs

The Oxfordshire BCU includes RAF Brize Norton where police crime scene examiners are called to examine the bodies of soldiers killed in Iraq before an inquest is formally opened. The original inspection was concerned that the arduous nature of this work and other aspects of CSI work were not formally recognised by the Force.

The BCU ensures that notable work is identified by senior CSIs who nominate staff for awards via a report to the principle CSI and Head of Scientific Support. Awards can take the form of a departmental commendation or nomination for a Chief Constable's commendation. Each LPA has a good work committee which also includes nominations

for CSI staff and both processes feed into the BCU performance group meetings. During the last year there have been several nominations for CSI staff to receive Chief Constable's commendations and 2 departmental commendations have been awarded.

Management of Outstanding Crime Reports

At the time of the BCU inspection there were an unacceptably high number of outstanding crime reports allocated to officers across the BCU, raising concerns over the effective management and supervision of files and the consequences for performance.

The BCU has introduced the crime investigation management module (IMM) which is linked to Thames Valley's crime recording system. The IMM ensures that specific crimes receive an action plan within 72 hours and are subject to a defined escalation policy of supervision and review. LPA commanders review all files which are outstanding at 42 days and identify training needs and discipline issues where appropriate. The crime manager reviews files at 72 days and a further review is conducted at 90 days. The policy has resulted in a reduction in the number of outstanding crime reports from 1270 in January 2005 to 124 in January 2006 and more efficient and expeditious investigations.

LPA commanders are held to account for outstanding crime files on their areas at monthly performance group meetings and force sanction detection meetings. LPA figures on outstanding crimes are published on an intranet web site which is updated weekly and the LPA commanders interviewed felt that whilst the reviews they were required to complete were time consuming the results justified the extra work.

Conclusion

The BCU has responded well to the recommendations made in the HMIC report of the BCU inspection in January 2005. Of particular note is the excellent on-going work concerning the DSU and the intelligence processes in Oxfordshire which will add considerable value to operational delivery.

All of the recommendations within the inspection report have been or are likely to be finalised satisfactorily in the very near future with the exception of the increased staffing levels for custody assistants, which the BCU has attempted to address.

As discussed above, there are no yearly performance figures for comparative analysis, however, the BCU appears to be performing well against similar sized BCUs considering the changes which have been experienced within the last year and the foundations are now in place on which to build for the future. All staff on the BCU and in particular the SMT and BCU Commander deserve credit for managing the changes of the last year whilst maintaining a good focus on performance and quality of service to the public. The BCU faces significant challenges in the near future as neighbourhood policing teams are implemented, but it is in an excellent position to embrace this work.

The HMIC staff officer considers that all matters subject to recommendation in the original report, with the exception of custody assistant contracts, have been actioned satisfactorily. There is no need for any other inspection activity other than routine monitoring.

Oxfordshire BCU - Thames Valley Police
Follow-up/Monitoring Visit – February 2006

HMIC BCU reports represent a snapshot in time, ie when the inspection occurred. It is acknowledged that performance may have changed since the time of the inspection. Every effort is made to publish reports as soon as possible after inspection.