

**Inspection of Macclesfield BCU
Cheshire Constabulary
February 2005**



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Introduction

1. Between 7 and 11 February 2005 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary conducted the Inspection of Macclesfield 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 do so with integrity. Scrutiny of police performance is shifting from aggregate force outcomes to the performance of individual BCUs, with the recognition that policing is essentially a locally delivered service. However, BCUs are not islands – they operate within a framework of policy and support determined by headquarters-based chief officer teams. The precise configuration of policing units and the balance of resources between HQ and BCUs varies across the 43 forces in England and Wales.
3. The focus on performance in reducing crime and disorder is likely to be relentless. Forces and police authorities, working with local authorities and other community safety partners, will need to raise their game year after year. Indeed, the statutory regime of Best Value demands 'continuous improvement' and an array of sanctions exist if authorities fail to deliver this. The Government recognises the need for additional resources in the fight against crime, and the 2002-05 comprehensive spending review (CSR) settlement is acknowledged to be the most generous the police service has received for many years. More police officers, better communications and information technology, and ever more sophisticated forensic techniques should all enhance police effectiveness. However, the potential for the service as a whole to deliver better results in crime reduction and detection cannot conceal an inescapable fact, that performance between BCUs operating in similar policing environments and with comparable resources varies to a degree that is at times remarkable.
4. Leadership by BCU commanders is probably the single most important determinant of BCU effectiveness. The responsibilities of command are significant, and some superintendents are not well supported in terms of the strength of their management teams and/or the quality and quantity of support from headquarters. Without exception, staff in pilot sites wanted their management teams to be more visible and accessible. One outcome from BCU inspections should be a better understanding of the practical manifestations of effective leadership.
5. In trying to make sense of the variations in operational performance, which exist – to differing degrees – in every force, a key ingredient is *focus*. The best performers focused efforts of their staff through timely, dynamic local briefings that are supported by a well managed intelligence system. They set targets and make sure that staff are aware of them, they communicate results and celebrate success. They define responsibilities and hold individuals to account for how they have used their time. In some BCUs this performance culture is absent, reflected in the fact that the personal development review (PDR) system of setting and monitoring individual goals is in abeyance. A nationwide rolling programme of inspections that focus upon performance and leadership is thus likely to produce an upturn in results.

Note

For consistency the term Basic Command Unit (BCU) will be used throughout this report, albeit that within Cheshire Constabulary local policing is delivered through a divisional structure.

Overview

- 1.** Cheshire Constabulary is responsible for policing the county of Cheshire including the two unitary authority areas of Warrington and Halton. Cheshire covers an area of 2,083.4 square kilometres, and has a resident population of 980,000. The county is diverse in nature, ranging from the Pennine hills in the east, through agricultural central Cheshire, to the industrial Dee Estuary in South Wirral.
- 2.** The chief officer group (COG) heads the Force. This is led by the Chief Constable and comprises the deputy chief constable, assistant chief constable (territorial policing), assistant chief constable (operations support) and an assistant chief officer with responsibility for finance, administration, information management, property, transport and legal services.
- 3.** Force strength currently stands at 2,176 full-time equivalent (FTE) officers, 1,218 police staff members and 184 special constables.
- 4.** The Force comprises six territorial BCUs that are known in Force as divisions. These are coterminous with local authority/district boundaries. The annual revenue budget (2004/05) for the Force is £142.2 million. The Force devolves police staff salaries, but not those of police officers, to BCUs and virement of over £3,000 at BCU level must have the approval of a chief officer.
- 5.** At the beginning of April 2005 Cheshire Constabulary intends to migrate its existing six territorial divisions into three new BCUs, which will be known as areas. This is part of an extensive change programme being delivered within the Cheshire Constabulary known as the 'Taking Control' programme. Although this Inspection report is primarily concerned with the BCU of Macclesfield, it would be unwise of the inspection team to present its findings without recognition of this corporate change programme and its associated context.

Macclesfield BCU

- 6.** Macclesfield BCU is located in north east Cheshire. The BCU was created in 1997 when the former Macclesfield and Wilmslow divisions amalgamated. It adjoins three separate force areas – Greater Manchester (north), Derbyshire Constabulary (east) and Staffordshire Police (south). Macclesfield BCU has one crime and disorder partnership, which is called 'The Partnership for a Safe Borough'. The BCU and Borough are coterminous.
- 7.** The BCU has one community policing action area (CPA), which is divided into four community action teams (CATs). The CAT teams are headed by an inspector and supported by two sergeants and 19 constables. The CAT teams are located at Macclesfield, Wilmslow, Poynton and Knutsford.

8. Macclesfield BCU headquarters is housed within the police station at Macclesfield. At the time of the Inspection, Macclesfield police station was undergoing substantial renovation using funds from the premises improvement fund (PIF). When complete this will provide a new help desk facility and some further office accommodation. The BCU has another main police station at Wilmslow, where the custody facility is located, and two smaller stations at Poynton and Knutsford.

9. The area covered by the BCU is approximately 523 square kilometres, where 85% of the area is rural. The area of Macclesfield is home to approximately 150,300 people and contains several towns and over 40 villages. The area is recognised as one of the most prosperous parts of the country, with low unemployment (0.88%). However, this is not completely consistent across the BCU. Colshaw Farm, Wilmslow and The Moss Estate, Macclesfield represent less economically prosperous areas.

10. The BCU has a budgeted strength of 248 police officers. In addition, there are 68 police staff, including three police community support officers (PCSOs), and 18 members of the Special Constabulary.

11. The BCU Commander is a superintendent. He is supported by a command team consisting of a chief inspector (operations manager), a detective chief inspector (crime manager) and a resource manager.

12. The process of the Inspection was tightly focused around leadership and performance, coupled with a visit to Force headquarters and pre-inspection analysis of key data and documents. These documents, data and other BCU issues were explored through an initial meeting with the BCU Commander and his command team, and then a series of interviews, meetings and focus groups during the week of the field Inspection. A total of 193 people were seen in a combination of interviews and focus groups and unscheduled visits, which took place at Macclesfield and Wilmslow. A number of reality checks (discussions and unscheduled meetings with staff) were performed during this period, which included visits to the outlying police stations of Knutsford and Poynton. The BCU Inspection concluded with a verbal debrief to the BCU Commander and his command team, and a separate 'overview' debrief with the assistant chief constable (territorial policing) and two representatives of the Cheshire Police Authority.

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

Part One – Leadership

The BCU Management Team

The Commander

1.1 The superintendent has twenty three years' police service and he has been the BCU Commander at Macclesfield since May 2004. He has experience within CID and uniform roles including three years' service as a DCI (crime manager). Prior to his current posting he served as superintendent in HQ uniform operations.

Chief Inspector (Operations Manager)

1.2 The chief inspector (operations) has fifteen years' service and he has been in post since August 2004. Throughout his career he has served in mainly uniform operational roles in both Merseyside Police and Cheshire Constabulary. Prior to joining the BCU he served as chief inspector in the Force training centre.

Detective Chief Inspector (Crime Manager)

1.3 The detective chief inspector (crime) has eighteen years' service and has been in post since January 2003. He has experience of both operational and headquarters based roles, with a background firmly based in crime investigation. Prior to joining the BCU he was involved in the 'Migration Project' connected with the establishment of the new Force HQ and continuity of vital business processes.

Divisional Resource Manager

1.4 The resource manager has been in post since July 2003 when he joined Cheshire Constabulary. Prior to his appointment he worked for 20 years with Royal London Insurance mainly in asset administration. He has wide-ranging experience in the management of finance, staffing and estates matters.

Strategic Management

1.5 There are six key policing objectives for the Force for 2004/05, with associated measures and targets. The objectives set by the Authority reflect the priorities of the people of Cheshire, Warrington and Halton, following consultation about all areas of policing. They also reflect the key priorities set nationally by the Government. The key objectives are:

- Call handling;
- crime;
- roads policing;
- anti-social behaviour;
- customer satisfaction; and
- diversity.

These key objectives are the subject of seven targets to:

- Reduce recorded crime by 4%;

- reduce domestic burglaries by 6%;
- limit violent crime;
- increase detection rates for violent crime, domestic burglary and vehicle crime;
- reduce vehicle crimes by 4%;
- increase offences brought to justice by 5%; and
- reduce the number of fatal/serious injury road traffic collisions by 5%.

1.6 Macclesfield BCU has an annual business plan for 2004/05. This sets seven local objectives, which include additional priorities that were identified by the local crime and disorder reduction partnership (CDRP) as causing the most concern for local people. The BCU command team decided upon the internal measures.

1.7 The Macclesfield CDRP has identified five broad aims for tackling crime and disorder:

- Making Macclesfield Borough a safer place to live, work and visit;
- reducing incidence of crime and disorder and the resulting cost to the community;
- reducing fear of crime and making people feel safer;
- promoting community safety through public participation to ensure the needs and priorities of the community are met; and
- promoting community safety through effective partnership working.

The CDRP identified six broad issues to pay particular attention to. These are:

- Anti-social behaviour;
- domestic violence;
- drug and alcohol related crime and disorder;
- fear of crime;
- household burglary; and
- vehicle crime.

1.8 The Macclesfield BCU business plan objectives take account of the CDRP priorities and reflect national, Force and local requirements. These are:

Objectives reflecting local and national priorities:

- **Providing assistance** - to improve the way we respond to calls from the public;
- **Investigating and reducing crime** – in partnership with other agencies and the public to reduce the levels of burglary, vehicle crime and drug related crime, combat serious and organised crime and increase the number of offences brought to justice;

- **Road safety** – in partnership with other agencies to reduce the number of fatal and serious injury road traffic collisions through enforcement, education and engineering;
- **Anti-social behaviour** – to reduce the level of fear and insecurity by working with local communities and partner agencies to impact on disorder, nuisance, anti-social behaviour and violence in public places;
- **Public focus** – to provide a good service to the public, especially victims and witnesses, which responds to their needs and inspires confidence in the police, particularly among minority groups;
- **Other measures** – ensure that the division makes effective use of its resources, performs with integrity and is committed to the provision of a high quality of service; and
- **Divisional issues** – to identify best practice and areas for improvement in performance.

1.9 The business plan incorporates local measures and targets associated with each of the objectives. This allows the SMT to measure achievement or non-achievement towards target.

1.10 The BCU also has a national intelligence model (NIM) control strategy, which includes the following threats/issues:

- Anti-social behaviour and the fear of crime;
- household burglary;
- vehicle crime;
- violent crime;
- supply of Class A drugs; and
- serious and fatal road traffic collisions.

1.11 The BCU control strategy is comprehensive and contains a range of strategic and tactical options. It was noted during the Inspection that whilst staff were not always aware of the detail included in the control strategy, or other plans, they were consistently aware of the BCU performance priorities. Arguably it might not matter if officers and police staff were not aware of all the elements within the NIM, so long as they undertook the actions required of them. It was pleasing to note that wider ‘quality of life’ issues, such as anti-social behaviour, had been included within the control strategy, to encompass broader policing issues other than crime related matters. However, the control strategy is a fundamental element of the NIM and should be used to direct the thrust of day-to-day policing activities. Though there was some focused activity it was not clear that this approach is fully incorporated within the management of the BCU.

1.12 Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary was concerned to note that understanding of the Force control strategy was very limited and it was not clear that this had been an effective influence in the design of the BCU priorities. Indeed, some members of staff questioned whether or not the Force control strategy had in fact been

published. **The SMT is therefore urged to clarify the links between the Force and BCU control strategies.**

Operational Leadership

1.13 Without exception the members of the BCU SMT were considered by their staff to be hard working, conscientious and approachable. It was most encouraging to note the consistency with which staff commented positively on the approachability and visibility of the BCU Commander. The Commander frequently visits stations across the BCU and regularly accompanies officers on patrol. Many respondents also noted that the visibility of the SMT had improved markedly over past months. The SMT visits are not scheduled but a diary record is maintained in order that an overview of all the recent visits by the SMT is available to the BCU Commander. Although there were some differences in the level of visibility amongst BCU SMT members, there was clear evidence that, collectively, the BCU SMT is active in its commitment to visible leadership to an extent not always found during inspections. **Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary commends their approach.**

1.14 The SMT has recently introduced an 'access point' for BCU staff. A member of the SMT is available for contact by telephone from staff on any issue or query at a regular slot from 2.00pm to 5.00pm each Thursday. These arrangements have recently been publicised to staff. Not all staff were yet aware of the facility and only a few had used the opportunity to speak to SMT members. Although it is too early to assess impact, this is a welcome initiative, particularly at a time of change. **It is suggested the SMT continues to promote this direct access point in order that staff can raise matters of concern. The take-up and effectiveness of this facility should be monitored and evaluated.**

1.15 The BCU SMT exercises its strategic role through regular weekly meetings. SMT membership is confined to the superintendent, chief inspector (operations), detective chief inspector (crime manager), and resource manager.

1.16 A strategic planning day had been held last year to which all inspectors had been invited. Some inspectors attend the fortnightly BCU tasking and co-ordinating meeting. These are the only occasions when inspectors seem to have a clear opportunity to formally influence BCU SMT decision-making. There does not appear to be any other regular management meetings for inspectors, where communication is two-way and not influenced by performance scrutiny. Such opportunities are important in ensuring their engagement and this will be particularly relevant following the forthcoming restructure that emphasises the inspectors' critical leadership role. **It is therefore suggested that the BCU introduces a more regular schedule of inspector meetings chaired by a member of the SMT.**

1.17 UNISON and Federation representatives attend some SMT meetings and this provides opportunity for consultation and liaison. Where issues arise at other times, the SMT was seen as accessible through informal contact with managers. At the time of the Inspection, however, the BCU did not have a UNISON representative in post. The SMT

has identified a need to increase the frequency of meetings and at the time of the Inspection a monthly meeting with UNISON and Federation representatives was being considered. **HMIC would urge the BCU to progress arrangements for regular meetings with Federation and UNISON representatives.**

1.18 The majority of BCU staff had attended the ‘Taking Control’ workshops arranged over recent months. It is clear these events involved considerable effort and had been well received by most participants. It was noted however, that such a significant process of change has, quite properly, involved redesign and development to ensure it delivers what is required. Consequently a need has arisen for more continuous communication to ensure staff are kept informed.

1.19 Information on current issues and in particular the ‘Taking Control’ changes were available to staff via the Force intranet system, e-mail and a variety of other internal publications and notice board displays. During the Inspection it was noted that, without exception, notice board displays across the BCU had recently been updated with well ordered and relevant information. Most staff appeared to know where to access the information, news and messages being communicated, and regular informal contact with the BCU Commander and the SMT was clearly appreciated. However, a level of frustration was evidenced amongst some respondents where information on some issues of concern was not featured within the available published material. **It is therefore suggested that the SMT consider regular ‘team’ briefings and open forums to provide opportunities for staff to raise issues and receive responses directly with the SMT.**

1.20 The five uniform patrol (block response) teams on the BCU are each led by an inspector and these inspectors play a crucial role in ensuring that the BCU provides a high quality of service to the public. These inspectors not only lead the teams but also manage critical incidents and have the delegated authority to direct all operational staff during their tour of duty.

1.21 An Inspector and his four sergeants lead the four community action teams (CATs).

1.22 The SMT has recently produced a ‘Making a Difference – Leadership and Standards Charter’, which highlights the standards expected of all leaders within the BCU. This charter was understood by inspectors, however, it was little known by sergeants and constables, probably due to the fact that it was only recently introduced, in December 2004.

Organisational Culture

1.23 It was pleasing to note that the day-to-day working relationship between police officers and police staff was described as positive. This was also the case with the relationship between uniform officers and colleagues in specialist departments such as CID, intelligence unit, roads policing, CAT teams and family protection unit. The day-

to-day relationship between police officers, police staff, PSCOs and special constables, was similarly supportive and constructive.

1.24 Patrol officers were seen at all police stations and police staff at Wilmslow and Macclesfield. Though generally a positive picture emerged, the inspection team witnessed varying levels of morale amongst the staff that were interviewed. This ranged from extremely positive personnel, who were very satisfied in their roles, to others who expressed concern regarding potential future changes. The inspection team was not surprised with this situation, and indeed had been advised that senior managers understood such concerns existed, due to the proposed changes relating to the 'Taking Control Programme'. It was apparent however that concerns about the change process were widest amongst police staff and that they were anxious for more detailed information.

1.25 A performance culture is well embedded with the SMT although this culture has yet to be fully embraced by all inspectors and sergeants. At sergeant and constable level there was a general acceptance of the performance focus and recognition that it is delivering improvements in service. Nevertheless it was clear that some officers had yet to understand the importance of the performance culture.

1.26 Management information in a performance data matrix is collated and made available to inspectors and sergeants. This includes measurements of individual officer's productivity including, for example, the submission of intelligence items. There was some recognition that the use of this personal performance data can become a solely quantitative measurement, sometimes described as a 'league table', and some inspectors and sergeants were widening their approach to include more qualitative measures linked to desired performance outcomes. Though this did not appear to be consistent across all teams, the understanding and practise of performance management demonstrated by the sergeants in the roads policing and CATs teams was commendable. **It is suggested that this mature style of performance management, undertaken by the CATs and roads policing unit, is encouraged across all sections.**

1.27 There was evidence of effective recognition systems in place. Many staff were often thanked informally for good work both by first line supervisors and by more senior staff members. This ranged from verbal appreciation and written notes of thanks, to commendations awarded by the Divisional Commander. Divisional commendations are presented at formal commendation evenings where family and friends can participate in the recognition of police staff and police officers. There was also effective and appropriate use of the bonus payment scheme in situations where members of staff have performed duties over and above their usual activities.

1.28 It was clear that staff realised that inappropriate conduct would not be tolerated and the inspection team did not witness any such conduct. There were strong messages of integrity within the BCU that were evident at all levels and within specialist teams. All staff showed courtesy and respect for each other and this extended to the inspection team. Nevertheless, understanding of diversity was patchy on some issues. Though 80%

of police officers on the BCU had attended some relevant training since January 2003, it was not clear that training needs for all BCU staff had been fulfilled. Only 15% of police staff had been trained. It was therefore pleasing to note that the BCU has instigated some local awareness training about diversity issues, in an attempt to address this need. (See paragraph 1.72 - Training and Development). Whilst this initiative is laudable it is not clear that the BCU has the capacity to sustain this training and that a fully effective approach will require further support. **It is therefore suggested that the SMT engage with the HQ training department to promote the design and delivery of a comprehensive diversity training package for all staff within the BCU.**

Business Planning

1.29 In common with other BCUs in Cheshire Constabulary, Macclesfield BCU produces an annual business plan. This plan sets out the objectives for the following year and includes a range of performance indicators and targets.

1.30 The plan consists of seven objectives and associated action plans to address them. Each action plan is assigned to a manager and contains details of key issues, performance measures and links to the community safety strategies for the BCU.

1.31 There were clear and visible displays of performance data throughout all the stations. In addition the BCU produced a one page poster that was evident around the police station notice boards. This poster displayed the key objectives of the business plan and it was apparent that most staff were familiar with the aims and broad objectives of the BCU. Over the course of the Inspection however, it became clear that an understanding of the links between these objectives and delivery through the work of individuals was limited. There was also some confusion between the BCU control strategy and the BCU plan. Most staff, including some more senior supervisors and managers, felt these documents articulated the same issues and were, effectively, interchangeable.

1.32 The recording of rest days in lieu and time owed to officers was undertaken. However, the methods in place did not appear to provide ready access to data that would enable effective monitoring. In January 2005 the BCU had introduced a policy to restrict the accrual of time off in lieu, including rest days, to a maximum of 50 hours per officer. This has been a necessary measure since, at the time of the Inspection, a total of 56 officers had accrued in excess of 50 hours' time in lieu. Ten of those officers being owed over 110 hours and in one case 168 hours. The inspection team was also concerned that only limited processes were in place to monitor and review the working hours for SMT members. **It is therefore suggested that the SMT establishes effective processes to ensure compliance with European working time regulations by all BCU staff which are systematic and include regular monitoring and review.**

1.33 It was pleasing to note that the BCU has introduced a process to manage and reduce overtime. Though there is a current overspend, which arose earlier in the financial year, this is being reduced and the measures in place over the past three months appear to be effective. The SMT is encouraged to continue its approach.

1.34 Though patrol officers felt they would benefit from increased numbers on duty at certain times it appeared that, in general, available resources were being matched with demand. It was noted that at times, particularly during the night, the BCU can experience quite a low level of calls for service. An examination of the command and control system at 03.00hrs on Thursday 10 February indicated five ‘open’ incidents were being managed.

1.35 There was a clear distinction between the roles of the CAT team and block patrol officers. Though it is necessary and indeed desirable that some interchange takes place, it was pleasing to find that the extent to which community based officers were abstracted from their role was limited. Under the current arrangements therefore, a formal BCU policy is not required but this position may alter with the forthcoming restructure. The SMT may wish to consider the setting of appropriate criteria to guide the temporary deployment of staff away from specialist roles.

1.36 Whilst it was not a main focus of the Inspection, the inspection team encountered a range of stand-alone databases. This gave some cause for concern, particularly in the light of the Bichard Inquiry recommendations. There is some evidence that the BCU is addressing this issue, particularly in their work on child protection and domestic violence referrals and the introduction of the ‘CAVA’ system. **However, the inspection team is still concerned at the number of stand-alone databases being used in the BCU and the command team is encouraged to continue to review and rationalise these systems.**

Community Policing

1.37 Local policing services are delivered through CATs. CAT members, with geographical beat responsibilities perform a critical function in establishing and maintaining community confidence. Partners complimented the local emphasis and commitment of CATs to solving problems and effective action.

1.38 One inspector provides management and direction for all the CAT teams. He is held to account at the monthly performance improvement meeting, which is chaired by the divisional commander and attended by his line manager, the chief inspector (operations).

1.39 The CAT inspector holds the two sergeants to account in a similar way and they, in turn, hold their teams to account at a formal weekly meeting. The inspection team was pleased to note this was an effective process and these officers were clearly aware that their performance was under scrutiny.

1.40 Four sergeants manage the CATs and a total of 19 constables and three community support officers are dedicated to this function. Special constables also support the CAT teams.

1.41 The inspection team was particularly impressed by the success of CATs in taking a robust approach to tackling town centre licensing problems. They have been combating

violent crime through liaison with the licensed trade and supervision of public houses and clubs. This initiative has included the development of effective pub watch schemes.

1.42 This initiative could be even further enhanced by encompassing proactive work tackling Class A drug misuse. It is suggested the SMT explore ways to promote such an approach through tasking and co-ordinating processes.

1.43 It was evident from the CATs teams that a great deal of energy was being put into building effective relationships with schools and young people. Of particular note in this respect was the Lacey Green Project undertaken in partnership with Cheshire Constabulary, Cheshire Fire Service, Macclesfield Borough Council and Cheshire County Council Youth Service. It is aimed at building relationships with those youths from the Lacey Green Estate who have been responsible for anti-social behaviour. An objective of the project is to reduce incidents of this nature. The project received funding from all the partners and formed part of the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme for community involvement and community safety and awareness.

1.44 The course was only intended to run for 12 weeks to qualify for the award but has been extended due to the enthusiasm of those involved. A second phase is planned to achieve the next stage of the award. There will be final certificates from the police and fire services for their participation and individual achievements. This promising initiative has been delivered with considerable energy and commitment amongst those involved. Clearly it has potential to improve quality of life issues for the community but it has not been formally evaluated. Particularly where this level of effort and resource has been invested an objective evaluation is necessary to assess impact and draw lessons for future practice. **It is suggested therefore that the SMT explore ways to embed appropriate methods for evaluation within planning for similar initiatives in future. HMIC further encourages the BCU SMT to develop a framework for appropriate independent evaluation, assessment and monitoring, in conjunction with partner agencies.**

1.45 The CATs work very closely with the BCU crime and disorder unit and with partners to tackle neighbourhood level issues, particularly disorder and other quality of life matters. Enforcement activity is regularly discussed at productive meetings with representatives of the local authority and social landlords. CATs strive to be accessible and recognisable, as was clear from their commitment to dealing with issues raised at town and parish council meetings, which they frequently attend. An excellent example of this type of work is the Bollington Project based on the national 'Restoring Reassurance' pilot. It was very pleasing to note that the dedicated beat officer, who was actively supported by the local PCSO and a special constable, led this successful initiative. The aim of the project is to involve communities in deciding the main issues that need to be addressed i.e. turning public priorities into police priorities. The method adopted has had three strands:

- Public Perception Survey – This involved 240 questionnaires being sent to local residents seeking their views on local issues of crime and disorder.
- Environmental Audit – A group involving members of the public, councillors and partner agencies walked through the area identifying visual signs of physical and social disorder.
- Community Action Meeting (CAM) – The results of the audits were then presented at a meeting of local residents, who then vote on the priorities they wished the police and other agencies to address. These meetings are scheduled for every six weeks, when an assessment can be made and, if necessary, the priorities amended.

1.46 Feedback from the public to those involved in the project is positive and the response to date from the interim volunteer meetings has also reported a noticeable decrease in anti-social behaviour. This was an area that was initially highlighted for attention by the first CAM. There are plans that this project is to be rolled out throughout the BCU. **Though effective evaluation is required, and should be considered before the approach is introduced elsewhere, this initiative is particularly promising.**

Community Safety Partnerships

1.47 In the spring of 2004, the partnership conducted a self-assessment. The findings of the assessment recognised that the structures and delivery mechanisms of the partnership needed to be more clearly aligned to the specific responsibilities of the CDRP. There was also a need to further develop the performance management regime of the partnership.

1.48 The vice chair of the CDRP is the Divisional Commander. Working closely with officers of Macclefield Borough, and supported by the chair of the CDRP, the Divisional Commander developed and proposed a new structure for the CDRP. This new structure has been agreed by the partnership membership and although not yet formally in place, the partnership has started to operate differently. The changes introduced are expected to enhance the co-ordination of the already effective ‘prolific and other priority offender’ scheme (PPO) particularly across the three strands of ‘prevent and deter’, ‘catch and convict’ and ‘resettle and rehabilitate’. More generally the streamlined partnership is intended to focus delivery towards specific geographic crime and disorder hot spots, as well as supporting thematic initiatives such as reduction of violent crime. **These are promising developments which Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary will watch with interest.**

1.49 A number of encouraging partnership initiatives were identified. In particular the development of a drugs programme known as STEPS. The objectives of the programme are to reduce offending behaviour of prolific offenders who have a chaotic drug habit by facilitating increased access to medical care and working in collaboration with other agencies to effect lifestyle changes. The other partners in this initiative include Probation

Service and NACRO. It was encouraging to note this programme is currently being evaluated at Force headquarters.

1.50 An inspector heads the BCU crime and disorder unit. He is supported by, and responsible for, a crime and disorder sergeant, three crime reduction advisers, a home watch co-ordinator and a schools liaison officer. Partners valued the role played by this unit but there was a level of uncertainty around the internal structures and different responsibilities of teams within the BCU. For example it was sometimes not clear whether they needed to engage with either the crime and disorder team or the CATs team on particular issues. It was agreed however that at the tactical level, activity was effective despite this ambiguity since the people involved ensured effective co-working. It would nevertheless promote even more effective partnership working if roles and responsibilities were more clearly understood. **It is therefore suggested that the SMT take steps to clarify these matters in order to facilitate effective partnership engagement. This will be particularly relevant in the context of the 'Taking Control' structural changes.**

1.51 The importance of the CDRP is recognised by all members of the command team and partners clearly valued the personal commitment to joint working by the BCU Commander and his team.

Financial Management

1.52 The Force operates a level of devolved financial management. The BCU revenue budget includes all police staff costs, police officer overtime, premises costs, transport costs and supplies and services but does not include police pay and allowances. Targets are set for income generation. Once the budget for the financial year is set the BCU can vire between all budget heads (unless ring fenced e.g. rates) in accordance with the Force's scheme of financial delegation. However, if the proposed permanent virement involves new policy, or has significant implications for the following year, then the proposal has to be approved by an officer at assistant chief constable level. There is no limit set on individual virement proposals. However, those above £3,000 are subject to more detailed scrutiny by the HQ finance department.

1.53 Macclesfield BCU has faced some significant funding challenges over the last two years. The BCU budget for 2003/04 saw an overspend in excess of £100,000. This overspend was primarily due to the cost of Operation Musketry, a very complex murder investigation, although this was supported by some Force funding. The overspend was also due to the use of overtime to extend service provision, for example to open Macclesfield custody unit at busy weekends during the summer period. Though clearly providing some operational benefits this overspend created a deficit as the BCU entered the 2004/05 financial year and it is difficult to understand the business case for this approach.

1.54 Macclesfield BCU budget for the current financial year 2004/05 is £2,314,070. The necessity to cater for three additional bank holidays over the Christmas period put further pressure on an already tight budget. Overtime in the first quarter of 2004/05 was

again substantially overspent against predicted expenditure. This of course impacts on Cheshire Constabulary's overall corporate overtime target, which has not been met for the last two years.

1.55 A further unanticipated cost of £20,000 arose due to the delay in the migration of the control room to headquarters. Had the inspection team visited the BCU after the first quarter, it would have seen a budget situation that could only be described as unacceptable.

1.56 However, in realising this situation, the new SMT took urgent steps to rectify this position. A comprehensive financial action plan has been developed to bring the BCU spending back under control. There is a plan to reduce overtime and monitor future spending.

1.57 At the time of the Inspection, the SMT was forecasting a year end overspend of £50,000.

1.58 In addition to its base budget, the BCU receives external grant funding of £100,000 through the BCU fund, £84,000 from 'Building Safer Communities' funding and £39,000 from the rural policing fund. The expenditure on these grants was appropriately agreed with partners.

1.59 There is no devolvement of overtime budgets to inspectors or equivalent team leaders and in the context of the difficult situation over the last financial year this is perhaps understandable. However, the SMT may wish to consider a level of devolved financial responsibility for inspectors to enhance ownership, accountability and delivery especially as their role changes following the restructure. **In the meantime Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary urges the SMT to continue to monitor and rigorously control the BCU budget through its comprehensive action plan.**

Health and Safety

1.60 In general terms the BCU operates an effective health and safety policy, with health and safety meetings being held and risk assessments being conducted. However, at the time of the Inspection, Macclesfield police station was undergoing significant refurbishment and alteration, which includes extending the building to provide improved public access facilities. The effect upon the working environment for staff at Macclesfield has been considerable. The inspection team was concerned to note that displaced furniture or other items occupied corridors and other work spaces and that there appeared to be unrestricted access to parts of the building where building work was being undertaken by contractors.

1.61 It also appeared that other work, though taking place outside the building, was being carried out close to occupied offices in the police station. Several respondents were either not aware or reported concerns about the effectiveness of the safety control measures in place. It was clear that risks and the appropriate measures to avoid harm were not widely understood by the BCU. This was particularly the case for those people

who did not work at Macclesfield, but who might nevertheless, visit the premises in the course of their work.

1.62 A risk assessment had been prepared by the contractors in connection with their work on site and during November 2004 a divisional health and safety audit had been conducted by the Force health and safety unit. Documents in relation to both were examined during the Inspection. The divisional health and safety audit is focused primarily on business processes. The contractor's risk assessment is concerned mainly with the conduct of work by contract staff.

1.63 This Inspection did not encompass a fully detailed health and safety audit of Macclesfield police station but they were not convinced that a sufficiently robust approach to managing the health and safety issues connected with the building work was in place. It also appeared that limited attention had been afforded to the impact upon the working environment for staff at the police station whilst the work proceeds. **HMIC urges that the SMT, in conjunction with the relevant headquarters departments, takes steps to urgently review the risk assessment for Macclesfield police station and in particular to ensure that all persons who visit or work in the building are adequately informed about health and safety requirements.**

1.64 During the Inspection a patrol briefing was observed. Whilst it appeared risk assessments were conducted for pre-planned operations and operational staff had an understanding of the need to assess risk, it was not clear that patrol briefings consistently provide information about hazards and the relevant action required by officers. For example, in the observed briefing, one particular item identified that an offender had a history of violence, but then included no further detail that might have assisted officers in any subsequent encounter. **It is suggested that items for routine briefings in relation to potentially violent individuals or hazardous situations include more specific information on the actions expected from officers.**

1.65 It was noted however that other briefing items included a 'trigger plan' providing very clear instructions to officers where they encounter particular types of operational incident. This appeared a most effective approach, which the BCU may wish to develop further.

1.66 It was noted that members of the Special Constabulary are not supplied with personally tailored body armour but instead a number of armour sets are 'pooled' for use by those officers arriving on duty. Different types are provided for male and female officers. **Whilst recognising that this is a pragmatic solution, in respect of expensive equipment, there are real concerns that the wearing of ill-fitting armour is inappropriate and potentially harmful. It is suggested that this policy is re-examined.**

Absence Management

1.67 The level of sickness absence 2003/04 for both police officers and police staff is outlined in Figure 1, showing a comparison within the Force.

| Figure 1: Police Officer sickness absence compared with Force | | |
|--|---------------------|------------------------------|
| | Macclesfield | Cheshire Constabulary |
| Average number of days sickness – police officers (2003/04) | 10.03 | 9.32 |
| % change compared with same period the previous year | -31.95% | -18.77% |

| Figure 2: Police staff absence compared with Force | | |
|--|---------------------|------------------------------|
| | Macclesfield | Cheshire Constabulary |
| Average number of days sickness – police staff (Apr-Dec 2003) | 11.01 | 9.54 |
| % change compared with same period 2002 | -7.17% | -25.77% |

1.68 The reductions in sickness absence for police officers and police staff are attributable to the positive emphasis given to sickness absence by the BCU command team, and the application of the Force attendance management procedure. Management information is available to supervisors.

1.69 Rigorous application of Force policy, including visits to officers and return to work interviews, has clearly contributed to the reductions in sickness absence.

1.70 Though the days absence average for Macclesfield remains higher than that for Cheshire Constabulary, the BCU is ranked fifth within its family of 14 most similar BCUs. These reductions in sickness absence for police officers are laudable and also reflect the improvements made across the Constabulary.

1.71 The decline in absence rates for police staff is less marked but overall the BCU is experiencing good performance in reducing levels of absence.

Training and Development

1.72 The inspection team identified some gaps in training and development at the BCU level. Training does not appear as a specific responsibility in the portfolio of any SMT member. However, the chief inspector (operations) has, commendably, identified this training gap and, with the assistance of a block inspector (with training experience) and the local divisional training sergeant, has conducted a training needs analysis. A full day's training package has been designed for response officers and includes subject matter such as stop and search, domestic violence handling, hate crime and diversity issues.

1.73 This training, which has only recently commenced, has been delivered on the whole to response officers. Records show that 80% of block officers have had this training. The package has not yet been delivered to police staff, detectives or roads policing officers. Neither has the package been evaluated other than by the return of two evaluation sheets. In the absence of corporate training delivery, the BCU has attempted to address some of the needs. It was noted that corporate training resources have been committed to the 'Taking Control Programme' and not in a position to deliver other training.

1.74 Other aspects of training and development that have been ongoing in the BCU include the mandatory self-defence training, which is delivered locally, and a new member of police staff has been appointed to deliver this training. The BCU has also done well in providing this training for a relatively high level of probationary constables, which was 44 at the time of the Inspection.

Performance Development Review (PDR) - Audit

1.75 Cheshire Constabulary has a PDR process for all police officers and police staff including chief officers. A new electronic intranet based PDR system was introduced in the summer of 2004. The basis for the PDR is to align individual performance and development with the corporate aims and objectives of the Constabulary and Police Authority. It is also aligned to the aims and objectives of the divisional business plan and crime and disorder reduction strategies. In addition, the process is intended to provide for career development within a current post.

1.76 Force policy dictates that PDRs should be conducted annually between March and June, however in practice this was not being done consistently. The Force recognises that completing all PDRs in this time frame is not always practical for a variety of valid reasons, such as the movement of staff and returns to duty from long-term sickness. Each PDR should contain a number of stages including a performance review of last year's priorities, objective setting, a personal development plan and a SMARTS action plan to address this year's performance priorities.

1.77 The inspection team examined 50 PDRs from both police officers and police staff of different ranks and grades within the BCU. The aim of the audit is to ascertain the level of compliance with Force policy and national guidelines with regard to evidence of:

- completion of a PDR within the last year – this was found in all **50** of the files;
- links to business priorities through 'SMARTS' objectives – this was found in **19** files;
- the gathering of evidence by individuals and line managers throughout the last year – this was found in **12** files.

1.78 It was pleasing to note that all the PDRs examined were current. However, the inspection team was somewhat concerned to note that in only a small proportion of PDRs

there was evidenced assessment of performance. There was also limited evidence that PDRs contained meaningful ‘SMARTS’ objective settings.

1.79 It is recognised that an electronic system for recording and maintaining PDRs had only recently been introduced and has replaced the previous paper records. Many staff are still not familiar with its use, and training support to enhance the introduction of the new system has been limited. The effective use of PDR is critical in providing a focus for staff and promoting effective learning and development and improvement is required in this area.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the SMT introduces a more rigorous approach to ensure ‘SMARTS’ action planning for individual PDR objectives to effectively focus activity in achieving BCU priorities and associated performance targets.

Grievance Procedure

1.80 In the main, staff understood the purpose of the grievance procedure and most knew where to access further information. A small number of respondents expressed reservations about using the grievance procedure as a means to resolve their concerns but this appeared to stem from uncertainty about the process. There was very little awareness of the first contact scheme. The BCU has recently taken steps to recruit a first contact officer however, this had been delayed due to the establishment of a corporate diversity team that will lead on such matters. **In the meantime the SMT may wish to consider an approach to reinforce and raise awareness of the grievance procedure and the existence of the first contact scheme.**

Special Constabulary and PCSOs

1.81 There are 18 special constables in the BCU. There are a further ten special constables in the recruitment process. The special constables seen by the inspection team were positive, enthusiastic and felt fully integrated with their regular colleagues. Their work was closely aligned to the community action teams and the special constables clearly saw themselves as part of the ‘extended police family’. They considered that they had the respect of most of the staff, and that the training they received at a local level was good, but somewhat limited in scope and frequency. In particular, though they were invited, it was not clear that members of the Special Constabulary were often able to attend the regular divisional training days as these events usually conflicted with their other work commitments.

1.82 Currently, Special Constabulary officers do not have access to all the Force information systems. This was a cause of some frustration and consequently, the officers

were required to rely on their regular colleagues for assistance in some administration and recording tasks.

1.83 The appointment of a Special Constabulary headquarters co-ordinator is welcomed and has significantly increased recruiting of special constables to the Force. It is also anticipated that this appointment will assist in the retention of special constables.

1.84 Concerns were raised that Special Constabulary officers do not have access to tailored body armour. Officers coming on duty share equipment from a number of armour sets kept for general use by all the special constables. Different styles of armour are available for male and female officers. However, experience elsewhere indicates that the wearing of ill-fitting body armour has potentially harmful effects. The current arrangements do not necessarily ensure that individual Special Constabulary officers have access to appropriately fitted armour and should therefore be reviewed. (See also paragraph 1.66.)

1.85 There are three police community support officers (PCSOs) in the BCU. PCSOs are clearly well integrated with the CAT teams. The inspection team saw that the PCSOs have made a significant impact in the communities, in particular, their engagement with projects including shop and pub watch schemes at Knutsford and the Bollington initiative. It was very pleasing to note that the PCSOs were highly regarded by their colleagues for their commitment, enthusiasm and effectiveness.

Domestic Violence

1.86 All officers knew of the requirement for positive action in response to domestic violence reports. Most officers knew of the requirement to investigate at scenes in order to enhance evidential opportunities and more effectively support prosecution. It was pleasing to note that cameras were consistently available and used where appropriate by officers to record evidence of injuries.

1.87 It was not clear however that the application of these techniques and approaches to develop evidence was being systematically measured. **HMIC suggests that the SMT develops systems to ensure that a standard qualitative approach to evidence collection at domestic violence incidents is monitored.**

Part Two - Performance

Performance Management

2.1 The inspection team did not undertake a crime audit during this Inspection.

2.2 Headquarters manage the performance data collection system for the Force and produce a performance bulletin on a monthly basis, detailing performance against targets to BCU level. The BCU also collates its own weekly data (collected by a research officer) and disseminates this through briefings, the intranet and notice board displays.

Accountability Mechanisms

2.3 The ACC (territorial policing) chairs a monthly performance management meeting at which information is presented and discussed. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure BCU commanders and departmental heads are held to account. It is also an opportunity to share good practice.

2.4 The performance review department has liaison officers for each BCU and through a process of BCU visits before the performance management meeting, the quality and accuracy of data provided by BCUs is checked. The performance review department also undertakes thematic, performance and formal reviews of BCUs at the direction of chief officers.

2.5 All BCUs are also subject to a six monthly visit and review of their business plan by the assistant chief constable (territorial policing). The BCU Commander has his PDR undertaken by the assistant chief constable (territorial policing).

2.6 Specific crime, criminal justice performance and good practice issues are also addressed at fortnightly meetings with the BCU crime managers. This meeting is chaired by the assistant chief constable (territorial policing) and also attended by the heads of administration of justice and crime policy. These meetings have not occurred as regularly in recent weeks due to other 'Taking Control' commitments.

2.7 The BCU Commander is also a member of the Force chief officer group, which meets monthly and attends a Chief Constable's conference, which is held every six weeks.

2.8 Performance is reviewed by the BCU at strategic and tactical tasking and co-ordination group meetings and is an issue at daily tasking meetings. Performance is also a standing agenda item at weekly command team meetings.

Performance

2.9 Macclesfield BCU is grouped with 14 other most similar BCUs.

2.10 Crime performance for the period April to December 2004, compared to April to December 2003 and the most similar BCU family is summarised in the following table:

**Figure 3: Crime Performance
April to December 2004 compared to April to December 2003
Macclesfield BCU and the MSBCU group**

| | April to December 2004 | % Change from same period the previous year | MSBCU group Average | MSBCU group Mean |
|--|------------------------|---|---------------------|------------------|
| Recorded crime per 1,000 population | 58.80 | -9.57% | 9th | 58.31 |
| % Recorded crime detected | 23.59% | -2.26 p.p. | 6th | 23.45% |
| Domestic burglaries per 1,000 households | 9.28 | -23.44% | 15th | 5.74 |
| % Domestic burglaries detected | 17.47% | 0.66 p.p. | 7th | 18.1% |
| Recorded robberies per 1,000 population | 0.53 | 36.21% | 14th | 0.29 |
| % Robberies detected | 12.66% | -18.38 p.p. | 12th | 25.43% |
| Recorded vehicle crime per 1,000 population | 7.96 | -28.15% | 13th | 6.7 |
| % Vehicle crime detected | 10.44% | 3.48 p.p. | 7th | 9.3 |
| Recorded violent crime per 1,000 population | 9.77 | 9.96% | 5th | 12.31 |
| % Violent crime detected | 53.71% | -15.00 p.p. | 4th | 44.0% |

Note: This data is not validated and therefore is only provisional

2.11 Macclesfield BCU has experienced a 9.57% decrease in total crime over the latest nine month period (April to December 2004) compared with the same period last year (April to December 2003). The BCU has also maintained a continual reduction in total crime levels since April 2003. This is promising performance in reducing crime and the SMT is encouraged to sustain this achievement.

2.12 The BCU area has had marked success in the reduction of domestic burglaries showing a 25% decrease over the last 12 months. This performance is good and reflects well developed Force and BCU policies for reducing these offences. However, the detection rate in respect of domestic burglaries has reduced to 17.1% for the last 12 month period. **Whilst this performance is mid-table in comparison with similar BCUs, it is an area that the SMT should monitor closely.**

2.13 Macclesfield BCU experiences low levels of robbery when compared nationally, however, the rates are in line with the other BCUs in its most similar group. Over the

latest 12 month period, there has been a 14% increase in robbery of personal property. The detection rates for robbery show deteriorating performance and this is an area of concern. **It is therefore suggested that the SMT explore and evaluate the effectiveness of the current approach to reverse this trend.**

2.14 Vehicle crime within the Macclesfield BCU is showing a 28% reduction over the year to date comparison. The vehicle crime detection rates have improved but are still below the Force and BCU most similar group averages. Nevertheless the reduction in offences is marked and demonstrates good performance.

2.15 The BCU has seen a 14% increase in violent crime over the 12 month comparison. The main increases are in the area of common assaults and harassment. This rise started following a concerted drive by the BCU to meet national crime recording standards (NCRS) and changed recording practices are likely to have contributed to the increase in recording in these areas of relatively less serious violence. Nevertheless the detection rate in this area is deteriorating and the SMT needs to address this decline.

2.16 The BCU has experienced reducing performance in the detection rate for sexual offences. For 2003 Macclesfield had a detection rate of 59.7%, which was substantially higher than both the most similar BCU and force groups. This decreased to 26% for 2004. This trend, if continued, would represent an area of concern and requires focused analysis to determine and address the issues affecting performance.

2.17 Overall, the BCU is showing improvements in reducing offences but is showing decreases in the detection rates and sanctioned detection rates. Robbery and violent crime are the main causes of concern and the SMT is urged to focus BCU activity to improve methods and drive improvements in detections in these areas.

Proactive Capability

2.18 Dedicated BCU roads policing officers and crime car personnel complement the front line policing capacity for Macclesfield BCU. There have been several proactive policing initiatives undertaken by these officers, which are worthy of mention as good practice.

2.19 Operation Madras is an initiative implemented by the Macclesfield roads policing unit two years ago. The purpose is to support the Force roads policing strategy and provide a high visibility presence on the division's target roads in an effort to reduce the fatal and injury collisions and to deny the travelling criminals the use of the roads. In addition, it combines enforcement, education and use of the division's own partnership funded automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) unit.

2.20 The high visibility is achieved by using the shift overlap period between 12 noon and 5.00 pm. The enforcement is targeted at those offences that contribute to fatal and injury collisions such as speed, seat belts, mobile phone use, drink/drug driving and construction and use offences. Each of these operations is co-ordinated with the Department for Transport's 'Think!' campaign.

2.21 Education of the motorist plays a major part and is achieved by using a wide range of measures. They include using the local and regional media, issuing leaflets to motorists, and distributing leaflets and posters in prominent places. The target roads on which the operation is focused are selected by continual analysis of collision statistics and intelligence. Whilst the operation centres on weekdays, it is flexible to allow for identified collision or crime trends to be addressed.

2.22 Operation Magpie is targeted directly at the A537 Macclesfield to Buxton Road. This road has suffered a high number of deaths and serious injuries, predominantly as a result of the high number of motorcyclists using the road. The road has attracted a degree of notoriety, being one of the ‘most dangerous’ roads in Britain and is unfortunately, described by the motorcycle press as the ‘the place to test your machine and ability’. Operation Magpie aims to provide a dedicated, visible presence on the road at the times that were identified by statistical analysis as being the most vulnerable. These times tended to be evening and weekend periods, especially the Easter, May and summer Bank Holidays. Additional funding was obtained from Cheshire County Council road safety department.

2.23 Education has remained an important part of the strategy with meetings with local residents and leaflet and poster campaigns that include the co-operation of the Cat and Fiddle public house, situated at the highest point on the road. In particular the media, including the motorcycle press, have been used to educate and alert users to the police operation. With the co-operation of outside agencies such as the Cheshire safety camera partnership, VOSA and local highways authority, many improvements in road surface and signage have been implemented and importantly, the introduction of a 50mph speed limit on the road, at police request.

2.24 Over the last three years since the inception of Magpie, the collision statistics show a noticeable and real decline, which is testament to the many efforts by all the agencies to improve road safety. Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary commends this achievement.

Figure 4: Road Traffic Collisions

| RTCs A537 | Fatal | Serious | Total |
|------------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|
| 1999 | 1 | 14 | 15 |
| 2000 | 2 | 8 | 10 |
| 2001 | 1 | 7 | 8 |
| 2002 | 0 | 8 | 8 |
| 2003 | 0 | 5 | 5 |
| 2004 | 1 | 4 | 5 |

2.25 Community Speedwatch is a scheme where volunteer local residents are used in areas where concerns exist regarding the speed of motorists. With appropriate training and equipment they record those vehicles exceeding the speed limits. No prosecutions are brought, however offending drivers are sent advisory letters and repeat offenders are

subject to targeting by police. The scheme is also used as part of a wider strategy for the community action teams in Macclesfield BCU. The results are mixed with some areas showing a 50% decline in the number of vehicles identified as speeding, others however, have remained constant. What is evident from the feedback of those local residents in the areas is the reassuring effect on the community through the empowerment of volunteers to be proactive in relation to their social speeding concerns.

2.26 The inspection team was particularly impressed with the enthusiasm, professionalism and passion displayed by members of the roads policing unit. Their dedication to reducing fatal and serious collisions was evident and their effectiveness demonstrated in historic and current performance data. **The implementation of the ‘Taking Control’ programme is expected to include changes in the delivery of roads policing but in the meantime it is suggested that the SMT evaluate the methods and approach within this unit to ensure the current positive levels of performance can be carried forward.**

2.27 The BCU has a small drugs team, which has only two officers and forms part of the BCU’s proactive team. It is questionable whether or not this small team alone can effectively tackle drugs issues across the BCU. However, the team has also been involved in Force-wide operations.

2.28 December 2004 saw the culmination of almost 12 months’ work by members of the Macclesfield BCU and central drugs unit. Branded under the corporate name for drugs operations, Operation ‘Cleansweep’ involved over 200 police officers who simultaneously executed 18 search warrants in Macclesfield, Wilmslow and Handforth, which resulted in the arrest of 17 people and recovery of weapons and several thousands of pounds worth of controlled drugs. The operation was considered a success. Some of the arrests mean that a major drug network in the area has been dismantled. It is anticipated this operation will have a significant impact on drug dealing and drug related crime across the BCU.

2.29 All those arrested were allowed access to a drug referral scheme and high visibility patrols in the areas where the warrants were executed continued for the next 48 hours to reassure the public. The feedback from this was very positive.

2.30 Macclesfield BCU has been understaffed in terms of qualified detectives for in excess of 18 months. This has had a serious impact on the BCU’s proactive capability. The situation has been brought about by various factors, including absences for major incidents, long-term sickness and long-term suspensions. Through the ‘Taking Control Programme’, it has been recognised that there is a general shortage of qualified detectives throughout the Force and the forthcoming restructure will address these issues.

2.31 Within Macclesfield BCU there is a system of crime recording and allocation of crimes, which is managed within the Force ‘Omega’ crime system. General practice is for the ‘day’ sergeant to monitor crime allocation and follow up investigation for all crimes recorded on the system. This means that sergeants may allocate work to

constables who are not necessarily on their teams and oversight of individual investigations resides mainly within the crime management unit. It is not clear therefore that supervisors have a picture of individuals' workloads, availability and capability to undertake the allocated tasks.

2.32 HMIC would urge the SMT to review this crime recording and action allocation system. It would encourage that sergeants should manage investigations by their own staff to improve ownership and quality.

2.33 The BCU has a crime screening policy, which ensures that resources are only allocated to those crimes, which are more likely to result in prosecution. Whilst it is appropriate that resources are focused on those crimes with the greatest likelihood of detection, the BCU may be reducing opportunities to increase sanction detection rates for some other types of offence, for example frauds, which may have been screened out in the initial stages. The SMT may therefore wish to consider periodic reviews of 'screened out' offences to ensure that all reasonable steps have been taken to pursue offences capable of detection.

National Intelligence Model

2.34 The BCU intelligence unit came into being in April 2003. The inspection team recognise the speed at which the NIM has been developed in Cheshire Constabulary and in Macclesfield BCU over the last 20 months and as such can explain some of the gaps that still exist in its implementation stages.

2.35 The NIM has not yet been fully embedded within the organisation. As detailed earlier, although the BCU control strategy has been published and is fairly well known, it is still not clear to some members of staff whether or not the Force control strategy had in fact been published. The support offered by the Force intelligence bureau to the BCU was reported as excellent, but it was also felt, by some respondents, that the corporate level approach to NIM needs further development.

2.36 The BCU intelligence unit has, since its inception, been staffed with one researcher and two analysts (1.5 full-time equivalent posts). The researcher is responsible for not only researching intelligence data, but also for the production of organisational intelligence in the form of performance management data. However this researcher has now been seconded to the headquarter's performance review department to enable him to roll out these methods across the Constabulary which has left the BCU without a researcher for the moment. It was acknowledged that the 'Taking Control' programme includes changes that will remodel intelligence units and this work was in progress at the time of Inspection.

2.37 Her Majesty's Inspector was pleased to note that at the time of the Inspection there were no outstanding intelligence reports in the intelligence unit and 100% of intelligence reports had been processed.

2.38 A computerised profile management system known as PROMS has been introduced into the BCU. The PROMS database allows supervisors to monitor and manage ongoing problem profiles, which are discussed at the tasking and co-ordinating group. At the time of the Inspection, the six ‘live’ problem profiles related to five crime related issues and a corporate speeding initiative. There was very little on the historic database linked to quality of life issues, since the system was heavily oriented toward crime.

2.39 Inspectors manage individual ‘PROMS’ and the SMT receive reports through the tasking and co-ordinating meeting. It appeared also that profiles can be removed once the problem has stopped occurring but not necessarily following objective evaluation. This use of the PROMS system therefore appears to have developed without detailed or consistent evaluation by intelligence analysts, which might provide a useful perspective. This is an area of concern and it was not clear that the PROMS system is effective in fully encompassing the approach to problem profiles and evaluation set out within the NIM.

2.40 The inspection team was further concerned that, despite anti-social behaviour featuring as a key element in the BCU control strategy and despite quality of life issues being raised as problem nominations, insufficient weight was given to dealing with quality of life and anti-social behaviour issues within the NIM process. As such, there was a poor understanding of the tactical options, in particular partnership initiatives that could be deployed. Despite this the CATs teams are fully engaged with partners and actively tackling anti-social behaviour in an enthusiastic and innovative manner. They do not however, perceive that this activity is influenced by the NIM.

2.41 It is not clear that the NIM is actually driving activity in the BCU, particularly in relation to non-crime priorities. The PROMS system, though potentially useful to record and manage current initiatives is not supporting a sufficiently detailed profiling of BCU activity and results. In the professional view of Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary these areas require attention by the BCU in conjunction with the relevant headquarters departments to improve delivery in line with the NIM.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the BCU broadens the use of the National Intelligence Model to incorporate quality of life issues, as well as crime matters. The BCU is encouraged to objectively evaluate results in order to direct future policing activity.

2.42 Tasking and co-ordination meetings are held fortnightly and chaired by the BCU Commander. The tasking and co-ordination meeting is attended by the analysts, various members of the intelligence unit, the intelligence manager and crime manager. Other

attendees included personnel from local authority, roads policing sergeant, CATs team members, CID staff and SMT members. The BCU resource manager does not attend the meeting however.

2.43 The analysis presented was adequate but lacked a focus on driving the mainstream activities of BCU staff. Some of the recommendations were not prescriptive and consequently the tasking, other than some short-term tasks including the arrest of wanted suspects, was somewhat vague. These tasks, where raised, are entered on a tasking database, which is separate from the PROMS system. However there was clear evidence during the Inspection that these tasks are not effectively monitored or evaluated and it was not clear that the impact of policing activity could be assessed.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the approach to tasking is reviewed by the SMT and that the tasking and co-ordinating meeting is re-configured to ensure:

- **Problem/target profiles are highlighted;**
- **tactical options are identified;**
- **specific tasks are appropriately allocated;**
- **policing activity is monitored; and**
- **problem/target profiles are routinely updated to evidence the impact of policing activity.**

2.44 In addition to the tasking and co-ordination meeting there is a daily meeting chaired by a member of the BCU command team, usually the Divisional Commander.

2.45 The inspection team welcomes the introduction of a dedicated source handler in the BCU. However, it would suggest that CHIS tasking is encouraged to address intelligence relating to other areas of the control strategy, as well as for tackling Class A drugs.

Briefing

2.46 Briefing and tasking patrol staff effectively, prior to their tour of duty, is crucial in respect of addressing key crime and disorder hot spots and prolific criminals within a policing area. Officers should be thoroughly briefed and then tasked to enable them to utilise any free time during their tour of duty proactively and productively.

2.47 Good practice, in relation to the environment in which officers brief, suggests that access should be controlled during briefings so that officers have the opportunity to concentrate on the information being presented to them without interference or interruption.

2.48 Macclesfield BCU uses the Force intranet based 'IBrief' system. This is an appropriate and effective means for conducting regular briefings. However, the quality of the briefing is dependent on content.

2.49 The inspection team observed one patrol briefing during the Inspection and examined IBrief products for other days. Too often the product was a list of the previous day's incidents, which was considered dated and lacking in quality intelligence.

2.50 The briefing environment was adequately equipped, with appropriate use of information technology. However, it was not helpful that whilst the briefing was taking place, the room was also being used as a writing room, with people present who were not engaged in the briefing. The inspection team however, acknowledge the limited space at Macclesfield police station due to the ongoing building work.

2.51 Some officers felt that the briefings tended not to reflect very local issues relevant to their particular area. It was felt that many of the issues were to an extent BCU-wide. An improved focus on specific local issues, perhaps presented by a CAT team officer, would be useful and informative.

2.52 The briefing system is supported by information that is passed to operational officers from the intelligence unit, this uses the Force intranet and the Force has recognised that this is not sufficiently sophisticated and an improved intranet based briefing system is being developed.

2.53 The inspection team was surprised that a supervisor did not deliver the briefing, but instead a nominated constable delivered it. It appeared that this is a regular practice but it was not clear that all those who undertake the role have received appropriate training or that they could be expected to impart the same leadership or direction as an experienced supervisor. Whilst it is not always possible to ensure a sergeant conducts all briefings and debriefings, especially across the several BCU stations, the SMT may wish to consider training for all those expected to perform this function.

DNA Sampling and Forensic Management

2.54 DNA samples must be taken from all detainees who are charged with a recordable offence, unless DNA has been previously taken and confirmed on the Police National Computer (PNC) database. It is essential that samples be taken where appropriate to ensure that the opportunities to gather intelligence and detect offences are maximised.

2.55 In addition, samples should not be taken where DNA has previously been confirmed since this will incur unnecessary expenditure for the Force.

2.56 The inspection team carried out checks to confirm there was a system in place for the BCU to monitor DNA sampling. It was not clear that systems ensure that the DNA sample is obtained when it is required nor prevent the unnecessary taking of samples where one is not required.

2.57 The inspection team examined the records relating to those prisoners who were currently on 47/3 bail. They found that there were 80 cases currently on file where a suspect has either not answered bail or has absconded from bail. Some of these records go as far back as September 2004. There was an acknowledgement by the SMT that this system was in need of review and that a weeding procedure was already underway. It is anticipated that custody facilities will soon be moved to Middlewich in the 'Taking Control' programme. This will present an ideal opportunity for review of such systems.

2.58 At present there is no ownership of the management of 47/3 bail cases. It may be more appropriate for individual supervisors to monitor their own staff and ensure that there is an effective management policy of 47/3 bail cases and subsequent notification to custody office.

2.59 Several issues were raised from a variety of sources, about the current charging regime involving the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) at Wilmslow. Whilst professional relationships were, in the main, satisfactory, it was made clear that many prisoners are being bailed rather than charged with substantive offences, because of the requirement for full transcripts and key statements prior to the submission of any file. Many expressed frustration with regard to the lack of opportunity for informal consultation with CPS. There is no doubt that this could well be impacting on the level of available sanction detections.

Summary

2.60 Macclesfield is an effectively led and well managed BCU. The SMT is viewed as conscientious and highly visible. The approachability of the management team is universally recognised. Much of the contact with the SMT is of an informal nature. The introduction of a regular formal inspectors' meeting, chaired by a member of the SMT, can only further enhance this effective leadership.

2.61 A performance management culture is well embedded amongst members of the SMT. However, this culture does not necessarily cascade to members of the inspecting ranks and indeed is almost non-existent amongst members of the sergeant and constable ranks. There is a need to further enhance the understanding of performance priorities and the link to individual performance. This will be achieved by the introduction of a more rigorous approach to SMARTS action planning for individual PDR objectives.

2.62 The Macclesfield community safety partnership has recently reviewed its structures and delivery mechanisms. This is a welcome improvement, which is well received by all the partners. Once fully implemented, this partnership review will reinforce the existing effective community based policing delivered by the CAT teams.

Community initiatives are well evident in the BCU and positively viewed by partners and the public alike. These promising initiatives would benefit from effective monitoring and subsequent evaluation prior to being repeated or rolled out across the BCU.

2.63 Macclesfield BCU has faced some significant funding challenges over the last two years, resulting in budgetary overspend, particularly under the budget head of 'overtime'. The SMT has developed and introduced a comprehensive financial action plan to rectify this situation. The SMT should continue to monitor and rigorously control the BCU budget.

2.64 There is still considerable work required to embed the working of the NIM into the policing business of the BCU. In particular, the BCU's tasking and co-ordinating processes should be reviewed to ensure they adhere to the principles of the NIM as per the outlined recommendations. The BCU is showing improvements in reducing offences in particular dwelling burglaries and vehicle crime. However, further work needs to be undertaken to improve sanction detection rates in order to improve its rating in its MSBCU group.

2.65 Overall the BCU Commander and his team should be complimented for what has been achieved to date, particularly in the context of the 'Taking Control' programme. Albeit there is still much work to be done in certain areas, the BCU command team has the operational capability and credibility to move the BCU forward.

Recommendations

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary makes three recommendations:

1. That the SMT introduces a more rigorous approach to ensure 'SMARTS' action planning for individual PDR objectives to effectively focus activity in achieving BCU priorities and associated performance targets.

[Para 1.79 refers]

2. That the BCU broadens the use of the National Intelligence Model to incorporate quality of life issues, as well as crime matters. The BCU is encouraged to objectively evaluate results in order to direct future policing activity.

[Para 2.41 refers]

3. That the approach to tasking is reviewed by the SMT and that the tasking and co-ordinating meeting is re-configured to ensure: problem/target profiles are highlighted; tactical options are identified; specific tasks are appropriately allocated; policing activity is monitored; and problem/target profiles are routinely updated to evidence the impact of policing activity.

[Para 2.43 refers]