



**HMIC Inspection Report
Cheshire Constabulary**

October 2007



Cheshire Constabulary – HMIC Inspection Report

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Introduction to HMIC Inspections

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

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

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

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

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

Programmed frameworks

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

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

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

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

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

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

Risk-based frameworks

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

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

While these activities will not be subject to routine inspection, evidence of a significant decline in performance would prompt consideration of inspection. For 150 years, HMIC has maintained an ongoing relationship with every force. This allows it to identify and support forces when specific issues of concern arise. On a more formal basis, HMIC participates in the Home Office Police Performance Steering Group and Joint Performance Review Group, which have a role in monitoring and supporting police performance in crime reduction, crime investigation and public confidence. HMIC conducts inspections of basic command units (BCUs), also on a risk-assessed basis, using the Going Local 3 methodology. Combining these various strands of inspection evidence allows HMIC to form a comprehensive picture of both individual force performance and the wider national picture.

The grading process

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

Excellent

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

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

Good

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

Fair

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

Poor

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

Developing practice

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

Future HMIC inspection activity

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

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

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

Force Overview and Context

Geographical description of force area

Cheshire Constabulary is responsible for policing the county of Cheshire, which includes the unitary authorities of Halton (comprising Widnes and Runcorn) and Warrington. Formed in 1857, the Constabulary now polices an area covering 946 square miles. The Constabulary is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year.

The force area is diverse in character, from the Pennines in the east through the agricultural planes to the Dee Estuary in South Wirral. To the west lies the county town of Chester, formerly a roman citadel, which attracts a significant tourism trade. In the north are the industrial towns of Ellesmere Port, Widnes, Runcorn and Warrington. Warrington is undergoing a significant redevelopment programme, attracting major new housing developments and an associated increase in its night-time economy.

Cheshire Constabulary is responsible for policing a significant sector of the nation's motorway network, including the M62, M6 and M56. Within the force area there are 28 top-tier COMAH (Control of Major Accident Hazard) sites, which is the second highest concentration in the country.

Demographic profile of force area¹

Cheshire Constabulary services a resident population in excess of 1 million people. Because of the major road and motorway networks providing essential arterial routes between the two large cities of Manchester and Liverpool, the transient population is invariably much larger.

Within the resident population, 48.7% are male and 51.3% female; 1.71% of the resident population are black and minority ethnic, with the largest groups Chinese, Indian, and white and black Caribbean. Cheshire also has a significant resident and transient Gypsy and Traveller population, with which it shares strong historical links, and a rapidly developing Polish community.

Strategic priorities

The force has defined its ambition to 'achieve excellence in policing', as reflected in:

- the confidence and respect of the community;
- the reputation of the force within the community;
- meeting customer expectations;
- building strong and confident communities; and
- disrupting, detecting and denying criminality.

This will be achieved through a focus on public safety (policing operations); knowing what works and why (processes and use of information); and unlocking potential and talent (people).

The Chief Constable has outlined three key priorities for the year ahead:

¹ Based on Office for National Statistics estimate for 2004 and 2001 census data.

- to reduce crime;
- to reduce anti-social behaviour; and
- to improve quality of service.

The force has also determined a series of complementary strategic aims that provide the overall strategic direction for activity. The 2006–09 strategic aims are as follows:

- Strategic Aim 1 – Reducing crime: To reduce crime and disorder through prevention and detection in partnership with local authorities, other agencies and the public.
- Strategic Aim 2 – Investigating crime: To investigate reports of crime appropriately, concentrating efforts on crimes that offer the greatest potential for detection; to improve the use of multi-agency intelligence and information sharing; and, in partnership with other criminal justice agencies, to ensure that the victim's needs are met and that opportunities for offences to be brought to justice are maximised.
- Strategic Aim 3 – Promoting public safety: In partnership with other agencies, to provide services that improve and promote public safety and reassurance, particularly relating to crime, disorder and road use.
- Strategic Aim 4 – Providing assistance: To provide improved, timely, professional and appropriate assistance to all calls for service, concentrating efforts on those circumstances where skills will be most effectively used and the greatest contribution can be made.
- Strategic Aim 5 – Public focus: To provide and develop police services that meet the needs of the public and enhance trust and confidence among the diverse communities of Cheshire.
- Strategic Aim 6 – Resource use: To provide an efficient and effective service, ensuring that people, technology, facilities and finance contribute to the delivery of policing services.

Force developments since 2006

Since the last report, the force has gone live with a new crime and intelligence recording system (Atlas – RMS Niche). This is underpinned by a data warehouse, from which intelligence and performance products can be extracted. The warehouse, over time, will be expanded to incorporate a wide range of data from corporate systems.

At the time of the last report, headquarters (HQ) operational units were operating as independent teams, within an operations directorate framework. Since January 2007, the uniform operations units – previously firearms support (including armed response vehicles), dog unit, automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) unit and area support group – have merged into a multi-skilled taskforce called Vector. This will enable a more effective and efficient level of support to be provided to areas and for level 2 crime.

In addition to the developments on the uniform side of the directorate, the central drugs unit and organised crime unit have joined together to improve capability as the force crime operations unit. Also, there has been considerable investment in increasing the force's level 2 intelligence and covert operations capability.

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In addition to these developments within the force operations directorate, a dedicated team has been developing collaborative opportunities with neighbouring forces to deliver enhanced protective services. Current projects include:

- regional strategic roads policing capability (with the Highways Agency);
- a regional level 2 crime taskforce (with North Wales Police); and
- shared services with North Wales Police, including:
 - air support;
 - scientific support;
 - firearms operations and training; and
 - dog support.

The joint activities are intended to deliver enhanced capacity and capability, the objective being to deliver more from the same resource.

The force has been selected as one of the workforce modernisation demonstration sites and is managing this workstream through its change programme. The force has achieved its recruitment target to employ 237 police community support officers(PCSOs), 54% of whom are jointly funded with partners.

The force has also recently commissioned Serco, KPMG and Value Adding to review some of its operational and back office processes; the outputs are helping to drive more effective and efficient working practices.

The force is already lean by police sector standards and operates on a challenging budget (the second lowest council tax precept in England and Wales). The process review and collaborative enterprises are intended to maximise the effectiveness of existing resources in order to enhance the service provided to the communities of Cheshire, Halton and Warrington.

In the HMIC baseline assessment undertaken in 2006, Cheshire Constabulary was assessed as Fair and Declined in the area of strategic roads policing. Since that time, the force has continued to make steady progress within this framework, embedding change, investing in training and maintaining a central overview. Focus is correctly being applied to the increased and 'smarter' use of ANPR technology, and collaborative approaches with regional forces/partners in policing the strategic roads network are being explored. On this basis the force has now been assessed as Fair and Stable.

Findings

National summary of judgements

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

Force summary of judgements

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

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Neighbourhood Policing

GRADE	FAIR
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National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
6	14	21	2

National contextual factors

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

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

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

Contextual factors

Neighbourhood Policing in Cheshire Constabulary was graded as Good and Stable by HMIC in the 2005/06 baseline assessment. There is strong leadership at both force and BCU level and a philosophy of Neighbourhood Policing is visible through its culture and style. The police authority has strong support for the Neighbourhood Policing ethos and has restructured some of its work around reassurance and cohesion.

In April 2005 the constabulary implemented major changes, which resulted in the restructuring of many aspects of the organisation. At the core of this Taking Control programme was the desire to establish systems and processes that managed existing demand while creating the capacity to deliver citizen-focused Neighbourhood Policing.

The constabulary is made up of 18 Neighbourhood Policing units (NPUs) whose responsibilities fall into five categories: dealing with incidents of crime and disorder that do not require an emergency response; the reduction of crime and disorder; partnership working; interaction with local people and organisations; and intelligence gathering to target local offenders and problem areas.

Each NPU is led by an inspector and includes community action team (CAT) officers, PCSOs and investigation teams. The NPUs work closely with partner agencies and citizens

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to develop community cohesion, provide reassurance, reduce crime and address the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

The constabulary now has 237 PCSOs in place, with some 80% of the last phase funded by partners; this includes an appropriate service level agreement. The remainder have been deployed using the Jill Dando Institute's Vulnerability Localities Index (VLI), anti-social behaviour levels and other indicators to place them in areas where they can have the greatest impact.

Recent internal work has been designed to articulate more clearly the constabulary's philosophy of Neighbourhood Policing and there is ongoing work to improve the existing reassurance performance framework. The safer and stronger communities unit (SSCU) has been created to drive the embedding of corporate and cultural change.

The British Crime Survey (BCS) has indicated that the percentage of people who think that the force does a good job has increased and is in line with the most similar force (MSF) average. Perceptions of anti-social behaviour have, however, declined over the period 2005/06 to 2006/07, resulting in a figure below the MSF average. The force is just below the MSF average for both understanding local issues and actions to deal with those issues, although improvements have been made since 2005/06 in the latter category. The percentage of people who agree that the police in their area can be relied upon to deal with minor crimes was stable year on year but below the MSF average.

Strengths

Neighbourhood Policing is a philosophy and style that runs through the constabulary. This policing style is communicated via the annual report, the policing plan and the strategic plan, and through the work of individual police officers and PCSOs when dealing directly with the community. It has remained at the heart of policing within Cheshire over the last year. A further £250,000 funding has been secured to further enhance Neighbourhood Policing over the next three years.

The assistant chief constable (ACC) (territorial policing and partnerships) chairs monthly board meetings of the reassurance (change management) programme, which has been implemented within the constabulary to deliver business change and improvement across a range of 'reassurance' activities, including Neighbourhood Policing. The SSCU within the constabulary HQ develops corporate policy and practice with regard to Neighbourhood Policing, partnership working and problem solving, and has been the leading driver of the constabulary's bid to become a national pilot site for Neighbourhood Policing workforce modernisation.

Since April 2005, Cheshire Constabulary has made progress in embedding its standard operating procedures (SOPs) in 18 NPUs across its three BCUs. Each NPU is led by an inspector, includes CAT officers, PCSOs and investigation teams, and works closely with partner agencies and citizens to develop community cohesion, provide reassurance, reduce crime and address the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour.

The police authority strongly supports the Neighbourhood Policing ethos and has restructured some of its work around reassurance and cohesion.

The constabulary clearly recognises the role of NPUs, as evidenced through an annual award to the most outstanding community officer. A force Safer and Stronger Neighbourhoods award was introduced in March 2007 using the criteria and methodology of the national Tilley (problem-solving) awards. The force award was timed as a precursor to the Tilley award process, allowing the winning entry to become the constabulary entry for the Tilley awards. The internal *Catalyst* newspaper celebrates the work of officers and staff

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by regularly publicising good work such as an award to three members of staff by Nantwich Borough Council for exemplary community policing. Special priority payments are made to NPU officers with more than five years' service and to NPU inspectors on a variable basis depending on the size of their respective NPU.

The constabulary has adopted an effective external and internal communication strategy specific to Neighbourhood Policing, which is owned by the corporate communications department as part of core business. The communication strategy includes the need to provide feedback to the community; this is undertaken through community and partnership meetings and leaflets, in ways that are appropriate to community needs.

A range of communication opportunities and media are being used to maintain the prominence of Neighbourhood Policing externally and to launch initiatives. This is in addition to the community action meeting (CAM) process, which focuses on obtaining public views and providing feedback on action to the community.

The constabulary uses a variety of marketing methods to identify local officers by name to the public, eg featuring NPU inspectors' photographs, names, contact details and areas of responsibility in the local press, and including information in local policing summaries, which have been distributed to 450,000 households.

Each NPU area has a web link identifying its staff, with photographs and contact details (both email and voice mail). Web pages are regularly updated and each NPU publishes a newsletter covering its work which is placed on the force website. The newsletter is also directly circulated to community members (opinion formers), and, using external funding, additional copies are printed and circulated widely within BCU communities.

The constabulary has a clear focus on improving customer service. In February 2007, the ACC (territorial policing and partnerships) and police authority members held meetings with NPU inspectors as part of a cultural web exercise. The meetings considered internal barriers in the organisation that are restricting improvements in Neighbourhood Policing and customer service.

In May 2007, officers and staff took part in an engagement programme. This was fronted by the Chief Constable via a video presentation to staff, followed by facilitated workshops in all BCUs and HQ. The focus was on delivering a better service in key areas and building excellence throughout the force. Various themes have been identified for action, including improvements in Neighbourhood Policing, customer service, investigation and HQ support. At the time of the inspection, 2,500 members of staff had undertaken the programme.

During January 2007, a training and recruitment campaign was run for PCSOs and a workshop delivered training to those in post on improving communication skills and boosting confidence.

The police authority is effectively managing the risk to PCSOs of any future loss of funding from partners and the Home Office, although it believes that money will continue to be made available year on year as PCSOs are delivering a visible reassurance and presence in support of police officers.

Within the strategic approach to improve quality of service, the force has in place a safer and stronger neighbourhoods operational group sitting beneath the reassurance programme board level. The group includes partners from crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs), neighbourhood management groups and the police authority, and there is cross-over for those not represented at this forum with the reassurance programme board itself. The group feeds back to the Cheshire safer and stronger group at strategic level.

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The Neighbourhood Policing project plan was dissolved in early 2007, with remaining work being undertaken through the force safer and stronger communities operations group. Responsibility for Neighbourhood Policing project management at BCU level is delegated to superintendents and chief inspectors. As well as a regular force meeting for NPU inspectors, one BCU holds its own NPU inspectors' forum to promote corporate standards, discuss concerns and share good practice.

The force has undertaken a self-assessment exercise in each of its BCUs to gauge the progress made in respect of the implementation of Neighbourhood Policing. An action plan will follow and will be driven at corporate level by the SSCU.

Neighbourhood Policing is fully integrated with wider quality of service activity and, to some extent, with different functions in the organisation, such as call handling.

The force has changed the call-management and deployment arrangements to include demand management units (DMUs) in BCUs to service NPUs. A revised grading policy has been adopted; responsibility for responding to grade 3 calls for service is generally held by the CAT teams, and higher grades of response are the responsibility of tactical patrol teams (TPTs).

A PCSO implementation project was established to ensure that the required number of PCSOs were recruited, trained, appropriately skilled and deployed. While it is recognised that developmental training, deployment monitoring, natural wastage replacement and general support will be necessary, the implementation project has now closed, having achieved all of its specified objectives; these functions will now be provided by the SSCU.

The force now has 237 PCSOs in place, with some 80% of the last phase funded by partners; this includes an appropriate service level agreement. The remainder have been deployed using the VLI, anti-social behaviour levels and other indicators to place them in areas where they can have the greatest impact. The SSCU's role includes identifying additional funding opportunities to increase coverage further.

The VLI-based work has provided the force with a clearer picture of the communities it serves, allowing it to identify and map emerging cultural groups such as the growing Polish community.

There is a clear rationale for allocating Neighbourhood Policing resources. Resources were originally determined and allocated in 2005 following an exercise in demand profiling against a corporate model initiated as part of the Taking Control programme. All student officers undertake an attachment of ten weeks with an NPU following their allocation to a TPT.

The force has in place a special constable deployment policy which includes volunteers, who are encouraged to contribute to various elements of local policing. More than 200 volunteers have been signed up so far. A number are currently engaged in speed watch campaigns in their local areas. Additionally, some are engaged in staffing smaller rural community stations.

There is clear evidence of continuity and succession planning for community officers and PCSOs, the responsibility for which lies with area personnel officers in BCUs.

Work in each NPU is allocated by the respective DMU to the NPU supervisors, who then task work to individuals. Reactive crime investigation is primarily allocated to the investigative team, leaving the community side to deal with problem-solving approaches to neighbourhood management. This balance is flexible; supervisors have a good overview of the ongoing work of staff and are able to link crime patterns and issues specific to an

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identified problem-solving approach.

CAMs are currently the primary community engagement mechanism at local level. As part of CAMs, participants are asked to identify priorities by voting for their top three. These then define community priorities. In some areas these meetings are developed by the police, while in others the process is piggy-backed on already established community meetings, eg neighbourhood meetings arranged by council neighbourhood managers. This minimises the burden on individual agencies and communities and maximises multi-agency collaboration. Mini-CAMs have also been developed in schools to engage with young people.

In some parts of the force, partners (including the police) undertake 'CAT walks' to identify priorities in a particular geographical area by speaking to passers-by and visiting residential and commercial premises. This identifies community issues such as lighting, the availability of taxis, environmental design and other issues which can then be addressed by partnership responses.

Street briefings have been undertaken by staff, and CAT officers hold surgeries at local levels. *Your Voice Counts* leaflets have been in use for the last five months and have been placed in shopping centres, libraries etc. The leaflets are self-sealing and have a reply address to the BCU commander. This project is ongoing but has seen limited returns. Chester University students have been engaged to research confidence and engagement.

The constabulary has a community cohesion co-ordinator who manages the gathering of local public service agreement (PSA) data on reassurance and fear of crime/anti-social behaviour issues. A significant amount of effort is expended in distributing survey forms and encouraging their return, and innovative approaches are being used such as distributing surveys among school children, faith and other groups.

The independent advisory group (IAG) is valued by the force at all levels and contributes to the formation of policies, aids understanding of situations and assists in the constabulary's engagement with hard-to-reach groups.

Effective links are being forged with the local Polish association by NPU inspectors in an effort to understand the Polish community's priorities. This is closely linked with volunteers and is part of ongoing engagement with this developing community. Effective use is made of Gypsy and Traveller liaison officers, allowing BCUs to understand priorities within this community.

The force has worked with the police authority to set up theme-based focus groups – eg on domestic abuse, the young, older people and victims of crime – to ascertain public views and policing priorities.

Every six months surveys are carried out in local neighbourhoods across the constabulary to measure community perceptions of the quality of local policing. While methodologies vary across BCUs (eg postal surveys and face-to-face interviews), collation and analysis is carried out centrally. Results are relayed to NPU inspectors and there is evidence that they are shared with the relevant communities and partners at CAMs.

Community impact assessments are well established tools used by BCUs and at force level as part of the risk assessment process and in deciding the response of the police and partner agencies to particular incidents and situations. The force profile management system (PROMS) holds details of all current and archived community impact assessments by BCU. The assessments are formally reviewed as part of the fortnightly tasking and co-ordination group (T&CG) process. They are reviewed more frequently if necessary and as particular incidents develop.

Partners are routinely involved in the creation of the six-monthly strategic assessments in

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each BCU. Other bespoke thematic strategic assessments have been commissioned with partners to identify long-term opportunities for partnership working in relation to domestic violence, alcohol-related crime involving young people, and criminal damage (currently the highest volume 'signal crime' within the force area and the biggest threat to achieving PSA 1 targets).

The CDRPs have analysts in place who have access to police and partner data. One analyst is working on the production of a second joint strategic assessment based on the measures in PSA 1 and anti-social behaviour.

There is clear evidence that CDRP and local authority representatives are part of the constabulary's strategic tasking and co-ordination meetings and are seen as adding value to the process. The CDRP maintains clear operational links to the BCU control strategy through key priority working groups on the themes of violent crime reduction, anti-social behaviour, young people, criminal damage, acquisitive crime and road safety.

The neighbourhood management concept is promoted through structured, two-way joint CDRP tasking as an integral part of the National Intelligence Model (NIM) process. Although CDRP partners have in the past attended the police T&CG meetings, they found them of limited value, with the focus being on volume crime issues. CDRPs now have fortnightly tasking meetings which are attended by a wide variety of partners (the borough council, housing associations, the fire service, youth services, Cheshire County Council, the probation service, unpaid work co-ordinators, etc). At these meetings each of the relevant NPU is represented. The constabulary provides updates on key issues and ensures a co-ordinated response with the police tasking process. The meetings focus on multi-agency issues, with single agency issues being rejected and returned to the relevant agency to progress.

Issues of organised crime and counter-terrorism are linked into Neighbourhood Policing activity through the force strategic assessment. Organised crime and terrorism within individual BCUs is managed through a combination of community policing and intelligence generated via members of the public and other human intelligence sources. There is an ongoing intelligence collection initiative aimed at increasing understanding of local communities. As this approach progresses, the counter-terrorism community intelligence unit will continue to brief police officers and staff with regard to the collection of community intelligence.

There is good evidence of data exchange across the force, although some exchanges are informal. Information-sharing protocols exist between a range of partners and are in the process of being updated to ensure compliance with Management of Police Information principles.

Media operations are co-ordinated and driven by proactive public relations officers located within BCUs. It is their role to promote activity relating to Neighbourhood Policing.

There is a clear link between quality of service and Neighbourhood Policing through strategic oversight groups such as the SSCU and performance management meetings. The force is looking to implement customer service desks and to review the work of the DMUs in BCUs.

The constabulary's new Atlas IT system immediately highlights to a call taker repeat victims and locations; this informs the call grading and allows early application of other aspects of the repeat victims policy.

Strategic priorities and arrangements for the delivery of Neighbourhood Policing are being developed as a result of influence from partners and other groups. All key strategic and tactical partners confirm that they have an input into the Neighbourhood Policing process.

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There is a history of good working relations between the force and the public/partners, with the public and partners already using joint training and funding opportunities and team-building exercises being held in some areas.

Community officers and PCSOs actively engage in multi-agency problem-solving policing and there is evidence of successful outcomes resulting from joint initiatives. An example of this is the work undertaken with the education department in support of anti-social behaviour and activity to deal with domestic violence.

Positive feedback has been provided by strategic partners such as CDRPs, multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) and the voluntary sector on their level of involvement and that of CATs (including PCSOs) in multi-agency activity. Partners are involved in police community engagement training, problem-solving training and the core leadership development programme. Student officers are involved in visits to partner agencies to increase understanding of each other's role and involvement in problem solving.

Through arrangements under the three local area agreements (LAAs) within the force area, joint partner training, learning and planning has taken place this year and has covered the development of neighbourhood management and the reduction of criminal damage. Partnership-based problem-solving training has been delivered at BCU level.

The approach to problem solving is standardised across the constabulary. Relevant partnerships are established across the county to address local priorities, support repeat victims and deal with emerging issues, eg anti-social behaviour and domestic violence, through case conferences and appropriate action.

A human resources (HR) strategy is in place, as are clear role definitions, expectations and training for members of dedicated neighbourhood teams, including PCSOs and special constables. Role definitions are understood by staff and role profiles are maintained. These are used as the basis for establishing performance expectations for any given individual and are personalised according to competencies and areas for development at the individual's annual performance review.

NPU inspectors are accountable for their teams' performance through the general performance management processes, which focus mainly on volume crime issues. There is a strong focus on sanction detections and contributory investigative outputs (eg arrests, stop/checks) in performance management across the force. CAT officers' performance assessment is linked to key crimes, including anti-social behaviour, on a particular beat.

The constabulary's performance bulletin includes some specific Neighbourhood Policing data, such as the number of CAMs, alcohol interventions and anti-social behaviour interventions.

Police authority members are allocated responsibility for different BCUs and have regular contact and oversight of performance issues. Designated police authority members also have oversight of each NPU's performance and have established relationships with NPU inspectors.

Work in progress

There has been ACPO approval for the force to be a pathfinder and demonstration site for workforce modernisation. The work will commence in the Neighbourhood Policing pathfinder site (Eastern BCU) and then be rolled out across the force in due time. It will examine the detailed modelling of structures and staffing in BCUs with a focus on TPT, CAT and investigating functions. Key stakeholders have been consulted on the proposal and are fully engaged with the governance arrangements. A steering group will progress activity and will include the police authority and staff associations.

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The ACPO lead for Neighbourhood Policing is consulting with senior commanders and NPU inspectors to consolidate and document the constabulary's style of Neighbourhood Policing which will be used to reinforce some key aspects of the Neighbourhood Policing philosophy.

The chief officer team recognises that there is a disconnection between Neighbourhood Policing and contact management in the force. While the former focuses on meeting citizens' priorities, the latter focuses on customer needs and expectations. This is creating strains on BCU resources and undermining the overall quality of service to the public. This is subject to debate at ACPO level in the force.

The force is currently reviewing deployment processes, with particular focus on grade 3 calls, in order to improve effectiveness and customer satisfaction levels. The incident management tasking group is seeking to identify the right balance between Neighbourhood Policing-based problem-solving responses to issues and incident management in general.

A mobile data pilot has recently been implemented to trial the use of hand-held IT systems to allow officers, special constables and PCSOs to complete clerical work away from the police station. The resources and corporate line management for this workstream and other related workstreams have been brought together within the SSCU to achieve greater corporate consistency and support for NPUs.

Special constables and communications staff have still to take part in the engagement programme workshops, which are being facilitated in the three BCUs and HQ and which have direct input from the Chief Constable.

Neighbourhood Policing boundaries in Cheshire are defined by ward rather than by neighbourhood or police beat and are agreed locally with communities and partners. Some BCUs have mapped potential neighbourhood areas but are struggling to harmonise local authority and policing services on a neighbourhood level on account of varying appetites and differences in service delivery structures. This is further complicated in some areas by the number of local authorities and their variable structures and approaches. In terms of practical deployment, the allocation of PCSOs is increasingly defined by neighbourhood. While some neighbourhoods have been defined, many remain to be agreed.

The network of CAMs exists to promote engagement between service providers and local communities but they are not sufficiently localised for problem-solving purposes. Although 64 CAMs have been identified, they vary in terms of approach. Many are based on the structure of local authority wards, which are geographically too large and demographically too diverse to facilitate community agreement and focus.

Pilot work has been carried out in Crewe and Nantwich through the CDRP analyst to translate the structure of 26 local authority wards into the 381 neighbourhoods defined using the VLI. The same approach has been applied across the whole of the county, with initial mapping completed and further work ongoing.

A number of analysts have been jointly funded by partners to increase analytical and research capacity in relation to Neighbourhood Policing demand and activity. The constabulary intelligence bureau (FIB) has also completed a number of research and analysis tasks in support of Neighbourhood Policing activity. It is anticipated that the community intelligence project will further refine the nature and volume of analytical and research demand, and will develop a case for a rationalisation and/or growth of resources where necessary. This will also link to the six-monthly strategic CDRP assessments.

The reassurance programme board has recognised that community intelligence is an area requiring development and that the current intelligence structures are not set up to manage huge quantities of community intelligence. A detective chief inspector is leading this

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development on behalf of the lead ACC.

Although some tactical partners are involved in drawing up the strategic assessments that determine the control strategy, the approach could be improved and strengthened. Currently they are usually only given the opportunity to comment on draft priorities. There has been discussion about harmonising planning cycles and processes to create a joined-up approach. More strategic commitment is required to address the broader, underlying issues that impact on crime and disorder.

Using the regime of the monthly constabulary performance improvement meeting (PIM), delivery gaps within the constabulary and wider partnership performance have been identified and are subject to further research and scrutiny using the force performance review team. Recent reviews have informed the ArcAngel programme (designed to engage partners more effectively in preventing and reducing alcohol-related crime) and a review of the prolific and other priority offender schemes across the force area.

A need has been identified to integrate the information collected as a result of the national 'Rich Picture' initiative with crime, intelligence and socio-demographic data (such as that being collated in the Eastern BCU VLI project) in order to provide the most accurate intelligence picture possible. This work is ongoing.

The recent review of the CAM-based community engagement process has identified the basis for a fully integrated community engagement strategy, comprising engagement delivered in tiers. The result will be a needs/risk grading of CAMs, with greater focus and resources going to the most needy areas and a gradual reduction in focus and in the number of CAMs in other parts of the force. Gaps in CAM coverage have also been identified, and scope exists to develop a themed approach to CAMs. In parts of the force a youth CAM is being developed, and a virtual reality CAM has been trialled. The SSCU will drive through these changes, assuring that partners are involved.

The constabulary uses a variety of marketing methods to identify local officers by name to the public, including using the local press and local policing summaries, which have been distributed to 450,000 households. As part of the inspection process, a telephone survey of 100 randomly selected residents in each force area was carried out, consisting of six questions about their experience and their view of how Neighbourhood Policing is being delivered. The responses to these questions were broadly in line with those seen nationally, with one exception: awareness of Neighbourhood Policing teams in respondents' areas was significantly below average. The constabulary continues with measures to assure that the continued development of Neighbourhood Policing is effectively marketed to the public of Cheshire at every opportunity.

Currently CDRP partners have established arrangements for the sharing of performance data, including basic crime statistics. Partners have access to iQuanta data. Although yet to commence, key CDRP partners will be engaged in the development of an approach to sharing performance data already used in the Greater Manchester area. Phase 1 of development includes police, ambulance, fire and rescue and street lighting. All three BCUs are involved in the Cheshire, Warrington and Halton information consortium. The intention is that partnership information will be fully integrated and disseminated to partners through a web-based system and that partners will finance information and communications technology (ICT) and relevant posts.

A series of half-day master class plus workshop has been arranged, commencing in October 2007, for all 123 officers, from the Chief Constable to chief inspectors, to highlight managers' responsibility to embed Neighbourhood Policing.

Constabulary SOPs set out BCU roles and responsibilities for NPU and TPT functions as

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part of the Taking Control programme. In practice, there is a disconnection between the two functions, particularly in the more rural parts of the force. Currently responsibility for remedial action to drive greater integration has been devolved to BCU commands. The constabulary has recognised this as an issue and work is ongoing as part of a TPT/NPU review

Although there is a common approach, the constabulary does not have an embedded problem-solving culture and steps are being taken to develop problem-solving skills. The constabulary has embraced Centrex core leadership development programme training. A programme has been developed and roll out is imminent. In the meantime, some 320 members of staff (including CAT constables and PCSOs) have been provided with problem-solving training as a stop-gap measure.

After securing £250,000 of funding for the reassurance programme over three years, there will be an investment in Neighbourhood Policing training. The constabulary will be buying into the National Police Improvement Agency (NPIA) Neighbourhood Policing modules to focus on problem solving in partnership. Additionally, this funding will secure 50 places on core leadership development programme training modules, which include six-day workbooks.

Areas for improvement

The further development of Neighbourhood Policing should continue to be a key priority for the force. Strong leadership to drive progress should be emphasised at both force and BCU level. While Neighbourhood Policing has improved over the last 12 months, there are still significant areas for development, not least the development of a performance management culture and expansion of community engagement techniques. In the main, NPUs are currently based on wards rather than locally defined neighbourhoods.

The SSCU was given responsibility for developing Neighbourhood Policing on behalf of the constabulary just prior to the start of the inspection. Currently there is no formal development plan in place for further delivery of progress; instead the force is using documented areas for improvement and other indicators to identify key areas on which to focus. There are ten strands of work identified that remain to be undertaken from the previous Neighbourhood Policing project team; however, there is no systematic and documented approach to making progress.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The constabulary should create a formal development plan with deliverables and key milestones to progress Neighbourhood Policing in a structured manner. The plan should include implementing an appropriate community intelligence infrastructure with associated systems and the development of community engagement methods such as key individual networks and community action meetings.

The constabulary should introduce formal BCU implementation teams for Neighbourhood Policing in order to take forward outstanding issues and development at a local level in line with the corporate framework. The team should meet on a regular basis and be chaired by a member of the senior management team in order to drive progress on implementation. Consideration should be given to the chair being the BCU's representative at the safer and stronger communities operational group meeting, which reports to the reassurance programme board and which has corporate responsibility for driving progress.

The SSCU should identify and task appropriate resources to drive Neighbourhood Policing development across the force in a corporate and consistent manner and within an agreed development plan, and to ensure that examples of ongoing good work in various parts of the

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force area are shared and developed.

Neighbourhood profiling has not as yet been completed across the force. Once it has, the use of profiles and key individual networks (KINs) should help to ensure that relevant groups are identified and included in the engagement and action process. Although work has commenced, progress is at different stages across the BCUs. At the time of the inspection, mapping was in place in Western BCU but the approach had not been rolled out across the remaining two BCUs. The force should nominate a champion at a senior level in the force to drive a corporate and consistent approach to this important development in Neighbourhood Policing, building on the work in the pilot BCU.

Some key operational partners are not aware of the development mapping of neighbourhoods by the police and there were various definitions of what a neighbourhood is according to which partner was asked. This indicates some inconsistency in communication. Partners in the Northern BCU have defined 'neighbourhood' for their own purposes and are therefore less eager to repeat the work with the police. The force should assure effective engagement with partners, working with them to identify neighbourhoods that will then be recognised by all.

Although staff can access the PROMS database and make themselves aware of community issues and ongoing problems, there is no systematic approach to target or inform staff about neighbourhood priorities that do not feature in the BCU control strategies. The force should develop systems to inform and direct staff to neighbourhood priorities and include relevant action in intelligence and performance frameworks to ensure that effective contributions are made.

Staff taking calls from the public have no access to details of community priorities for specific areas nor have they ready access to any IT system that identifies relevant community officers or PCSOs, although they are able to provide contact numbers/emails for each NPU. The constabulary should develop effective systems that allow call-handling staff to identify community priorities together with local NPU staff by name when receiving calls for service from the public. This would support other efforts that are being made to market this information externally.

Although a call-grading policy is in place for grade 3 calls, there is no requirement on the call taker to inform the caller of the estimated time for attendance to the incident within the 72-hour target time. Although this approach follows the guidance set out in the command and control and DMU policy, the force should be aware of the potential negative impact on customer satisfaction levels and should use proactive education to ensure that the public is made fully aware of the new arrangements. The call-handling incident management review group has been tasked with addressing this issue.

While there is some evidence of collaboration in the management of demand, TPTs are not effectively tied in to local NPU tasking. As a result, teams tend to operate in functional silos and there is a clear distinction between managing customer demand and solving community problems. Some TPT officers have little awareness or understanding of the role of community officers or local priorities. There is scope to improve collaboration by promoting the citizen focus agenda and raising awareness of the importance of the NPU role.

Until recently, there was no IT representative on the reassurance programme board driving forward Neighbourhood Policing. This has delayed the identification of IT systems best suited for managing neighbourhood data. The force and key partners use different mapping systems. To allow effective information exchange, a small number of licences have been purchased for the partners' mapping product. The mapping system is to be reviewed and account will be taken of the Neighbourhood Policing requirements. IT should continue to be engaged at a strategic level in the development of solutions to manage all aspects of

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Neighbourhood Policing and partnership data sharing to assure a corporate approach and the most effective response within the available budgets.

The force has been extremely successful in securing partnership funding for 126 out of its 237 PCSOs; however, the extent of partnership commitment is not replicated across the country. A service level agreement has been agreed with relevant partners in order to ensure that they are committed to the constabulary's vision of safer and stronger neighbourhoods. It is essential that the overall allocation of NPU assets continues to reflect the strategic requirements of the force. The constabulary should therefore undertake periodic evaluation to inform future allocation of PCSOs as part of a wider resource allocation exercise in line with the intelligence process.

There is no policy in place to govern or monitor the abstraction of officers from the NPU to other duties, and Neighbourhood Policing is considered as one of a number of priorities. In BCUs there is an acceptance that NPU officers will be used to cover for colleagues when the TPTs fall below minimum staffing levels. Abstractions are frequent and NPUs make their own ad hoc arrangements to monitor staffing levels, which often results in community officers having to cancel community commitments at short notice. The force is in the process of reviewing the resources of TPTs, comparing their availability with demand profiles in order to make changes that will reduce the abstraction burden on NPUs. The force should develop appropriate corporate processes that allow the monitoring, review and implementation of action when abstraction targets are not met. Targets should include both planned and spontaneous abstraction incidents (with allowances made for local major incidents that temporarily skew the level of abstraction) and abstraction from key roles, not merely geographical abstraction.

The force should build on CAMs and develop more effective means to capture community priorities. Part of the work of the community cohesion co-ordinator is to undertake surveys with a representative sample of people in defined areas. NPU staff, including PCSOs and special constables, are tasked with carrying out these surveys. The force should maximise the opportunities presented by this proactive work to capture community priorities across a broader spectrum than CAM attendees.

CAMs provide an opportunity for local officers and PCSOs to engage with local residents. In some areas meeting are independently chaired and attended by various partners, eg local authority wardens and representatives of the fire and rescue service, while in others PCSOs and police constables act as chair. Comments from some residents reflected a lack of confidence in actions taken by the police to solve the problems/priorities previously identified, eg parking, speeding and anti-social behaviour. PCSOs and police constables have had little or no training in handling public meetings and, although their efforts are laudable, the force should consider assuring that a police supervisor is present to add credibility to the process and demonstrate that the force considers such meetings to be central to its community engagement strategy.

At present there is a mixed view among partners and the force of the value of CAMs. Activity around CAMs is currently not intelligence-led and is based on the views of a small number of attendees at the meetings rather than on the wider views of residents and businesses in the locality. Limited consideration is given as to whether such activity will bring maximum benefit in a wider policing sense. CAMs should be developed to take account of survey results and wider intelligence in order to add more value to the engagement process. There should be more focus on capacity building within communities and an emphasis on neighbourhood priorities.

The force has not yet commenced in earnest the development of KINs, other than in limited areas, and there is little corporate direction or IT support. The force should develop its practice of engagement with the community through KINs, and ensure that key individuals

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are representative of the communities in which they live, taking particular account of minority groups and hard-to-reach groups in the county. KINs should include members of IAGs at both a strategic and tactical level in order to take full advantage of an established body of people willing to assess community views on policing and diversity issues. In addition, the force should develop appropriate IT solutions and relevant training for staff to effectively record and manage KINs.

The force does not have in place a formal definition of community intelligence, preferring to combine its collection and assessment with those of other types of intelligence. Currently, therefore, there is no distinction drawn between community intelligence and any other intelligence. This approach detracts from the drive to heighten the status of community intelligence, makes delivery of training and key messages to staff and partners difficult, and does not easily facilitate the attraction of funding for specific posts. The force should formally define community intelligence.

One of the key challenges facing the force is that there is an inconsistent approach to dealing with community intelligence. Some BCUs have in place CDRP analysts, a partnership resource that in the main deals with the production of the strategic assessment and issues emanating from multi-agency tasking meetings. Wider data collection and dissemination takes place on behalf of the relevant CDRP. Analysts within the FIB and BCUs do not have the capacity to produce meaningful community intelligence packages or set up appropriate community intelligence-gathering systems and processes. The force should reconsider its capacity to deal effectively with this important aspect of Neighbourhood Policing, investing in appropriate levels of staffing with relevant IT support.

Specific training to assist in the identification or collection of relevant community intelligence has as yet not been delivered to CAT officers, PCSOs or key partners. Once a clear definition of what constitutes community intelligence is agreed, awareness training should be delivered to all officers and police staff and systems and processes should be developed. This will lead to an emphasis on the value of community intelligence, its potential links to serious and organised crime and counter-terrorism, and how staff, partners and the public can effectively contribute to the NIM process.

The force should drive the development of community intelligence in line with the terms of reference in the Neighbourhood Policing project approach document. The aim should be to ensure that all streams of community intelligence are identified, to develop processes to analyse and disseminate community intelligence, and to ensure that Neighbourhood Policing is integrated into the NIM process. Also, there should be a two-way intelligence flow within the community, so that the results of community intelligence are fed back. Importantly, systems should be in place for routine partner and community involvement in the formulation of NIM products and NIM processes.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The constabulary should drive the development of community intelligence. It should ensure that all streams of community intelligence are identified, develop processes to analyse and disseminate community intelligence, and ensure that Neighbourhood Policing is fully integrated into the National Intelligence Model process.

Some partners, such as CDRPs, are involved in setting strategic priorities. Informal meetings take place and draft documents are circulated. This process is not mature and more work is needed to engage partners such as the probation service and the health service within this process.

At the partnership T&CG meetings in some BCUs, accountability for the delivery of problem-solving actions is weak and commitment from partners is variable. Two parallel tasking

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processes are in existence, with cross-over provided by NPU inspectors. Despite these weaknesses, however, relationships with partners at a tactical level are very strong. While separate structures and processes may be politically, and geographically, expedient, it is essential that a joint approach to volume crime management, community priorities and other mainstream activities is engendered. The force should exploit the opportunities it will create when developing jointly defined neighbourhoods to strengthen links with partners. Video conferencing and other IT solutions would present opportunities to return to one BCU T&CG process. The force should consider developing further approaches to ensure that the full range of police and partnership resources can be used to address community priorities in an intelligence-led manner.

Neighbourhood Policing supervisors had not yet all had relevant training, in particular in relation to their role and contractual issues surrounding the supervision of PCSOs. It is important that supervisors and all their staff are properly trained for their role in Neighbourhood Policing. The force should complete a gap analysis of training and ensure that courses are appropriately developed to address shortfalls in skills.

Although special constables undertake a role in NPUs as a matter of course, only in some BCUs are they then allocated to specific neighbourhoods. It was noted that many special constables prefer to work with TPTs. The force should encourage their involvement in the work of NPUs to support the Neighbourhood Policing function.

There has been no consistent approach to integrating Neighbourhood Policing into the force performance management framework. There are currently no corporate SPIs for CAT officers or PCSOs, although in some parts of the force supervisors are developing ad hoc approaches. Where performance indicators exist, they are generally unsophisticated and do not capture the focus of the community officer's role. The performance measures for these officers are broadly the same as those for response officers. Given the different role focus, this is inappropriate. In order to strengthen the force's approach to Neighbourhood Policing and to encourage appropriate activity, the force should continue to develop and introduce a set of performance indicators for the delivery of Neighbourhood Policing. The framework should include key qualitative data.

There is no performance framework in place for special constables or PCSOs linked to policing plan priorities or the force control strategy. Currently special constables complete a simple monthly return which outlines hours worked and activity undertaken. There is an inconsistent approach to this return across the force area. PCSOs have no framework other than an annual personal development review (PDR) process. The service level agreements with partners define key outputs for PCSOs. The development of a balanced scorecard would be useful to match performance management approaches for NPUs, and would include alcohol seizures, PROMS activity and other hard performance indicators. The force should develop a more robust system to drive activity towards force priorities.

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Developing Practice

TITLE: Funding shortfall – PCSO uplift

PROBLEM:

The government target and funding mechanism for the growth in numbers of PCSOs would put significant strain on an already stretched policing budget. Without partnership support, the risk faced by the police authority was significant.

SOLUTION:

A project was set up under the direction of the ACC (territorial policing and partnerships), reporting through the force reassurance programme board. One of the key work strands for the project team was to develop a series of presentations, supported by police authority members and parish councillors from parishes where PCSOs were already jointly funded, to 'sell' the benefits of co-funding PCSOs.

The team commenced presentations to convince as many partner agencies as possible of the benefits, facing and addressing some volatile questions on double charging for policing services. Support from the Chief Constable and the chair of the police authority was key in changing perceptions in certain areas.

Strict assessment criteria were created that allowed the ACC (territorial policing and partnerships) to assess the suitability of every potential funding partner. This ensured their compatibility with the constabulary's vision for Neighbourhood Policing before progressing to a formal relationship.

A robust service level agreement was developed to provide clarity on the relationships between local authorities, parish councils, local education authorities and commercial enterprises entering into a sponsorship arrangement and to clearly set out the benefits of contributing towards additional dedicated policing resource. This service level agreement is sufficiently flexible to enable the force to use the co-funded PCSOs for other duties, where justified, but also gives the funding agency a say in the officers' tasking.

The force hosted an open evening to thank all the funding partners, using it as a marketing tool for the 11 posts yet to have funding secured and to promote the success achieved.

OUTCOME(S):

The force has met its recruitment target of 237 PCSOs, 54% of whom are co-funded for the next three years by 42 separate partner agencies. The funding initiative has not only significantly reduced the risk to the police authority, but has also started to increase confidence levels in those wards and parishes where the PCSOs are deployed.

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Performance Management

GRADE	GOOD
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National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
6	29	8	0

National contextual factors

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

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

Contextual factors

The performance strategy defines the core principles and mechanisms of accountability and makes the necessary links to the key strategic processes. Regular performance meetings at all levels within the organisation provide accountability, focusing on key performance areas. Strategic leadership is applied to particularly pressing areas of performance and those issues are effectively communicated throughout the organisation.

The police authority has a healthy overview and involvement in performance management, from NPU to force level, through structured processes which it continues to develop across all business areas.

The investment in IT processes has created one central data warehouse and software applications are being developed to allow comparative analysis down to the individual rather than to the team level, as happens at present.

A framework for performance management of all business services has been developed and provides clarity on the relationship between management and key organisational delivery targets.

Strengths

There is a clearly articulated vision and strategy for the force, with which staff are familiar, that is consistent with the strategies of partner agencies and with the National Community Safety Plan. Account is taken of CDRP strategies when creating force targets and strategies, and the local criminal justice board (LCJB) strategy is joint with the force.

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The policing plan for 2007/08, which has been well publicised and takes the form of a small newspaper tailored to individual BCUs, outlines key priorities based on an analysis of the local situation, the previous year's performance, and any specific planned initiatives or operations. In areas where no national targets have been set, local targets have been defined.

There is clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the police authority, Chief Constable and senior managers at all levels for performance. A corporate governance structure is in place with clear authority levels for decision making on force strategy, and there are policy arrangements for timely reviews that involve the police authority.

Strong and proactive leadership is provided by chief officers on performance management and improvement. The clear commitment to developing a performance culture is shown by personal involvement in the targeted implementation of a range of new performance management tools and the development of the force performance framework.

The force has the lowest level of funding per head of population compared with its MSF and this has been the case for a considerable period of time. This has meant that the force has had to be lean and capable in its service delivery. The force continually strives to meet challenges in new ways without the availability of significant levels of finance. An example of this is its private finance initiative for custody arrangements.

The monthly constabulary PIM is well established and allows the chief officers to drive key messages regarding performance and to scrutinise operational performance across all BCUs against set targets. The monthly meeting is chaired by the Chief Constable, attended by ACPO officers, BCU commanders and most departmental heads. Actions are allocated to specific owners as part of this process, with dates for completion and reporting back. There have been some notable successes over the past 12 months, with many crime categories showing improvement.

The force acknowledges that it has to improve customer satisfaction levels, and the deputy chief constable (DCC) has led work to concentrate the force on citizen focus and customer satisfaction, issues where the force has some of the lowest levels nationally. The DCC chairs seminars that all front-line managers are required to attend.

Following the force PIM there are interim monthly meetings in each BCU chaired by the ACC (territorial policing and partnerships) and attended by the BCU commanders and other relevant managers/staff.

A list of key performance headings are used as a framework. In part these match the control strategy priorities – eg crime figures, detection rates and DNA/fingerprint hits – and they are examined against previous performance. Targets are identified and, along with BCU-based contributory targets, documented in the policing plan.

Focus in BCUs is placed on monthly meetings between line managers and their staff where they are held to account for previous performance and activity is set for the following month. Currently TPT officers have all their prisoner handover packages graded A to C, with qualitative comments supporting the grading, and there is a drive to improve quality of service targets.

The police authority performance panel meets every second month. The Chief Constable and DCC attend the meeting and are often joined by other members of the chief officer team. These meetings are minuted and review overall force performance on a rolling basis, including thematic issues as appropriate.

The police authority deputy chief executive reviews iQuanta data and produces a regular

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bulletin to members covering force and BCU-level performance. The focus is on key performance issues, and any exception issues are highlighted. The police authority has a newly appointed research analyst who has access to force IT systems. Once established in the role, the analyst will be developing and researching performance information that is already freely provided to the police authority by the force in order to scrutinise and support the force's efforts.

Each police authority member is allocated one or two NPU areas and has monthly meetings with the relevant NPU inspector. The authority members are aware of their relationship with inspectors and, where there is a need to formally challenge issues, it is done through the appropriate channels rather than directly with the inspector. This approach is being extended to HQ departments.

There is recognition of good performance and appropriate and inclusive processes of rewarding good work and celebrating success, including:

- the Chief Constable's regular commendation award ceremonies;
- awards for the NPU officer of the month;
- an award for the community constable of the year; and
- the internal *Catalyst* newspaper, which details examples of good practice and heralds the work of individuals in its delivery.

There are effective monitoring systems throughout the force that enable poor performance to be identified and constructively addressed at every level. There is a clear correlation between the NIM control strategy and performance objectives and other key planning processes.

The monthly force PIM scrutinises contact management against national call-handling standards. This has resulted in steady improvements over time. At a recent force PIM, the non-emergency call-handling data was flagged and this is now subject to a separate report to the police authority.

There is an established performance management framework within contact management, with monthly meetings between the superintendent and supervisors. This includes quantitative data and qualitative data on call taking. Supervisors have a process of reviewing calls against a set quality framework on a regular basis. This framework is being developed to incorporate a qualitative approach to incident management. Funding has been identified to support this work and to replace the current telephony system, which will provide opportunities to compare the voice recording with actions being completed on the IT systems at the same time.

The incident management tasking group reviews force performance against targets for grade 1 and 2 incidents and takes the over view on response to grade 3 calls.

Strategic planning is integrated with NIM processes, with the force control strategy reflecting national and local priorities. The framework allows the force and the police authority to resolve potential tensions between national and force priorities. Plans are informed by feedback from service users, staff and partners, and by community consultation within a comprehensive consultation strategy. There is constructive engagement of the police authority in the planning process.

The force has in place a resource allocation model which has been used to review resources across the three BCUs as part of work to identify resources for the Taking Control

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programme. The model involves senior budget holders and has resulted in an equitable distribution of resources according to workload and risk management. The model will be applied on an annual basis. PCSOs are allocated according to the influence of partner funding and/or policing priorities.

A two-way communication process is in place internally with staff and externally with partners. The force has mechanisms to tap into public opinion on policing matters and reflect the public's views where appropriate.

The force makes extensive use of public opinion surveys, which are mainly phone-based because of the low return rate for postal surveys. Telephone surveys provide a 50% return rate, which has increased the confidence level to 95%. The surveys are run by a private company and include standard questions which are replicated nationally to allow force comparisons to be made and ask others that are generated locally. Results are received on a monthly basis. The sample is drawn from various crime/incident types, including anti-social behaviour from April 2007, although limited finances mean that a smaller percentage of anti-social behaviour customers can be rung back.

Limited IT capability prevents the automatic identification of officers dealing with the incidents surveyed. As an interim solution, when a result is particularly good or bad, there is a manual search of systems and officers names are fed back to the BCU for a direct link to PDRs. As the force develops survey work, the intention is to use the identification of officers and staff to change their behaviour.

The force had considered, but declined, the national Neighbourhood Policing survey as it considered that the questions were in need of further development. It established its own approach by trailing the survey at its citizens panel, which is available for themed work to allow understanding of issues throughout the organisation. The force included two questions that relate to Neighbourhood Policing (level of confidence and fear of crime) from the current national phone survey.

Resource allocation involves senior budget holders and is based on efficiency savings according to risk management and reinvestment according to priorities. There are robust monitoring and review arrangements in place with clear deliverables, timescales and review points. Activity-based costing models are used in assessing and improving productivity, efficiency and effectiveness of activities.

Key strategies from support departments such as finance, IT and HR are becoming more integrated with corporate strategies and force and BCU plans. The director of corporate services liaises frequently with the heads of finance, IT and HR, and all work collectively to deliver force goals. Estates, IT and HR all have strategies that align with the force's three-year plan and that have been amended as part of the review of the force strategy. The various strategies include targets for delivery and performance indicators to varying degrees.

The force and the police authority have in place appropriate arrangements to oversee the development of the annual policing plan; there are frequent meetings of the engagement committee leading up to the plan being published. The necessary target setting is undertaken, taking account of national, local and partnership targets (LAAs).

The force freely provides performance information to the police authority. However, the police authority is mindful of the impact of such requests on the force's limited resources, and therefore keeps these requests to a minimum. The force has supported training on performance management for police authority members and a newly appointed police authority research officer has access to force IT systems, which will allow further detailed analysis by members.

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Supported by the force, the police authority has recently undertaken training for new and established members. This training should allow members to be more intrusive but in a focused way. The training included 'challenge' issues and the use of iQuanta data and performance data in the force; how this drills down to individual NPUs was explained by the force performance manager.

The force performance manager and the deputy chief executive of the police authority, who has a particular responsibility for performance issues, meet on a monthly basis to discuss ongoing performance and its development.

Each NPU area has a nominated police authority member who undertakes regular visits, often as frequently as monthly but as a minimum every six months. They also attend BCU performance management and attendance meetings and leadership days. Their attendance at the monthly PIMs is co-ordinated on a rotation basis and they are prepared to challenge performance at BCU level.

A logical, coherent and effective corporate governance structure is in place, with clear authority levels for decision making on matters of force strategy and policy, and arrangements for timely review that involve the police authority.

The police authority has an effective scrutiny process. This includes examining issues through papers submitted to the scrutiny panel, for example a paper was presented on an aspect of public complaints.

The police authority lead for performance management is an independent member who has extensive previous experience in public/private industry. He attends the monthly PIM and visits a nominated BCU twice a year, meeting the BCU commander, setting action plans and reviewing previous action plans. The authority holds force performance review panels monthly. Members hold focus groups with staff and develop a good understanding of current issues. The police authority has away day meetings with the Chief Constable and demands well developed business plans to support business cases put before it.

There are regular T&CG meetings at force and BCU levels. These drive activity via the setting of policing priorities and objectives, which are collated on tactical menus with relevant action managers. Updates have to be provided at the following meeting. The constabulary and all BCUs have control strategies, which highlight relevant priorities, and groups commission strategic and tactical assessments. There is a clear focus on intelligence levels 1 and 2, performance targets, acquisitive crime, problem/target updates, Class A drugs and violent crime.

The force strategic intelligence assessment is developed jointly by the FIB and the performance directorate to assure a joined-up approach to the development of the control strategy and the policing plan targets and priorities.

A logical strategic planning process is in place, starting with the preparation of a three-year strategy, which is reviewed annually in line with the National Community Safety Plan. Environmental scanning is undertaken and strategic aims realigned as necessary. Key stakeholders within partnerships are consulted. Local objectives are informed by forums and Cheshire County Council survey work, and the citizens panel is used to check that the priorities are appropriate. Priorities take account of the Cheshire domestic abuse partnership (CDAP) strategy and LCJB plan. Objectives cascade down from the force three-year strategy to the annual policing plan, then to departmental and unit plans and team plans. Performance targets are cascaded down to BCUs, which have various targets according to performance requirements and their capacity to improve. BCU targets are discussed with CDRPs prior to being finalised.

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Police officers and police staff have individual objectives in their PDRs, all of which are intended to drive improvement and performance.

The IT department has an established suite of performance data which is now being developed into a balanced scorecard approach. This will be reviewed internally. The force also uses information management business area data on an annual basis to compare itself with other forces and is seeking ISO 2000 accreditation.

All inspectors (or deputies) attend the monthly PIM, which is chaired by the BCU commanders. The inspectors hold daily team briefings and monthly one-to-one meetings are held between first-line managers and their staff.

The PIM is directly linked to NIM processes, drives inspection and improvement review processes, and feeds reporting arrangements to the police authority.

The ACC (operational support) provides a strong lead on volume crime investigation and maintains a focus on investigation and detection throughout the force. BCU commanders are effectively held to account by CDRPs, monthly PIMs and interim performance reviews undertaken by the ACC (operational support) on a monthly basis. The superintendent (operations) within each BCU is the identified champion for the management of volume crime reduction targets, and NPUs hold individual performance targets across the range of volume crime categories.

Volume crime performance is monitored by use of 'Looking Glass', which allows early identification of deteriorating performance and, together with iQuanta, quarterly performance data. Looking Glass has been developed to support force and BCU performance review and decision making on a daily to a quarterly basis. Performance data is updated every two days on the system.

The HR department is held to account in terms of performance through representation at the monthly force PIM, chaired by the Chief Constable. At this meeting, relevant national statistics are debated; these are also scrutinised at the quarterly meeting of the police authority's HR committee.

For this year the force has introduced quarterly rather than annual targets. These targets will be changed to reflect movement in the MSF and BCU clusters to assure that the force is matching national changes in service delivery.

There is effective use of survey data, with evidence that survey findings inform service delivery. User satisfaction results are included in force performance meetings, which involve chief officers holding BCU and department management teams to account. In addition, the police authority reviews user satisfaction results on a quarterly basis and holds the force to account on user satisfaction performance as well as crime and detection performance. Consultation also takes place with the public and partners for the purposes of the policing plan. At a BCU level, consultation takes place in various neighbourhood forums such as CAMs. The force also hosts seminars and meetings to deliver key messages and seek feedback, for example in respect of neighbourhood management.

The force sets improvement targets in key areas such as crime reduction and customer satisfaction. The force has a clear picture of cross-border threats.

The force completes the minimum two-week activity-based costing exercise in February of each year. Before and after the exercise, a team from corporate services visits each BCU management team to establish what they wish to discover and to help them interpret results. This information will be used to identify the impact of changes in IT provision on availability for front-line patrol.

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Police staff within performance management, HR and IT have started an intranet-based activity analysis where they input activity which can then be analysed easily. This has identified issues including the fact that HR staff are spending a disproportionate amount of time with aspects of sickness management and that performance management staff are spending too long writing reports. This process ran for three weeks and will be repeated periodically.

There is a clear vision in place that facilitates collaborative arrangements on key services with North Wales, and to a lesser extent with other north west forces, in order to strengthen protective services and meet policing demands that extend beyond the force's own geographical area, such as counter-terrorism and serious and organised crime. The force is involved in a number of bids for regional collaborative demonstrator sites.

As part of the work to respond to low customer satisfaction, the force introduced customer service summits for front-line management (chief inspectors, inspectors, sergeants and police staff equivalents) to understand this area of performance and how staff can have an impact. The DCC attended a number of these workshops to give them strategic focus.

Staff are aware of the qualitative aspects of performance as well as quantitative performance measures. This approach is constantly reiterated by senior managers and supervisors in the force. Efforts are being made to adjust processes and structures to improve customer satisfaction levels, which are less than satisfactory. Staff are fully aware of the quality of service commitment.

The force is well practised in its analysis of operational performance across national and local indicators. There is effective monitoring of comparative data (force, BCU) using Looking Glass, and this enables benchmarking of performance levels using iQuanta. Data is accurately communicated and used to inform decision making at strategic and operational levels.

Work in progress

As part of seeking improvement in the way targets are set and monitored for 2008/09, the police authority has agreed that targets will be reviewed on a quarterly basis not only in respect of force performance but against its MSF. In essence, targets could be variable on a quarterly basis, with the performance of other forces making the process more dynamic and flexible. This is part of a developing approach.

PDR training is planned for supervisors within communications to build on their limited knowledge in this area. Police staff supervisors do not attend the full core leadership development programme but do complete some modules and attend workshops.

The force is developing a three-year plan to identify what is required to meet future threats. An integral part of this will be the HR strategies to support change. The force has invested in IT systems with integrated databases. The development of a data warehouse, which is now in the final stages of introduction, will allow the force to analyse performance management data in new ways, eg comparing the HR system data with performance in key crime areas for individuals. Additional software will allow performance analysts to better access and manipulate data within the warehouse, although the force will need to identify and capitalise on the business benefits provided by the new opportunities that this data retrieval will allow.

The force has recently produced a performance management framework for the areas of work in the business services directorate. This will see an assistant chief officer or the DCC holding the directorate to account on a quarterly basis using the performance data identified in the published framework. This is a first attempt at this work and it will be developed. The

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cross-over between some services and front-line delivery will result in functional directors attending level 1 or 2 performance processes as appropriate, eg HR will be answerable in respect of training and staff provision/absence figures on an exception basis.

Generally, departments have not yet developed specific performance measures that allow them to feature centrally in the PIM process. This is a developing area for the force. Some departments are developing a balanced scorecard approach to performance. At present, departments are unable to draw direct links between day-to-day activity and wider corporate performance levels.

A performance management framework for Neighbourhood Policing is being developed using a balanced scorecard approach. Two models are in use at separate BCUs and a force model will be adopted after these have been evaluated.

While building on the established monthly PIM, the force is developing a level 2 process that will more closely hold the crime support and uniform support functions to account. There will be cross-over to the level 1 PIM where necessary, eg for call-handling issues, but this will be on an exception basis. The level 2 process is still being developed through monthly meetings, but the drive is towards a balanced scorecard approach.

Areas for improvement

There is a good understanding of roles and accountability in respect of performance improvement among supervisors and management. There are a number of documents that outline various elements of the force's performance regime, including PIM terms of reference, role profiles and the PDR process. In addition, the business services performance development framework has been published. The force would benefit from the development and introduction of a performance management handbook, which could include a clear flowchart for the performance framework and identify links between the police authority, PIMs, interim performance meetings and more frequent supervisors' performance meetings at both operational and support levels.

The force currently has in place an independent audit team, which in the main focuses on data protection and data audit and is developing an audit strategy. The force should consider introducing a corporate audit board to oversee and drive inspection/audit activity within an agreed schedule and to ensure that organisational learning becomes a key theme of audits. This work should be risk-based and undertaken in an intelligence-led manner in order to ensure that key policies and strategies are adhered to.

The force should develop an audit methodology to systematically undertake focused, intelligence-led inspections/audits in BCUs and support departments. Key issues, areas of vulnerability and the effectiveness of and compliance with new processes could be assessed using this format. The force should consider producing a standard audit systems manual, outlining the detail and level of specified checks within an agreed period. The manual should be utilised by the audit team and other personnel authorised to undertake audits. There should be a documented and robust returns process with clear owners for improvement and mechanisms to feed into strategic decision-making bodies. Action and improvement should be actively monitored.

The force should consider developing a thematic approach to its PIMs, which would be arranged when needed. The meetings could focus, for example, on the development of protecting vulnerable people and customer satisfaction, which are key areas of performance for the force. This would facilitate discussions on staffing, training, sharing of good practice, etc.

Police authority members have an open invitation to force PIMs. The question of what level

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members should be able to raise questions in these meetings is still to be decided. There is a view among some members that they should pursue performance issues through the chief officer group rather than at the meetings. The force states that some training has been provided to members in this regard. The force should discuss and agree a way forward to allow all members to have a meaningful role and purpose when attending force PIMs, as this will add value to the process.

The search functionality of Looking Glass only allows performance to be reviewed at BCU or team level. It does not allow analysis of individual performance. As Atlas is extended, the force should consider steps that will allow the drilling down of performance to individual level and the use of that information should then become commonplace.

There is no performance framework in place for special constables linked to policing plan priorities or the force control strategy. Currently special constables are expected to complete a simple monthly return which outlines hours worked and activity undertaken. There is an inconsistent approach to this return across the force area. The force should develop a more robust system to drive activity towards force priorities.

There are currently no specific performance indicators for community officers or PCSOs assigned to NPUs, although in some parts of the force supervisors are developing ad hoc approaches. This is an area of development for the force that has been recognised. In order to strengthen the force's approach to Neighbourhood Policing and to encourage appropriate activity, the force should continue to develop and introduce a set of performance indicators for the specific delivery of Neighbourhood Policing. This framework should include key qualitative data.

The force should ensure that learning and feedback from audits are assessed against performance requirements at both tactical and strategic level, and that learning from such audits is systematically used to make organisational improvements. Performance inspectors should ensure that learning is fed into the centre for this purpose.

NPU inspectors should make better links with the training and PDR function in their respective BCU. Local mechanisms should be implemented to draw information from PDRs and the training function regarding shortfalls in individual and team performance and to inform area training panels. Emphasis should be given to improving both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of policing. Currently only the HQ performance inspector attends the force training meeting, and this has only happened recently.

Developing Practice

TITLE: Business services directorate performance framework

PROBLEM:

Force performance management arrangements had been focused on improving operational services and had not previously considered the 'back office' or support functions in a meaningful way. This led to an imbalance in accountability arrangements and a feeling that the 'tail is wagging the dog' on occasions.

SOLUTION:

With the creation of the business services directorate, the force identified an opportunity to introduce new performance management arrangements. Each function within business services is preparing a balanced framework of performance measures (a balanced scorecard) through which improvement can be demonstrated. An overview of the business services directorate's structure and service delivery arrangements has been prepared which clearly articulates the vision for adding value to the front line. For each function within the directorate, a description of the vision, approach, objectives, performance measures and workload is provided. A PIM has been established at which senior officers will monitor the progress and performance of the directorate. In addition, the force has undertaken to use a value-adding approach to challenge the way in which it does business, reduce the cost and effort taken to deliver essential non-value-adding activities, such as some of its many transactional services, and reinvest savings into value-adding activity in support of the front line.

OUTCOME(S):

It is still early in the process; however, each of the three directors and the managers of other business services have attended their first PIM, chaired by the DCC, at which they were held to account for service delivery, and the performance framework has a strong customer focus and takes a balanced view of performance across the directorate. The value-adding work is bedded in and efficiencies are being found in every function and are being reinvested. This work is also informing the constabulary's efforts to streamline its transactional services, as it looks at the potential of delivering a shared services approach in the future.

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Protecting Vulnerable People – Overview

National contextual factors

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

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

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

Contextual factors overview

During last year's baseline assessment, Cheshire Constabulary was graded Fair and Stable for the inspection area of protecting vulnerable people. The force has sought to improve, with clear strategic lead from the chief officer team assisted by the police authority, which has funded additional administrative posts within the dedicated public protection units (PPUs).

The ACC (territorial policing and partnerships) has specific portfolio responsibility for matters relating to domestic violence while the ACC (operational support) has responsibility for all other related disciplines.

The constabulary retains a central strategic public protection unit (SPPU) which develops policy, practice and procedure on behalf of the ACPO leads and assists the PPU's with local implementation.

In April 2005, as part of a major restructure of the constabulary dedicated PPU's were introduced, based in each of the three BCUs with several operating basis. They are accountable to the BCU commander and each has a dedicated detective inspector, who splits the team between the protecting vulnerable people disciplines, and a referral unit, which deals with all referrals made or received by the PPU.

Additionally, there is a level 2 PPU dedicated to the investigation of child abuse images.

Strengths

The force control strategy has been realigned from April 2007 and specifically details the protection of vulnerable people as a key element of business. The constabulary has reinforced the focus and direction placed in this area by both the chief officer team and police authority.

The area PPU's are supported by the SPPU. It is their responsibility to assist in the implementation of force policy and ensure that there is a corporate approach to the response to all aspects of public protection. At a practitioner level, the links between the two are cemented by a process of workshops, where practitioners from all areas come together under the steerage of the SPPU to disseminate knowledge, share best practice and take central guidance on developing trends and issues.

Cheshire Police Authority supports the force in this area of business, with members sitting on the pan Cheshire multi-agency safer and stronger communities group, which receives performance and activity reports. The group manages the LAAs that contain targets specific to protecting vulnerable people.

Each of the eight CDRPs are attended by lead members and police authority officers who both scrutinise and actively support local workstreams in public protection issues.

Work in progress

Across the whole PPU area of work, the lead ACC plans to introduce a corporate approach to activity. This will be a phased approach, with the SPPU initially defining good practice, identifying gaps, closing those gaps, and then undertaking analytical work with formal audit arrangements replacing the current ad hoc approach. These changes will be managed through meetings with BCU-based staff and will include feedback loops to ensure that emergent good practice is identified and then implemented across the force.

The force has recently introduced PPU quality assurance inspection procedures, which will see formal auditing of child abuse investigations, domestic violence investigations, vulnerable adult investigations, sex/violent offender management, missing persons investigations and the activity of the referrals unit. These audits will be completed by the SPPU with reports to the BCU commander for consideration. The procedures also define minimum standards for the supervision of detective sergeants and detective constables within the PPU's on an ongoing basis. These procedures will be reviewed by July 2009.

The force has limited training capacity across the board and has to prioritise training provision. Training staff to the standards identified in the ACPO/National Centre for Policing Excellence (NCPE) doctrines surrounding protecting vulnerable people was identified as a priority after the completion of training for all staff in aspects of the new Atlas computer system, which has taken a large proportion of training resources. The course allocation process is being developed to ensure that training is provided only where it is essential, rather than desirable, for an individual's role, and collaborative approaches with other forces are being considered.

Generic protecting vulnerable people areas for improvement

Although the force has in place a SPPU with a remit to develop policies and procedures, its remit does not cover the delivery of performance and standardising activity and practices across the BCUs. There should be a clear focus on sharing good practice and on

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performance monitoring/improvement. The SPPU currently influences and negotiates with BCU commanders and should be given more executive authority on behalf of the lead ACPO officer to ensure that agreed policies are delivered.

In addition to relevant force policies, there is also an SOP for PPU which has been in place since the commencement of the Taking Control programme in 2005. The SOP should be reviewed in line with changes and new staffing arrangements.

The force does not currently have in place specific performance indicators for the PPU functions other than for domestic violence, which are collated for Home Office statistical purposes, and those collected for MAPPA strategic management board (SMB) purposes. The force should consider developing suitable performance indicators to drive activity and improvement in the PPU disciplines.

The force has recently introduced meetings for PPU practitioners. Although these quarterly meetings are held at force level to promote the introduction of good practice (eg specialist domestic violence courts and free legal services from the National Centre for Domestic Violence), there is no focus on performance management. The force should drive performance improvement through this meeting and seek to hold BCUs to account for performance based on agreed performance indicators that reflect the various roles of PPU staff.

The PPU manager in one BCU has developed a framework for performance management for PPU functions which is integrated with the force PDR system. They hold monthly performance review meetings with the detective sergeants who, in turn, are required to hold similar meetings with their subordinates. A key purpose is to ensure that staff have the skills to fulfil their roles in order to improve performance. This is a personal initiative and does not appear to reflect a corporate approach to performance management of the function. The force should consider rolling this approach out to other BCUs.

Although the constabulary has up-to-date job descriptions for staff within the PPUs, the inspection team found that, particularly at weekends, generic as opposed to specialist cover was provided for all aspects of the PPUs' work. It is important that individuals do not undertake work beyond their level of training and that overall staffing levels within each specialist PPU role are appropriate. The constabulary should assure itself that these ad hoc multi-functional roles are developed in an informed and managed way

There is no system of identifying NPU or TPT staff to stand in as formal reserves for PPU staff in times of exceptional abstraction levels, although there are opportunities to reallocate staff on a temporary basis from the specialist investigating unit. There is no proactive arrangement in respect of succession planning in place. The constabulary should ensure that the staffing of PPUs is maintained at a level to provide appropriate resilience and should consider implementing a process of succession planning where appropriate. There should be a sound rationale for staffing levels within PPUs, which takes account of workload, demand, abstractions and resilience.

There is currently no central control through the SPPU over staffing levels in PPUs. In some BCUs, senior management teams have taken the opportunity to alter some of the staffing levels since their original inception, which, although being of value to specific BCUs, has introduced inconsistency across the force area as there is no central control over staffing levels. Those officers within PPUs who are substantive detectives are subject to routine abstractions to provide night cover in the county. Additionally, staff have specialist interview skills and therefore abstractions frequently occur as they are called upon to assist the specialist investigation unit with sexual assault crimes. The force should take steps to ensure that these approaches do not have a negative impact on the role and workloads of

PPU staff.

The force currently uses a separate, distinct database for tracking all cases of domestic violence, missing persons and child protection cases using the Children and Vulnerable Adult (CAVA) database. The force is undergoing a major change with regard to information and intelligence capability and is in the process of taking on Atlas. It is recognised internally that there are some shortfalls around overall operability and links between systems. The force should continue to review its IT systems and seek to maximise interoperability and links between all systems.

Protecting Vulnerable People – Child Abuse

GRADE	FAIR
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National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
3	17	21	2

National contextual factors

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

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

Contextual factors

The police authority has committed increased funding to support local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs) and has lead members sitting on children and young people strategic partnerships (CYPSPs).

SPPU and PPU staff are active participants within all the LSCBs and the constabulary has a well developed policy with teams of dedicated child abuse investigators and supervisors within each of the three PPUs supported by a level 2 team dedicated to the investigation of child abuse images.

Strengths

The ACC (operational support) has specific portfolio responsibility for the investigation of child abuse and chairs quarterly meetings with the SPPU and the three BCU-based crime managers and PPU detective inspectors. He provides clear focus, leadership and direction. Although not responsible for territorial policing or partnerships, they retain a close working relationship with their ACPO colleague.

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On publication of the ACPO/NCPE guidance on investigating child abuse and safeguarding children, force working practices were reviewed and developed by the DCC as chair of the NCPE steering group. This resulted in the implementation of a detailed force policy that records the strategic aim of the constabulary.

Cheshire Constabulary's contributions to the LSCBs have increased for 2006/07 by £54,000 and comprise £37,000 to Cheshire, £23,000 to Warrington and £24,000 to Halton. The head of the SPPU is a member of Halton, Warrington and Cheshire LSCBs and the SPPU detective inspector sits on all policy and procedure subgroups, ensuring corporacy in approach. BCUs have superintendent representation on all LSCBs and all subgroups also have BCU representation.

The police authority lead for children and young people has good oversight of the SPPU and PPUs in respect of child abuse, holding regular meetings with the head of the SPPU. The police authority supported the increase in funding to the LSCBs and has lead members sitting on the CYPSPs for Cheshire, Halton and Warrington.

A written accountability framework for child abuse investigations exists within the force policy, with defined lines of strategic and operational responsibility from practitioners through to the chief officer lead. This requires review to provide clarity on the role of BCU commanders and their senior management team.

Specialist child abuse investigation officers take primary responsibility for the investigation of intra-familial and professional carer child abuse cases, reporting directly to a child abuse investigation sergeant who has responsibility for providing support. The sergeant is in turn accountable to a dedicated PPU detective inspector.

The PPU detective inspectors are responsible for monitoring child abuse performance trends and ensuring that the key performance areas of child abuse are achieved. They report to the crime manager, who in turn answers to the BCU leadership team and feeds into the chief officer team via the monthly force PIM process.

Although the force has not specifically included child abuse within policing plans/strategies, the drive towards increased provision of protective services is apparent from the amendment of the force control strategy template to include a section on protecting vulnerable people.

A new investigating child abuse and safeguarding children policy was published in October 2006 and took account of the ACPO/NCPE guidance, *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. The policy is due to be reviewed by the force in October 2007.

This policy includes *Working Together to Safeguard Children* as an appendix and provides the reader with a clear understanding of the definition of the term 'referral', action to be taken on receipt of a referral, and the purpose of a strategy discussion/meeting.

When considering a joint investigation with social services, a supervisory detective is involved at the referral stage and follows LSCB procedures. A detective inspector oversees all joint investigations to ensure that they are fully informed of, satisfied with and accountable for the way in which the investigation is planned and conducted.

Student officers receive the full NPJA package, while trainee detectives receive child abuse investigation input sessions that link in with NPJA doctrine. They are also required to complete a three-month attachment to a PPU as part of their training programme.

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The procedures for initiating a police protection order are outlined fully in policy, with clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the designated officers.

In April 2007, the force had 18 officers identified as child abuse investigators, equating to a full-time equivalent of 17 officers. Those officers worked in one of three detective inspector-led PPUs, working from two operational sites within each unit. In one BCU, there is one detective sergeant; in another there is a detective sergeant at each site who splits their time between child abuse and domestic violence issues; and at the third BCU there are two detective sergeants with full-time equivalent hours of 1.75 posts.

Each PPU retains a referral unit that manages all referrals for domestic violence and child abuse issues. The referral units have a detective sergeant in charge of two officers and administrative support.

Staffing levels are devolved to BCU commanders, with the rationale that child abuse investigators and their supervisors should be dedicated to their purpose. These staffing levels were originally defined in April 2005 as part of the Taking Control programme.

There is a level 2 team, comprising one detective sergeant and five detective constables supported by a field intelligence officer, within the FIB dedicated to the investigation of child abuse images. Although the workload is high, and growing, the team's capacity is regarded by its detective sergeant as sufficient.

There are mandatory referrals to the occupational health unit for all those in the level 2 team dedicated to the investigation of child abuse images. BCU-based supervisors of child abuse investigators are able to refer staff for support on a case-by-case basis. Individual issues are addressed through the regular workload meetings, where welfare needs are an agenda item for discussion.

Any child abuse investigator who is Initial Crime Investigators' Development Programme (ICIDP)-trained provides county night cover on rotation, but child abuse investigators are not routinely abstracted for high-visibility patrols or non-PPU functions. The working hours of the child abuse investigators are determined locally. Where supervisors have responsibility for other disciplines, these are always within the PPU arena, for example domestic violence, and they are not used for unrelated work.

The force retains a system of having available at all times a duty detective inspector who is responsible for instigating appropriate police actions in respect of serious crime. Although there is not a dedicated child abuse investigator nominated 24/7 in the county night cover rota, one may be on duty. If not, the detective inspector can utilise one of the substantial number of sex offence-trained officers (over 250) for initial actions prior to the engagement of a fully trained child abuse investigator at the earliest opportunity.

A PPU sergeant attends initial case conferences with subsequent reviews attended by investigators or referral unit constables. It is extremely unusual for the police not to attend a child protection case conference, and written reports are submitted, as detailed in force policy, only under extreme operational duress.

Requests for conferences are fed into the referral units. Background intelligence checks are completed and forwarded to the officer attending via an allocated CAVA referral. The designated detective sergeant then takes ownership of the case conference referral, ensuring that the review is assigned to a child abuse investigator. Police attendance and the outcome of the meeting are directly monitored by the designated detective sergeant.

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After a case conference, the officer then returns the referral with a closing report outlining the decisions made. The full written minutes are subsequently received in PPU and included on the paper file held in relation to each family known to the PPU.

Strategy discussions/meetings are similarly recorded on CAVA. When a request is received for a strategy discussion, a CAVA record is created and allocated to a supervisor for response. Effort is made to meet in person, and actions are documented and signed as agreed at the meeting, with a copy provided to social services at the same time. When it is not possible to meet, a telephone strategy discussion is conducted. These are documented on CAVA and the relevant journal entry is faxed to social services with a request that the team manager signs the actions as agreed and faxes the copy back for the police file.

The force, in conjunction with all LSCBs, has devised a pan-Cheshire working procedure based on *Working Together to Safeguard Children*. The latest version of *Working Together to Safeguard Children* has been disseminated to practitioners in all areas and compliance with agreed working procedures is monitored by the SPPU.

Child abuse investigation officers and their supervisors have accurate and up-to-date job descriptions, with role profiles developed in line with the integrated competency framework and linked to their PDRs.

Child abuse investigation officers are located in multi-disciplinary PPU and are on occasion called upon to provide resilience to other business areas within the PPU. They do not routinely undertake duties outside the PPU arena.

There is evidence of a structured approach to the supervision of child abuse investigations with local audits of enquiries being undertaken. The PPU detective sergeants undertake close supervision of individual cases and of the workloads of child abuse investigators.

All decisions taken and the progress of investigations are recorded on CAVA, where the active role of supervisors in the review of all aspects of investigations can also be audited.

There is one officer dedicated to receiving, researching and evaluating all child pornography-related enquiries. The officer assesses each new case immediately and undertakes extensive checks to establish if the suspect has any immediate access to children or other relevant factors. A dedicated detective sergeant reviews this risk assessment and prioritises work accordingly.

The crime registrar is regularly consulted by specialist child abuse investigators for advice on individual cases to establish the appropriate recording methods for complex issues surrounding the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS).

The force has recognised and acted upon the need to train all child abuse investigators and supervisors in ICIDP and other specialist issues. Those officers who join the child abuse investigation unit are required to complete the ICIDP and sex offence investigation training. They also complete a joint police/children's social care two-week course, covering achieving best evidence and video interviewing, with some officers also trained in enhanced interviewing skills.

Officers are released to attend joint training organised by the LSCB. This initially takes the form of a two-day course in safeguarding, and a yearly calendar of other training courses in specialised areas is sent to the referrals unit and circulated to operational child abuse investigators.

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PPU staff are able to access and are informed of diversity training pertinent to child abuse investigation. This has recently included male rape, female genital mutilation, human trafficking and mental health awareness training. LSCBs also have working groups in relation to cultural issues in child protection which have police representation at detective sergeant level.

PPU supervisors are encouraged to attend both the enhanced interview and the interview co-ordinators course provided as part of Professionalising the Investigation Process (PIP).

The detective inspector from the SPPU has provided awareness inputs to uniform staff on training days, which included inputs on their role within child abuse investigations.

The force has effective recording procedures in place (including for identifying relevant incidents involving children to specialist officers), supported by the dedicated CAVA IT system, which is accessible to all officers and staff from all terminals via the force intranet. This holds full nominal details and histories for individuals and families known to PPUs and is supported by significant paper files on families subject to intervention and/or investigation.

The data quality project has recently completed a full compliance review process whereby all paper records have been reviewed to ensure that CAVA provides front-line staff with accurate and relevant incident details.

CAVA is an effective case-tracking and monitoring system where cases can only be closed by supervisors. The regular workload reviews are recorded and enable cases to be re-prioritised to reflect any dynamic factors while also providing an auditable decision-making record.

Effective recording procedures are in place using a force form which is passed to the PPU as a matter of routine. This Vulnerable Person Notification report (Form 40a) is passed to the referral unit in each PPU, which creates a record on CAVA and, as a matter of course, completes checks of all relevant police computer systems. The same reporting form is used to report information surrounding all classes of vulnerable people.

There is some use of management information to monitor performance and plans are in place to introduce central auditing of all aspects of protecting vulnerable people. Quarterly meetings are held with all PPU inspectors and these are used as a forum for the introduction of good practice across the BCUs.

Child abuse investigators are co-located and work closely with the related disciplines of domestic violence, public protection and missing persons. The PPU detective inspectors with responsibility for these business areas have a key role in identifying child abuse risks from offenders within MAPPAs and multi-agency risk assessment committees (MARACs). With one referral unit in each PPU dealing with all referrals and notifications for all children and vulnerable adults, the referral unit supervisor is well placed and responsible for identifying links and emerging trends.

CAVA holds a significant amount of information and is accessible to all staff. Child abuse investigation officers are required to submit intelligence reports as part of their enquiries and this will be significantly enhanced when CAVA and Atlas are linked (scheduled for February 2008).

The force major investigation team review team undertakes serious case reviews, including Part 8 reviews, which result in recommendations and action plans to deliver improvements as required. Oversight is maintained not only by the SPPU but by the LSCBs.

Within the Halton, Warrington and Cheshire LSCBs' business plans, clear links are made with the activities and priorities of the constabulary.

Work in progress

The feasibility of mandatory referrals to occupational health for all child abuse investigators is presently under examination by the ACC (operational support).

Staffing levels are devolved to BCU commanders with the rationale that child abuse investigators and their supervisors should be dedicated to their purpose. These staffing levels were originally defined in April 2005 as part of the Taking Control programme. The force has commissioned a review of staffing and workload levels for child abuse investigators from the performance improvement review team.

The force has fully committed to the establishment of a sexual assault referral centre (SARC) in the county. This dedicated facility will provide continuous cover to investigate incidents of adult and child sexual assault, either through self-referral or through referral by the police or other partner agencies. The site will also provide appropriate aftercare, counselling and sexual health screening, etc. Partner agencies that have expressed support for the SARC model and Cheshire Police Authority have committed to £800,000 of capital investment.

In the absence of nationally agreed performance indicators, the ACPO lead has commissioned a working group to examine and potentially pilot a meaningful performance management framework.

Areas for improvement

The current force policy identifies the ACC (territorial policing and partnerships) as the strategic lead for child abuse investigations. Although there is clarity among the two ACPO officers and staff within the SPPU, the force policy should be amended to reflect that ACC (operational support) is the strategic lead.

Child abuse investigation is not detailed within the force policing plan or control strategy. However, violent crime is detailed within both and the control strategy has been amended for the current year to include a section that specifically relates to protecting vulnerable people. Equally, the Cheshire policing strategy for 2006–09 makes specific reference to the force implementing the relevant NCPE guidance on child protection. The force should raise the focus on child abuse investigation and measuring achievement by having this area specifically included within the control strategy or policing plan for each BCU.

The current force policy provides guidance on the role and responsibilities at a strategic level although it refers to the wrong ACC. At a tactical level it provides clear guidance on the role of communications staff and staff within the PPU. Given that operational responsibility is locally devolved but with strategic responsibility retained centrally, the links between the two should be clear. These links are being made in practice but are not captured within policy. In particular, the force policy should identify the role of the BCU commander and their crime manager and identify the correct ACC in order to strengthen the chain of accountability.

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Child protection is not part of the force's strategic threat assessment process. The force should undertake strategic analysis of child abuse, including the use of partnership data, developing appropriate control strategies at both a force and BCU level.

The force has not undertaken any themed audit of NCRS compliance in the child abuse investigation area. The force should consider the issue of NCRS when reviewing child abuse investigations, with particular regard to the recording of crimes following referrals to the police.

A number of individuals who have been within the PPU's for a number of years are to be ICIDP trained on a voluntary basis. The inspection team noted that some BCUs had a more structured approach to joint agency training than others. It is essential that all staff working in the area of child abuse investigations are trained and refreshed to current high standards. The force should consider undertaking a systematic skills audit at all ranks within the PPU's to ensure that minimum standards are maintained and training provided in priority order.

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Protecting Vulnerable People – Domestic Violence

GRADE	GOOD
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National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1	13	27	2

National contextual factors

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

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

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

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

Contextual factors

The constabulary is member of CDAP, which is a well developed multi-agency partnership that has made a significant contribution to the reduction of domestic abuse by supporting victims and working with perpetrators.

The force has a well developed policy and practices and significant scrutiny is applied to assure compliance with these.

Strengths

The ACC (territorial policing and partnerships) has the strategic lead for domestic violence investigations and is actively involved and demonstrably committed to reducing domestic abuse, being the chair of CDAP. At a national level he is a member of the ACPO National Domestic Violence Group and is the lead for stalking and harassment.

The ACC (territorial policing and partnerships) is also the portfolio holder for partnership working, with the portfolio responsibility for crime investigation being held by the ACC (operational support). The links between these business areas are made at various informal meetings and through the work of the SPPU.

Domestic violence is a force strategic priority and is specifically included in the level 2 control strategy.

Domestic violence is a standing item on the force PIM agenda and a specific performance measurement tool exists for arrests made at domestic incidents. The constabulary achieved an arrest rate of over 52% in 2006/07 compared with the MSF rate of 33%.

BCU crime managers are identified as the BCU champions in relation to domestic violence, attending quarterly meetings chaired by the ACC (territorial policing and partnerships) in order to drive the issue forward by demonstrating the strategic priority placed on this area of business.

All areas have dedicated domestic violence co-ordinators. The Western and Eastern BCU co-ordinators are employed by Cheshire County Council while the Northern BCU's co-ordinators are employed by Halton and Warrington Borough Council together with the community safety partnerships.

The police authority is actively involved in each of the eight CDRPs and is represented by a lead member and police authority officer. Their role is to support and scrutinise ongoing work, including that in relation to domestic violence. In addition, there are two lead members specifically for the area of domestic violence and a further two members are actively involved with CDAP and have undertaken 'survivor' focus group work together with the ACC (territorial policing and partnerships).

There is police authority representation on the safer and stronger communities group, a Cheshire, Halton and Warrington multi-agency forum. This group receives performance and activity reports, manages the LAAs that contain targets relating to domestic violence, and receives reports in relation to the local PSA target for domestic violence reduction.

A written accountability framework for domestic violence exists within the force policy, with defined lines of strategic and operational responsibility from practitioners through to chief officer lead. The framework includes the quality of first response, investigations and evidence gathering. Accountability is well managed in practice through structures that ensure that those with operational responsibility are accountable at a strategic level.

The current force policy provides guidance on the role and responsibilities at a strategic level. At a tactical level it provides clear guidance on the role of communications staff, the quality of first response, investigations and evidence gathering and the role of staff within the PPU's.

There is specific inclusion of domestic violence within the force's policing strategy, force control strategy and the BCU policing plans.

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CDAP has a strategic management group to oversee and improve the combined efforts of this effective and well developed multi-agency group. They achieve this through regular meetings where they co-ordinate recommendations from CDAP and develop collectively agreed priorities, encourage self-assessment, and introduce and monitor development plans.

Domestic violence forums operate in all areas to develop locally responsive service delivery, overseen by the CDRPs, and to ensure that strategies are consistent with the force policies and procedures.

There are agreed joint performance measures in place within CDAP, including for a reduction in numbers of repeat victims and reported incidents of domestic violence and an increase in the number of prosecutions in relation to domestic violence incidents.

Policy guidance and procedures are consistent with the ACPO/NCPE guidance on investigating domestic violence and ACPO guidance on police officers who commit domestic violence-related criminal offences. This guidance clearly sets out procedures to be followed in respect of reporting, responding to and investigating domestic violence, and this is supported by a manual issued to all officers setting out the minimum standard of investigation.

All police officers have recently been provided by the force with the *Making People Safer* minimum standards manual. This manual is easily carried by front-line officers and incorporates guidance on specific action to be taken on receipt of a report of a domestic violence incident, the initial response to be undertaken, and guidance on the investigation to be pursued. It also reinforces the force's commitment for positive action to be taken by attending officers.

The profile of domestic violence has been raised with the instigation of a number of strategically led campaigns, firstly in the Northern BCU and then force-wide.

The constabulary has recently undertaken a domestic violence murder review. While undertaking this, they liaised with the Home Office PPU on guidance in advance of national practice documents.

An honour-based violence working group has been established and involves the diversity unit, SPPU and IAG. The force is proactively seeking to expand this into a multi-agency group. This work is being championed by a detective chief inspector who sits on the ACPO honour-based violence working group.

The DCC sits on the regional professional standards board. This forum allows the sharing of good practice, lessons learnt and Independent Police Complaints Commission recommendations in all areas of policing.

Daily tasking meetings at BCUs review domestic violence incidents, with particular focus upon positive action at scene which results in a good level of compliance with policy on initial actions by response officers.

The force has effective command and control recording procedures in place. These ensure that domestic violence incidents are correctly identified on the command and control systems so that officers can be deployed in accordance with force policy and supported by in-force auditing to ensure compliance with the force policy on arrest and NCRS.

Daily tasking meetings at BCUs review domestic violence incidents, with particular focus on positive action at the scene that results in a good level of compliance with the policy on

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initial actions by response officers. These incidents are identified by the PPU staff reviewing all domestic violence incidents recorded on the command and control system.

There is clear guidance to staff in relation to the recording of domestic violence incidents. Control room staff have received training in the deployment of officers (PASS policy) from the SPPU. National Standards for Incident Recording and specialist training in relation to the domestic violence policy have been provided to control room staff by the SPPU.

There are specific prompts within the formatted text on the command and control system that assist the operator in obtaining the required information to comply with the force policy on deployment to incidents of domestic violence.

The force operates an intrusive supervision procedure within the rapid deployment centre in the form of general incident searches at least hourly. This ensures that deployments are made to all domestic violence incidents appropriately and in line with policy. A systematic process of auditing in relation to every aspect of a domestic violence incident ensures that policy is complied with and positive action is taken.

Critical incident flags are routinely applied to locations of concern, which regularly include domestic violence. These flags are on the command and control system and alert operators as new incidents are created. They can be updated 24/7 by control room staff at the request of officers and staff.

Relevant computer checks on individuals are undertaken, subject to time constraints and pressures of work in the communications room, on receipt of domestic violence incidents.

Specialist officers are supported primarily by CAVA, which holds a significant amount of information and is accessible to all staff at 'read only' access. Specialist officers have editing access to CAVA whereby they can create records and maintain details of ongoing investigations. Supervisors within the PPU have the required managerial access to close CAVA incidents.

Timely risk identification and assessment procedures are in place and are based on NCPE guidance. These are applied by the referral unit detective sergeant when assessing the Form 40a in conjunction with the Police National Computer (PNC), previous CAVA reports and other databases. This risk assessment is recorded on CAVA, enabling the appropriate allocation of investigations or referral through to independent domestic violence advocates, victim support services, social services and other agencies.

Very high and high risk indications will lead to an active input from specialist domestic violence investigators. A medium or standard risk indicator will result in support from other partner agencies.

Any withdrawal of support for a prosecution prompts a review of the victim's safety through the PPU referral unit. An officer will submit a further Form 40a in order that a further assessment can be made of the victim's safety and to assess whether any further services or support would be appropriate.

If a perpetrator of domestic violence is sentenced to a community domestic violence programme, this is recorded on CAVA and the offender is then flagged on the system, enabling ease of identification by referral unit staff to trigger the agreed information-sharing process. All such offenders are subject to management at level 2 MAPPA.

Domestic violence officers and supervisors are routinely utilised during domestic homicide investigations. Following the instigation of such an investigation, the senior investigating officer (SIO) liaises closely with the PPU to access all relevant databases in order to provide

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evidence for the investigation and interview those domestic violence officers involved with the victim or perpetrator.

There is limited evidence that the force is using NIM processes to inform strategic priorities for the investigation of domestic violence. When a person of specific concern is identified, they are routinely included within daily intelligence briefings. The force has PROMS, which can be used to manage a problem-solving response to specific issues.

Submission of Form 40a leads to the identification of children living within a household where domestic violence is occurring. Throughout the referral process this information can be allocated within the PPU to any relevant business area. There is an electronic exchange of information with all relevant social services departments so that the form is transferred immediately and directly to an assessment team.

For those households where the domestic violence threshold is not met but lower level domestic incidents occur repeatedly, each referral unit has an agreement with their respective advocacy and support services.

In April 2007, the force had 18 officers identified as domestic violence officers, equating to a full-time equivalent of 15.3 officers. The officers worked in one of three PPUs, each of which has two operational sites. In one BCU there is one detective sergeant; in another there is a detective sergeant at each site who splits their time between child abuse and domestic violence issues (as a result of a geographic split); and at the third BCU there are two detective sergeants.

Each PPU retains a referral unit that manages all referrals for domestic violence and child abuse issues. The units have a detective sergeant in charge of two officers and administrative support.

Supervisors of domestic violence officers are able to refer staff to the occupational health unit for support on a case-by-case basis. Individual issues are addressed through the regular workload meetings where welfare needs are an agenda item for discussion.

Any domestic violence officer who is ICIDP-trained can provide county night cover on rotation, but domestic violence officers are not routinely abstracted for high-visibility patrols or non-PPU functions.

The working hours of domestic violence officers are determined locally, with staffing levels at the discretion of BCU commanders. Each BCU area has a detective sergeant with specific responsibility for the management of domestic violence officers and PPU detective inspectors are responsible for this and the closely related business areas of public protection and child abuse. Where supervisors have responsibility for other disciplines, these are always within the PPU arena, for example child abuse, and they are not used for unrelated work.

Domestic violence officers and their supervisors have job descriptions, with role profiles developed in line with the integrated competency framework and linked to their PDRs.

Domestic violence officers are located in multi-disciplinary PPUs and are on occasion called upon to provide resilience to other business areas within the PPU. They do not routinely undertake duties outside the PPU arena.

There is evidence of a structured approach to the supervision of domestic violence investigations, including quality control of recording, incident attendance and investigation

standards.

When a report of a domestic violence incident is received, the call taker creates an incident log and assigns an appropriate code identifying that it is a domestic incident. TPT supervisors are responsible for monitoring the actions of their staff at domestic violence incidents. Prior to the closure of a domestic violence incident log, a review should be completed by a communications supervisor. As part of the incident finalisation process, any variation between the initial report and the subsequent result attracts a detailed update to assure NCRS compliance.

Reported incidents of domestic violence are also routinely audited by the force crime and incident registrars to ensure both policy and crime-recording compliance.

Domestic violence incidents are subject to oversight and scrutiny at the BCU daily T&CG meetings to ensure that force policy and standards are maintained with regard to positive action. Where an arrest has not been made or has not been possible, a tasking is instigated.

Each of the PPU's has a detective inspector lead and at least one detective sergeant responsible for domestic violence issues. When serious incidents occur and are dealt with by the PPU, the case is managed and recorded on CAVA. The detective sergeant undertakes close supervision of individual cases and the workloads of domestic violence officers.

The force has completed audits of the incident identification codes together with the level of compliance with Form 40a submission by responding officers. This has helped them identify where additional focus needs to be applied within the recording processes surrounding domestic violence incidents.

There is some use of management information to monitor performance and plans are in place to introduce central auditing of all aspects of protecting vulnerable people. Quarterly meetings are held with all PPU detective inspectors and these are used as a forum for the introduction of good practice across the BCUs. Management information is fed through the PIM process through senior management to ACPO in order to monitor performance.

The impact of domestic violence enforcement campaigns are closely monitored by the SPPU, with formal evaluation and recommendations being passed to the BCU commanders. This has resulted in further initiatives, such as the trialling of domestic violence champions on some teams.

Management information in relation to the high numbers of low-level domestic incidents that do not meet the domestic violence threshold are being used to inform the strategic development of advice and information services by partner agencies, in both statutory and voluntary sectors, through the domestic violence forums.

There are agreed joint performance measures with other agencies which were determined through discussion and agreement within the domestic violence forums. The measures to increase reporting, reduce repeat incidents, and bring more offenders to justice are used to identify areas for improvement and have led to the development of support services. The information supplied by the force is used by partner agencies to determine the strategic development of domestic violence services.

There is a planned approach to training of both specialist and non-specialist staff using local adaptations of NPIA modules in domestic violence.

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The force has recognised and acted upon the need to train all domestic violence investigators and supervisors in ICIDP. All supervisors are detectives and around 40% of staff are already trained or currently on the ICIDP training programme.

PPU supervisors are encouraged to attend both the enhanced interview and the interview co-ordinators course provided as part of PIP.

As part of the force's ICIDP process, all trainee investigators will spend a three-month period within a PPU to develop their knowledge and expertise in this area.

CDAP provides multi-agency domestic violence training which is accessible to officers as well as to a wide variety of partners. The PPU domestic violence officers receive a minimum of multi-agency training to level 1 to allow access to the level 2 and 3 training provided by the partner agencies involved in the LSCB.

PPU staff are able to access and are informed of diversity training pertinent to domestic violence. This has recently included forced marriages, male rape, female genital mutilation and mental health awareness training.

The detective inspector from the SPPU has provided awareness inputs to uniform staff on training days, which included inputs on domestic violence issues. Trainers from the relationship centre for Halton and Warrington co-deliver domestic violence awareness training with the SPPU as part of the force induction training for new recruits.

CDAP has been instrumental in the development of numerous initiatives to address domestic violence through multi-agency problem solving. Initiatives include family safety units, specialist domestic violence courts, independent domestic violence advocates, independent sexual violence advocates, domestic violence co-ordinators, voluntary perpetrator programmes and MARACs.

The force has provided accommodation for the recently established domestic violence units and has provided funding for the implementation costs of the Lifeline voluntary perpetrator programme following a successful pilot in one area.

The SPPU has provided training to staff in all A&E departments in the county in support of a domestic violence referral protocol. The raised level of awareness among hospital staff has resulted in well over 95% of domestic violence victims agreeing to be referred to the police. Victims often travel from outside the force area for treatment and partners noted that the force provided a timely and appropriate response regardless of where the incident took place.

Partners are invited to the domestic violence champions' meeting held by the ACC in two BCUs. Structures to include partners in the third BCU are under development.

There are established specialist domestic violence courts in Halton and Chester.

The force has completed a number of domestic violence enforcement campaigns that have been fully evaluated.

Work in progress

The force is pursuing the development of Restorative Justice initiatives through the reassurance programme board. The views and perspectives of the victims of domestic violence are an important element of this. This work provides an important insight into the

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effects and consequences of domestic violence and will be incorporated into an awareness-raising conference for front-line officers.

The ACC (territorial policing and partnerships) has initiated an assessment of the force's practices and procedures against the ACPO guidance on harassment. Once that has been completed, a force policy will be developed and this will be reflected within the current force policy on domestic violence.

To enhance the application of the force policy within the operational setting, initiatives are being trialled at BCUs to provide enhanced training/awareness to staff, who will then become champions for their respective teams. This will include training those champions in the use of camera equipment for the purpose of better evidence gathering.

CAVA is to be incorporated in the Atlas system within the current financial year and consideration is being given to mobile data solutions for the submission of Form 40a.

Harassment notices are currently held at the enquiry desks within the BCUs. Work is being undertaken by the force administration of justice department to progress a system for ensuring that this information is readily accessible on Atlas.

The force is currently developing a force strategy in relation to preventing domestic violence homicide, working closely with the MARAC and the force major investigation team.

The force control strategy has recently changed to include specific focus on domestic violence. The FIB is therefore reviewing the focus of its analytical capability to support the development of products relating to domestic violence.

Staffing levels are devolved to BCU commanders with the rationale that domestic violence officers and their supervisors should be dedicated to their purpose. These staffing levels were originally defined in April 2005 as part of the Taking Control programme. The force has commissioned a review of staffing and workload levels for domestic violence officers from the performance improvement review team.

The force has fully committed to the establishment of a SARC in the county. This dedicated facility will provide continuous cover to investigate incidents of adult and child sexual assault, either through self-referral or through referral by the police or other partner agencies. The site will also provide appropriate aftercare, counselling and sexual health screening, etc. Partner agencies that have expressed support for the SARC model and Cheshire Police Authority have committed to £800,000 of capital investment.

MARACs are in the process of being introduced across the county, with the police playing a lead role. A database has been established in each BCU to facilitate the effective identification of victims for referral to the MARAC. In conjunction with this approach, the force has in place an agreed referral protocol with the fire service to identify homes where fire preventative measures can be employed effectively.

Areas for improvement

The current force policy provides guidance on roles and responsibilities at a strategic level. At a tactical level it provides clear guidance on the role of communications staff, the quality of first response, investigations and evidence gathering, and the role of staff within the PPU. Given that operational responsibility is devolved locally but strategic responsibility is retained centrally, the links between the two should be clear. These links are being made in practice but are not captured within policy. In particular, the force policy should identify the

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role of the BCU commander and BCU crime manager in order to strengthen the chain of accountability.

Currently domestic violence is not included in the BCU control strategies, although protecting vulnerable people does feature in the force control strategy. The force should consider raising accountability in this area through inclusion within the BCU control strategies.

Every domestic violence incident requires the completion of a Form 40a and submission to the referral unit. The completion of this is key to the progression of ongoing support and assistance by both the force and partners. The force has recognised that the completion of this form has often not taken place, and blockages in the submission process also delay passing information in many cases. Local focus has been applied in one BCU for some time and this has improved the submission levels and speed. The force has applied focus from chief officer team level across all BCUs and is considering changes to systems and processes over the long term to streamline the system. The force should continue to develop process solutions and drive a high level of compliance to assure that extensive multi-agency responses can be instigated in a timely manner in every case.

Although there is auditing of incidents created on the command and control system, the force has not undertaken any themed audit of NCRS compliance in the domestic violence investigation area. The force should consider the issue of NCRS when reviewing domestic violence investigations and should have particular regard to the recording of crimes following referrals to the police.

The force policy makes no reference to the importance of ongoing reviews of the initial risk assessment, apart from in cases where a victim withdraws consent for a prosecution. Throughout every investigation, information will come to light that will inform the risk assessment process. In order to demonstrate a defensible decision-making process, the force should consider explicitly stating within the force policy that the information gained as part of the investigation should be used to identify risk factors and be fed into the risk assessment process.

The SPPU has undertaken two limited problem profiles to help it evaluate specific domestic violence initiatives. It is important that the force fully understands the strategic issues surrounding domestic violence so that focused tactical responses can be implemented. The force should consider focusing in more detail on this area of violent crime within the strategic and tactical assessment process on a regular basis.

Force policy identifies that victim personal statements should be completed as part of domestic violence investigations. These are used for the more serious cases but are not generally produced as part of investigations completed by TPT officers. Victim personal statements are an important element within all domestic violence investigations and allow the victim to explain the impact the incident has had on them. The force should ensure that they are routinely used in all instances of domestic violence.

Within BCUs there is a lack of good supervision of the domestic violence process at sergeant level. This has already been highlighted by HMIC in a separate report considering domestic violence data quality. The referral Form 40a should be signed off by the supervisor, but despite this being highlighted in October 2006, there is still a history of late submission and failures to complete the form at all. The force policy addresses this issue and sets out the responsibilities of supervisors. Internal audits are undertaken to help the force understand the level of this problem and in one BCU the referral unit sergeant takes personal responsibility for chasing outstanding forms from officers. While alternative IT

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solutions are being progressed, as detailed above, the force should take steps to ensure rigorous compliance with policy in this area.

A number of individuals who have been within the PPU's for a number of years are to be ICIDP-trained on a voluntary basis. The inspection team noted that some BCUs had a more structured approach to joint agency training than others. It is essential that all staff working in the area of domestic violence investigations are trained and refreshed to current high standards. The force should consider undertaking a systematic skills audit at all ranks within the PPU's to ensure that minimum standards are maintained and training provided in priority order.

Protecting Vulnerable People – Public Protection

GRADE

FAIR

National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
2	16	23	2

National contextual factors

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

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

Category 1 – Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs)

Category 2 – violent and other sex offenders

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contextual factors

Nationally established MAPPA are employed for the supervision and management of sexual and violent offenders who pose the highest risk of serious harm to the public. These arrangements involve an agency identifying an individual whom they assess as more likely than not to commit a serious offence. A risk assessment is made by the agency that first raises a concern about an offender. A meeting is then convened involving other relevant agencies, from which an effective risk management plan is drawn up.

Offenders who are managed under MAPPA include all registered sex offenders (RSOs) and all those sentenced to 12 months or more in prison for a violent or sexual offence.

The force has low, medium and high-risk offenders being managed at both level 1 and level 2, with offenders assessed as not posing a high risk to the public (level 1) being managed by a single agency and offenders assessed as posing a high risk to the public (level 2) requiring multi-agency management through a local risk management meeting (LRMM) structure. These meetings are held monthly throughout Cheshire, Halton and Warrington. For the small number of offenders who are the most dangerous, very senior staff from the agencies involved effectively develop a risk management plan that ensures that resources are allocated to manage those offenders. In these cases meetings are held as the need arises (multi-agency public protection panels/level 3).

The police, prison and probation services are the responsible authority and hold the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that MAPPA is effectively implemented and managed. Senior managers from all these agencies come together with other agencies involved in these processes under an SMB.

The total number of RSOs managed by the constabulary in the first quarter of 2007 stood at 816, rising from 730 and 603 in the preceding quarters. A number of these individuals are held in custody and previously resided in the county. The constabulary's involvement with these individuals is generally limited until plans are being made to manage their release from custody.

The number of RSOs being managed within the community stood at 664 in the first quarter of 2007. Of these, 579 were being managed at level 1, 80 at level 2 and 5 through the multi-agency public protection panels/level 3 process.

The force has dedicated specialist staff within each PPU for the management of RSOs – sex offender liaison officers (SOLOs) – and one of the Constabulary's BCUs has a violent offender liaison officer (VOLO) dealing with violent offenders in an intelligence-gathering and dissemination role. The VOLO supports work undertaken by the probation service, which has overall responsibility for this category of offender.

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These officers work within the PPU's and are supervised by detective sergeants and detective inspectors. The work of the PPU's is supported by a Violent and Sex Offenders Register (ViSOR) registrar and a ViSOR assistant based within the SPPU.

The constabulary and the police authority have acted to support these functions by introducing dedicated administrative support for the SOLOs in the face of a steadily increasing workload.

Strengths

The ACC (operational support) has specific portfolio responsibility for public protection and is the lead force representative on the MAPPA SMB. He chairs the SMB every other year, with the assistant chief officer of the probation service chairing the interim years.

The heightening of the status of the SMB chair's role is a recent development, with the head of the SPPU, a detective chief inspector, previously undertaking this function. The change not only reflects national good practice but also ensures that the high level of potential risk that this area of work represents is recognised and responded to effectively.

The head of the SPPU is a member of the SMB and is chair of the training subgroup. A member of the SPPU attends all meetings and working subgroups of the SMB.

The ACC (operational support) chairs a quarterly protecting vulnerable people working group within the force that provides clear leadership, monitors progress, and influences strategic priorities in this area of business.

Public protection is a force strategic priority and is specifically included within the level 2 control strategy.

The profile of public protection is at a raised level within the constabulary, with BCU commanders aware of the risks being managed by their PPU's. They receive regular strategic updates from their detective inspectors and continue to apply focus on this area of policing to minimise the risks to the public.

The police authority lead for children and young people has good oversight of that area of work as well as reviewing other aspects of the PPU's' work, holding one-to-one meetings with the head of the SPPU.

Recognising the issues facing SOLOs in managing workloads, the police authority approved additional administrative support posts.

There are lines of accountability outlined in the PPU SOP, although currently there is no MAPPA policy in place and the SOP is outdated. Performance is monitored through the work of the SMB at a high level, which focuses on agreed objectives and targets in the annual business plan.

Responsibility for policy and procedures relating to public protection lies with the SPPU, which also collates statistics and conducts quarterly meetings with BCU-based officers to disseminate best practice and drive the business area in a corporate and consistent fashion.

The force jointly funds with the probation service the full-time post of a probation officer MAPPA co-ordinator. The MAPPA co-ordinator has responsibility for monitoring attendance at level 2 and level 3 MAPPA meetings and for assuring a corporate approach to managing offenders. The MAPPA co-ordinator ensures compliance with national MAPPA guidance, and, when unable to personally attend meetings, receives the minutes and risk management plans for further assessment.

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Public protection is managed by staff within each of the PPU's, with the SOLO/VOLO accountable to specialist detective sergeants, who in turn are accountable to the PPU detective inspectors. Each detective inspector is line-managed by the detective chief inspector crime manager, who is accountable to the BCU leadership team. The management of sex/violent offenders on a day-to-day basis is devolved to the BCU commanders.

The SMB serious case review panel has agreed the terms of reference between partner agencies in relation to serious case reviews. The SMB is currently reviewing a case of domestic violence homicide. Additionally, the force has undertaken its own investigation, Operation Vogue, into the incident and surrounding circumstances.

Information-sharing protocols with key partners are in place. There are strong local links with social services and the probation service and collaboration at all levels to share and deal with issues. Processes are in place that allow information to be exchanged and a review to take place if an offender or potentially dangerous person commits a serious offence.

Within the SMB there is a monitoring and evaluation subgroup that has responsibility for performance monitoring and auditing. The force provides the required data to support the work of this group. Much of this data comes direct from the SOLOs. The force contributes to the SMB's training subgroup and joint agency training takes place both regionally and locally. The force provides accommodation facilities for training events, which is a key supporting function in the face of budgetary constraints.

There are a number of dedicated and committed staff working at the tactical level to deal with MAPPA issues and its management on behalf of the force and attempting to effectively manage the MAPPA process. Partners are satisfied with the force's contribution to the MAPPA process and there are clear lines of communication between the SPPU and Cheshire Probation Service.

Although there is no policy for the reporting, managing, responding to and investigating RSOs and violent and sexual offenders registered within the MAPPA process, the force has in place an overarching public protection policy supported by an SOP, which specialist staff have a thorough understanding of.

The SPPU detective inspector chairs quarterly meetings with BCU-based SOLOs where national issues, policy/strategic development, consultation, feedback on operational issues, training issues, resilience and good practice are discussed.

Clearly defined mechanisms are in place to identify and review risk and to ensure that, once risk is identified, assessed and agreed, an appropriate response is put in place and action is reviewed regularly. The risk assessment and decision-making processes are recorded on ViSOR, providing an auditable record of the process.

All specialist officers are trained in the use of RM 2000. SOLOs maintain a close and effective working relationship with both the probation service and the prison service and share relevant intelligence. Information is received on a regular basis from the probation service, prison service and other agencies, and relevant intelligence is discussed and assessed in MAPPA meetings and decisions recorded in the minutes. Where there are evident differences between risk management tools (ie RM 2000 and OASys), discussions are arranged with the relevant agencies and decisions are made using all the available intelligence.

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Prison liaison officers are identifying subjects who are still in prison and maximising proactive opportunities to develop intelligence that will help inform the risk assessment process and management following release.

Arrangements are in place to facilitate necessary meetings according to the various levels of cases. A review meeting will be held at the appropriate management level to examine any new information from visits or other sources and to decide on any change of risk or management level.

In level 1 cases, the PPU detective inspector and the SOLO will meet and review the case initially. The case will also be discussed at the earliest LRMM, where the risk management level and management plan will then be determined.

Level 2 cases are the subject of LRMMs held in each BCU on a monthly basis. These meetings are chaired by the PPU detective inspector and attended by the SOLO, with appropriate representation from the probation service, social services, housing and other partner agencies when required.

Level 3 case meetings are attended by the BCU crime manager or PPU detective inspector and are arranged and held according to need.

Home visits to RSOs are timetabled according to the perceived level of risk posed by the subject. The visits are conducted by specialist staff, SOLOs and VOLOs, ensuring that standards of intelligence gathering are consistent and that an evaluation of dynamic risk factors can be made. Home visits are recorded on ViSOR and, when appropriate, an intelligence report is submitted and is recorded on the force intelligence system.

In appropriate cases there are joint visits by the police and probation services as part of preparations for the MAPPA meetings.

Public protection is contained within the force control strategy. The ACC (operational support) has directed the inclusion of all high-risk individuals within the level 2 tasking process. This not only allows the force to understand the risk areas but also raises the profile of this area of business and places ownership at a strategic level.

The PPU brings issues surrounding the management of sex and dangerous offenders to the T&CG as necessary and has bid for, and received, level 2 support in appropriate cases. As part of the level 2 daily meeting, scope exists to flag up incidents around approved premises that may be linked to potential critical incidents. The location of approved premises is in the public domain, and demonstrations have taken place.

Following conviction of an individual for a relevant offence, all Cheshire courts fax the details of the conviction to a central point of contact in the force. Those details are then entered on the PNC and ViSOR as a nominal record and allocated to the appropriate SOLO via supervision.

All RSOs are flagged on the force intelligence system, enabling the ViSOR registrar and relevant SOLO to be aware of any interest or information in respect of that offender. SOLOs are required to routinely update intelligence about RSOs.

CAVA contains nominal details of RSOs. Individuals of specific interest have an occurrence marker to flag any incidents for the attention of the SOLO managing the individual's case.

The force has appointed a ViSOR registrar and a ViSOR assistant. Senior management utilise quarterly reports to maintain an overview of the workload levels of area SOLOs and to monitor and address any issues that may arise. Some resilience is provided in the central

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management of ViSOR, eg the registrar and assistant take leave at different times to maintain cover, and further resilience is provided by cross-training staff in closely related functions, eg the PNC.

When they were initially set up in April 2005, PPU worked a formal shift system providing seven-day-a-week and evening cover. This has now been adapted to better fit local need, based around staffing levels and working with partners. There has been some growth from the original establishments in recognition of the workloads of the SOLOs and as a result of restructuring other areas of work within BCUs to focus resources in this area of work.

The constabulary has in place seven full-time and one part-time dedicated SOLOs who have responsibility for the day-to-day management of RSOs. In addition, Northern BCU has appointed a part-time VOLO working 32 hours per week to deal with violent offenders. Any SOLO who is ICIDP-trained provides county night cover on rotation, although SOLOs are not routinely abstracted for high-visibility patrols or non-PPU functions. The working hours of the SOLOs/VOLO are determined locally, with staffing levels at the discretion of BCU commanders.

Each BCU area has a detective sergeant with specific responsibility for SOLO management. PPU detective inspectors are responsible for this and for the other closely related business areas. Where supervisors have responsibility for other disciplines, those disciplines are always within the PPU arena; they are not utilised for unrelated work. PPU supervisors have responsibility for both the welfare of their staff and the review of their cases. Supervisors and staff are co-located and work closely on a day-to-day basis, thus enabling any welfare or workload issues to be managed effectively.

Supervisors endorse and review risk levels, monitor home visits, and review actions and risk management plans. The decision-making process is recorded on the ViSOR system.

All staff working in the PPUs, the MAPPA co-ordinator, ViSOR registrar and ViSOR assistant have up-to-date specific job descriptions that are central to the PDR process. Role profiles are readily accessible via the force intranet and link into the integrated competency framework.

The force SOLOs and VOLO are provided with appropriate training and attend the following Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre training courses as a continuing programme: understanding sex offenders (foundation course), interviewing sex offenders, internet sex offenders (two-day course), sex offenders risk assessment and management in the community, and awareness of the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Training in MAPPA processes is organised and delivered through the training subgroup of the SMB.

ViSOR is fully implemented and centrally monitored by a registrar with administrative support. Through the utilisation of quarterly meetings and SPPU workshops, the use of ViSOR in a corporate and consistent manner across the force has been developed. This approach is resulting in a more corporate approach to achieving data standards in the BCUs and subsequent realisation of business benefits. Relevant personnel have appropriate access to ViSOR.

There are joint performance indicators that measure at a high level the activity of partners in the MAPPA process. Through these, the SMB can influence and challenge the performance of each agency and thereby drive improvement. This approach is driven by the SMB and is still developing.

A performance information process is managed through quarterly reports to the chief officer team. Quarterly statistics are provided by the SOLOs, including the numbers of subjects being managed, the level of perceived risk identified and the use of sexual offences

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prevention orders. This performance information is centrally collated and used as a diagnostic tool to identify areas for improvement. This approach has recently led to training being delivered to SOLOs by the force legal team in applications for foreign travel orders and the development of ViSOR SOPs.

The BCU commanders in some areas receive a monthly spreadsheet showing the status of SOLO activity to manage offenders.

There are effective links between staff dealing with RSOs and violent and sexual offenders managed under MAPPA and closely related disciplines such as serious violent and sexual crimes, domestic violence, child abuse and missing persons investigations. Information is effectively shared as each PPU is supported by a single referral unit that can allocate work through CAVA to child abuse investigators or other officers within the PPU as required.

Work in progress

The force identified a lack of corporacy in the way ViSOR is managed across BCUs. A draft policy is in place to address this issue and provides a clear level of accountability from ACC through administration support in respect of ViSOR issues.

The SMB's monitoring and evaluation subgroup has responsibility for performance monitoring and auditing. This group is in the process of developing an audit tool to facilitate effective auditing of MAPPA processes and risk assessment mechanisms such as RM 2000 and OASys. Attendance and contribution at meetings will be included in the criteria.

The MAPPA registrar is currently in the process of developing a template to be used for referrals for level 2 risk offenders, which will provide a more consistent approach to referrals across the county area. All referrals will be submitted through the MAPPA registrar.

ViSOR SOPs have been drafted and workshops held with practitioners at all levels up to ACC (operational support). These SOPs provide a clear level of accountability from ACC through administration support in respect of ViSOR issues.

The constabulary has in place seven full-time and one part-time dedicated SOLOs. The average number of RSOs managed by each SOLOs is above a notional constabulary target ratio of 1:50. PPUs have recruited dedicated public protection assistants who will provide administrative support to SOLOs.

A joint database is being developed with the probation service to assist in researching the status of sex offenders. This database will enable the identification of offenders who fall outside the MAPPA criteria but present a risk of harm, together with providing statistics on home visits and repeat offences for those managed through MAPPA.

The functionality of the OMEGA intelligence system ended in February 2007 and the force migrated to Atlas software. OMEGA used an automated system to highlight to SOLOs when flagged nominals were brought to the attention of the police through police checks or when an intelligence submission was generated. This functionality was not initially available on Atlas and the constabulary has prioritised work that will see a return to automatic notification of police interest in identified nominals.

The constabulary has commissioned a review of staffing and workload levels for SOLOs by the performance improvement review team.

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The constabulary has focused on the health and welfare of SOLOs and has introduced formal support processes through the occupational health unit. These processes are new and have not yet had time to embed.

The force is in the process of introducing PPU quality assurance inspection procedures, which will see formal auditing of the work of each PPU, including sex/violent offender management. Audits will be completed by the SPPU and reports submitted to the BCU commander. A programme of audits is being developed to allow a co-ordinated approach to the audit of key databases such as CAVA and ViSOR. A procedure has been drafted to undertake an annual health check in October 2007. The document also defines ongoing minimum standards of supervision for detective sergeants and detective constables within the PPU on an ongoing basis.

Areas for improvement

The force does not have in place a comprehensive force policy surrounding public protection. Although still to be formally approved, the draft ACPO/NCPE guidance for this area provides a good framework to develop this policy, which can subsequently be reviewed once the national guidance is approved. The force policy should make reference to the PPU structure and outline the various roles and responsibilities of staff within the constabulary. Such a policy will provide a clear framework for managing the risk posed by sex and violent offenders. The force should commence the drafting of a relevant policy or guidance, taking account of the unique context and staffing arrangements in which it is to be implemented, and ensure that appropriate specialised staff are involved in consultation and drafting exercises. Once approved, this policy should be effectively promulgated to relevant staff.

The ACC (operational support) is aware of the pressures placed upon SOLOs by the volume of work. Early in 2007, the SPPU was tasked with undertaking a review of all RSOs against an internal risk assessment template to identify the actual risk posed by individuals living the community. It was proposed that, following the assessment, the force's limited capacity would be focused on managing those who presented the greatest risk. At the time of the inspection only one BCU had started to use this process and BCU commanders were not all aware of this approach. There is an element of inconsistency in approach and the force should ensure that both the methodology and template are withdrawn from use or their value reiterated and progress driven.

Performance is monitored through the work of the SMB at a high level, focusing on agreed objectives and targets in the annual business plan. The SMB currently does not have an overview of the work of individual partners where single agency responses are involved. In particular, the SMB is not aware of the issues surrounding the management of visits to RSOs by the constabulary. As the strategic management group responsible for MAPPA arrangements, the SMB should consider developing its oversight arrangements to cover management activities in critical risk areas.

The SPPU detective inspector chairs quarterly meetings with BCU-based SOLOs where national issues, policy/strategic development, consultation, feedback on operational issues, training issues, resilience and good practice are discussed. The MAPPA registrar should attend all such meetings in PPUs to discuss common issues regarding the management of sex offenders and to share good practice among practitioners.

Those individuals who require management at level 3 represent the 'critical few', and as such they require detailed multi-agency involvement. Those representing the various agencies at the level 3 meetings must be of sufficient seniority to make decisions committing their agency's involvement. The constabulary has adopted the practice of

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representation at detective chief inspector level, with the PPU detective inspector deputising. Pending the provision of any national guidance, the constabulary should consider whether those individuals currently representing the organisation have sufficient authority in every case to commit resources, including specialist resources such as surveillance assets, without recourse to more senior officers. Having determined the level of authority required, the constabulary should introduce a process which assures that, in their absence, the presumption will be that attendance is delegated upward rather than downward within the organisation.

The focus of SOLOs is on very high and high-risk offenders, and capacity issues mean that medium and low-risk offenders are not visited as often as required. This problem had been identified by the constabulary force, which had placed reliance on the introduction of additional staff to undertake administrative work for SOLOs. The inspection team found that the constabulary was not aware of how up-to-date all visits were, and therefore could not clearly identify the risk it was managing. In some BCUs, SOLOs do not populate the 'date of next visit' field so as to avoid the administrative burden of responding to an overdue report on ViSOR. Recognising these issues, the constabulary has already commenced a detailed audit of the visits regime to better appreciate the significance of the situation and to address it. The force should take steps to improve the management of RSOs at all levels. Areas to consider as a priority include the following:

- The role of the SOLO should be reiterated to managers and staff. In some areas there has been 'role creep' and SOLOs are acting outside their remit by undertaking investigations and surveillance activities regarding RSOs. In addition, SOLOs are expected to undertake night detective cover and provide cover for other PPU duties. The force should consider ring-fencing the role to provide the capacity to undertake all responsibilities within the role and to get up to date with outstanding duties.
- The force does not currently have a policy on the frequency of visits. The frequency of home visits is determined for each case at the appropriate management level meeting, based on good practice guidelines: low risk – 12 monthly; medium – six monthly; high – three monthly; and very high – every month. The constabulary should determine the minimum timescales between home visits at all levels and include this within a force policy document.
- The force should ensure that ViSOR is used effectively and that necessary fields are completed.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The constabulary should ensure that strategic managers responsible for the various aspects of public protection have appropriate awareness of the MAPPA process, oversight of various associated management processes (including risk management and ViSOR) and are held to account through an agreed performance framework.

The registrar has recently developed IT routines on ViSOR that will allow the force to identify which home visits have been completed. Work is continuing to allow the force to identify through performance management approaches the gaps in home visits. It is essential that the force understands its level of compliance with risk management plans and can identify individual cases to managers in order that appropriate focus can be applied. A resilient monitoring process should be developed that is capable of scrutiny at both a strategic and tactical level against criteria that should be defined within the force policy.

There is no formal risk assessment process for either single agency or joint home visits to RSOs falling within MAPPA. The inspection team noted that a number of lone visits were

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being undertaken by SOLOs in an effort to manage the volume of work. The force, with the probation service, should work to develop an appropriate process to formally risk assess all levels of home visits. This will ensure that the health and safety of officers carrying out home visits is considered and addressed.

With the introduction of new staff within the PPU structure, there is a need to inform key MAPPA partners of changing roles, responsibilities and processes.

Refresher training should take place in regard to the general management of perpetrators and victims and in the use and documentation of risk management for home visits in accordance with health and safety requirements.

The ViSOR assistant identifies offenders who have had convictions since registration for unrelated offences. This approach to identification is not systematic. The force should develop a process to ensure that a review of the risk assessment is triggered whenever an offender comes to police notice.

The force has two approved premises with the key contact being through the BCUs' field intelligence officers rather than SOLOs. There was some confusion over whether plans are in place to deal with incidents at approved premises, although there are service level agreements. Following a TV programme, a formal review of arrangements at one premises was undertaken. The force should review its strategic and tactical links with approved premises to ensure that engagement is appropriate and at a suitable level and that effective plans to manage any change in risk are in place.

While most PPU practitioners spoke enthusiastically of their roles, acknowledging the progress that the force has made since the implementation of the Taking Control programme and the extent to which they are valued and supported, there was some concern about abstractions and a lack of corporacy. The inspection team identified limited awareness among BCU commanders of the second tier of risk assessment, which screens out visits to medium and low-level RSOs in the face of pressures on SOLOs. While formal auditing by the SPPU is already planned, it is essential that BCU commanders, who are operationally accountable for public protection issues, have effective measures to closely monitor the management of offenders registered within the MAPPA process on an ongoing basis. These processes should share learning across other BCUs and there should be a corporate response to issues undertaken by each PPU based on identified good practice.

At present the force has limited specialist audit capability to undertake regular scheduled audits of systems and processes associated with MAPPA and other related disciplines. An audit capability should be developed within the SPPU to undertake this specialist role. The force should ensure that a suitable audit regime is agreed and strictly followed.

The force identifies offenders who fall outside MAPPA criteria but present a risk of harm through intelligence gathering via key partners, eg the probation service, the prison service, domestic violence partnerships, mental health partnerships and others, and through internal NIM processes. This is a developing area of work for the constabulary, and one such individual has been managed through the MAPPA process as a result. The MAPPA process does not allow for the management of individuals in these circumstances, although the methodology is analogous. The constabulary should develop formal processes, outside the MAPPA arrangements, to build on the work already undertaken to manage those offenders who fall outside the MAPPA criteria but present a risk of harm.

The constabulary retains a vetting and disclosure unit and all officers and staff are subject to vetting before employment. A recent review of the force's approach to the ongoing vetting of staff within the organisation has been completed and will see periodic reviews of the vetting

of some staff throughout their careers, based on their role. The force should ensure that all specialist officers and staff working with children and vulnerable adults are included within the ongoing vetting processes, which are to be introduced in a manner commensurate with their level of access to these vulnerable groups.

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Protecting Vulnerable People – Missing Persons

GRADE

GOOD**National grade distribution**

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1	21	21	0

National contextual factors

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

Contextual factors

Cheshire Constabulary has raised the profile of missing persons investigations by the active involvement of the ACC (operational support).

The daily level 2 briefing sheet circulated to senior officers and police authority members records the number of missing persons each day by risk category, with details of high-risk incidents provided.

Each BCU retains a missing persons co-ordinator who has an overview of all ongoing enquiries and develops partnership responses to reduce missing persons episodes. This approach has seen considerable successes.

Strengths

The ACC (operational support) has specific portfolio responsibility for missing persons, which is a force strategic priority and is specifically included in the force control strategy.

Clear focus, leadership and direction in this area are provided by the ACC (operational support), who regularly contacts BCU commanders direct for updates on identified high-risk missing persons and who chairs the quarterly meetings of the SPPU with the BCU crime managers and the detective inspectors from each PPU. This meeting provides a forum to progress policy/process improvement issues and non-compliance with policies in all areas of protecting vulnerable people.

Although the strategic lead is not responsible for territorial policing or partnerships, he retains a close working relationship with his ACPO colleague and has recently signed off data-sharing protocols in relation to those missing from care, the Child Rescue Alert and the Missing People (formerly the National Missing Persons Helpline).

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The police authority lead for children and young people has good oversight of the SPPU and PPUs in respect of missing persons, holding regular meetings with the SPPU detective chief inspector.

Police authority members all receive the force's daily level 2 briefing document, which includes details of the number, by category, of missing persons reported in the previous 24 hours and additional information on high-risk missing persons.

A written accountability framework for missing persons exists within the force policy. This includes the role of the SIO, with clearly defined lines of strategic and operational responsibility from practitioners through to chief officer lead.

Force policy makes it clear that BCU commanders and departmental heads are responsible for delivering the high standards required, while the detective superintendent (crime operations) has ownership, strategic direction and responsibility for the development of the SPPU functions within missing persons issues.

The force missing persons policy was formally adopted in January 2007 and uses the ACPO/NCPE guidance as its framework, clearly setting out the recording process, risk assessment, tactical options, supervisory responsibilities and review requirements for the management and investigation of missing persons. This was widely publicised and is available to all staff via the force intranet. This policy has been highlighted for review in October 2007, recognising the planned changes to systems used to record missing persons within Cheshire Constabulary.

All officers have recently been issued with the minimum standards manual *Making People Safer*. This manual is a small, lightweight document that officers can take on patrol with them and provides an aide-memoire regarding the practice to be adopted in relation to missing persons investigations.

Effective recording procedures are in place that allow for the active supervision and review of missing persons investigations. Every report of a missing person generates a command and control log that records key actions and decisions made. Some high-risk missing persons cases are managed via PROMS, which allows for more detailed oversight of activity.

Following initial police attendance, the officer completes a paper-based missing persons report which includes a formal risk assessment. A copy of the missing persons report form is passed to the PPU referral unit, which enters details of the individual on CAVA. Once a person is found, a further form is submitted to update the CAVA entry.

The inspection team noted a high degree of recognition among communications staff of the potential for a report of a missing person to lead to a critical incident. They were aware of their role in the initial risk assessment and flagged all incidents to their supervisor and the force incident manager (FIM).

Communications staff had a detailed knowledge of the 'missing from care' protocol, which draws a distinction between the police response to an unauthorised absence and to a missing persons report.

There is evidence that missing persons are routinely considered within appropriate NIM business processes at both level 1 and level 2.

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Incidents of missing persons are proactively scrutinised by the BCU senior management team at the daily management meeting. At the fortnightly T&CG meeting, relevant missing persons enquiries are considered.

To increase the profile of missing persons and ensure that potential critical incidents are identified and appropriate responses activated, missing persons are a standing item at the daily level 2 meeting. The FIM has details of every new missing person in the previous 24 hours and provides details of all high-risk missing persons at the meeting.

Timely risk identification and assessment processes are in place, and, once the risk level is identified and assessed, appropriate and timely responses are instigated. Risk is continuously reviewed in a dynamic manner, with a series of formal reassessments of risk identified within the force policy.

The force uses the risk assessment process identified in the ACPO/NCPE guidance on the management and recording of missing persons. Call takers have a summary document available to them to help establish the level of risk at the time of the first report. This assessment is supplemented by every missing persons incident being routinely referred to the communications supervisor and FIM.

The officer deployed to the scene completes a missing persons report that incorporates a risk assessment matrix. That assessment is discussed with the duty inspector, who reviews the level of risk attached to the missing person. When a high risk is identified, policy requires: the immediate deployment of police resources; involvement of a member of the BCU senior management team, or similar command level, in the examination of initial lines of enquiry and approval; the appointment of an SIO; and appropriate staffing levels.

A structured review process is undertaken for all missing persons, and all cases are raised at the daily management team meeting. Those assessed as being of medium risk or high risk are reviewed by the BCU chief inspector (operations) on at least a weekly basis. Long-term missing persons cases are reviewed by a senior detective at 28 days and then reviewed by a senior officer at three months, six months and then annually, or as directed at the last review .

Each BCU has a missing persons co-ordinator whose role is to ensure that the missing persons policies and protocols are strictly adhered to within the BCU, through the constant review of missing persons cases, and to maximise the intelligence-gathering opportunities from missing persons who have returned.

At the time of the inspection, the constabulary's data quality unit was undertaking an audit of 40 missing persons enquiries.

There is evidence of case review to identify opportunities for preventative work and multi-agency responses. This has resulted in strong partnership approaches, which have led to a reduction in missing persons cases.

The force has developed a longer-term problem-solving approach to dealing with missing persons, particularly those missing from care homes, where a protocol has been established between the constabulary and public/private care providers. This has seen a reduction of 65% between July and September 2006 of missing persons cases as a result of prevention activity, correctly distinguishing between unauthorised absences and missing persons cases, and multi-agency problem solving in respect of repeat cases.

Connexions is a pilot project within Eastern BCU. All missing persons are referred to the project to enable a problem-solving approach to be adopted. The project also offers guidance and support to 13 to 18 year olds who run away.

October 2007

A three-year pilot project, 'Talk, Don't Walk', has been completed in the Warrington area. This was a problem-solving initiative focusing on the early identification of relationship issues leading to runaway episodes, with multi-agency support then being instigated. Over 16,000 people have been directly informed about the dangers of running away, with over 390 young runaways and their families being actively engaged in preventative work. This project won a national Safer and Stronger Communities Award and incidents of runaways have reduced by 256.

Work in progress

While all officers have access to the force policy and will be aware of their duties from basic training in relation to missing persons, a training programme is currently under development to raise the awareness of the issues surrounding missing persons, risk factors and the importance of the return interview as an intelligence-gathering opportunity.

The force is committed to implementing the Atlas record management system across all business areas. Missing persons will be included in this system, which will replace the paper record with an electronic equivalent. The force reprioritised other areas of work to deliver this product, which will be available from November 2007.

The electronic record will be updated by the officer attending the scene, allowing senior officers immediate access to the missing persons report, and facilitating an immediate review of the risk assessment and the identification of any urgent lines of enquiry. Any previous photograph of the missing person (eg if they have been a missing person before or are known to the police) will self-populate onto the system.

This system will also enable the force to effectively record and store information immediately on other existing IT systems, including PNC and the Police National Missing Persons Bureau, and to communicate with other forces and organisations.

The potential for a missing persons report to lead to a critical incident is an area for inclusion within the training presently being developed for both front-line officers and call-management staff and will build on current awareness within the force.

When CAVA is integrated into the Atlas IT system in March 2008, it is anticipated that this will enable the missing persons co-ordinators to identify and progress in a more systematic manner problem profiles for individuals or care homes where missing persons episodes are occurring repeatedly. This should enable the force to build on a pilot project undertaken in this area in Warrington.

The force investigated a reported missing person that developed into a homicide enquiry, with apparent links to domestic honour-based violence and forced marriage. As a result of an analysis and review of the force response to this incident, an honour-based violence working group was established involving the force diversity unit, SPPU and IAG. The force is proactively seeking to expand this into a multi-agency group. This work is being championed by a detective chief inspector who sits on the ACPO honour-based violence working group.

A PPU quality assurance inspection procedure, which includes the sampling of three missing persons reports, has been approved and will be implemented in October 2007. This

will provide the springboard for management information to be used by senior managers to monitor performance.

Areas for improvement

The current force policy identifies the ACC (territorial policing and partnerships) as the strategic lead for missing persons. Although there is clarity among the two ACPO officers and staff within the SPPU, the force policy should be amended to reflect that the ACC (operational support) is the strategic lead.

In April 2007, the force implemented the Child Rescue Alert system, a national approach to rapidly circulating details of missing children in certain circumstances. Response constables and sergeants demonstrated a clear understanding of their role within 'missing from home' enquiries but were not aware of this procedure, while communications staff were aware that this had been introduced and would look to the FIM for guidance. Early use of the Child Rescue Alert system in appropriate cases is an essential tool and awareness should be developed among staff in a manner commensurate with their role.

The force policy provides detailed guidance on the importance of ongoing reviews of the risk assessment and allocates specific responsibilities in respect of formal reviews to duty inspectors, supervisory detectives and the chief inspector (operations) and for ongoing reviews at the daily management meeting. Within the extensive policy document, the process of review is discussed in a number of areas and does not provide immediate clarity on responsibilities and accountability. Consideration should be given to providing clarity for those staff new to their roles, perhaps by inclusion of Figure 3 of the ACPO/NCPE guidance ('A suggested model for the supervision of missing persons cases'), which is already embraced by the force.

The inspection team saw no systematic approach to reviewing 'missing from home' issues on a regular basis and using that to inform training, partnership and other needs. Although PPU quality assurance procedures were under development at the time of the inspection, these envisaged a dip sample of only three missing persons investigations per year. The force should introduce a systematic approach to auditing missing persons enquiries at both a local and force level, with lessons learnt being used to drive improvements force-wide.

October 2007

Developing Practice

TITLE: 'Talk, Don't Walk' – tackling the issue of young runaways

PROBLEM:

In 2002, Cheshire Constabulary statistics showed that running away was a growing problem in the Warrington area, with 820 reported incidents of young people missing in that year alone. Research has consistently shown running away to have subsequent adverse effects on both the young person and the community in relation to truancy, poor educational development, anti-social behaviour, involvement in crime and risk-taking activities. In 2002, the cost to Cheshire Constabulary, made up of investigating the missing episode as well as investigating the crimes the individuals were involved in, both as victims and offenders, was £2,789,254

SOLUTION:

Running away is an extreme response at any age and indicates that there are serious issues behind it. These are always connected with relationship problems; if left unresolved, the young person's behaviour will deteriorate to the point where they are rejected completely by their family and are then forced to leave the family home. 'Talk, Don't Walk' prevents that downward spiral and the associated trauma and emotional damage. In developing the project, Cheshire Constabulary engaged with partners across both the statutory and voluntary sectors as well as with at-risk groups and families where runaway behaviour had been identified. A detective with an extensive background in the field of abuse investigation was made available to the project to feed runaway referrals into an engagement and assessment service under the non-stigmatising umbrella of a voluntary sector organisation. A consistent approach is applied to the 'return home' interview and each family member has a support worker to enable them to identify and address personal issues before mediation and resolution of the intergenerational and relationship issues underlying the runaway behaviour. In this way, repeat incidents and sibling replication are reduced and often prevented. The project has also undertaken a significant awareness-raising programme, not only training professionals in the field but also educating young people on the dangers of running away. A 24-hour helpline, working in partnership with the national Runaway Helpline, is also available to offer support to young people and prevent missing incidents.

OUTCOME(S):

So far, over 16,000 Warrington people have been directly informed about the dangers of running away. The police project workers' role has become the template for best practice in 'missing from home' co-ordination and has been replicated across the force. Over 390 young runaways and their families have actively engaged in the preventative work and incidents of runaways have reduced by 256. The project has made cost savings of £1,064,679. Most importantly, the young people helped have better prospects for full citizenship, enhanced employment, stability and safety.

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Recommendations

Neighbourhood Policing

Recommendation 1

The constabulary should create a formal development plan with deliverables and key milestones to progress Neighbourhood Policing in a structured manner. The plan should include implementing an appropriate community intelligence infrastructure with associated systems and the development of community engagement methods such as key individual networks and community action meetings.

Recommendation 2

The constabulary should drive the development of community intelligence. It should ensure that all streams of community intelligence are identified, develop processes to analyse and disseminate community intelligence, and ensure that Neighbourhood Policing is fully integrated into the National Intelligence Model process.

Protecting vulnerable people

Recommendation 3

The constabulary should ensure that strategic managers responsible for the various aspects of public protection have appropriate awareness of the MAPPA process, oversight of various associated management processes (including risk management and ViSOR) and are held to account through an agreed performance framework.

Appendix: Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

A

ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ANPR	Automatic Number Plate Recognition

B

BCS	British Crime Survey
BCU	Basic Command Unit

C

CAM	Community Action Meeting
CAT	Community Action Team
CAVA	Children and Vulnerable Adult database
CDAP	Cheshire Domestic Abuse Partnership
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CYPSP	Children and Young People Strategic Partnership

D

DCC	Deputy Chief Constable
DMU	Demand Management Unit

F

FIB	Force Intelligence Bureau
FIM	Force Incident Manager
Form 40a	Vulnerable Person Notification Report

H

HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources
I	
IAG	Independent Advisory Group
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
ICIDP	Initial Crime Investigators' Development Programme
IT	Information Technology
K	
KIN	Key Individual Network
L	
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LCJB	Local Criminal Justice Board
LRMM	Local Risk Management Meeting
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board
M	
MAPPA	Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements
MARAC	Multi-agency Risk Assessment Committee
MSF	Most Similar Force(s)
N	
NCPE	National Centre for Policing Excellence
NCRS	National Crime Recording Standard
NIM	National Intelligence Model
NPIA	National Policing Improvement Agency

NPU Neighbourhood Policing unit

P

PCSO Police Community Support Officer

PDR Personal Development Review

PIM Performance Improvement Meeting

PIP Professionalising the Investigative Process

PNC Police National Computer

PPU Public Protection Unit

PROMS Problem Management System

PSA Public Service Agreement

R

RSO Registered Sex Offender

S

SARC Sexual Assault Referral Clinic

SGC Specific Grading Criteria

SIO Senior Investigating Officer

SMB Strategic Management Board

SOLO Sex Offender Liaison Officer

SOP Standard Operating Procedure

SPI Statutory Performance Indicator

SPPU Strategic Public Protection Unit

SSCU Safer and Stronger Communities Unit

T

T&CG Tasking and Co-ordination Group

TPT Tactical Patrol Team

V

ViSOR Violent and Sex Offenders Register

VLI Vulnerable Localities Index

VOLO Violent Offenders Liaison Officer