

**Inspection of
Chesterfield BCU (C Division)
Derbyshire Constabulary
April 2005**

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1. The inspection of Chesterfield Basic Command Unit (BCU), known as 'C' division, Derbyshire Constabulary was conducted on behalf of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary by a staff officer for BCU inspections, Mr Stephen Griffiths, assisted by Chief Inspector Christopher Ward between 18 and 22 April 2005.

Force and BCU Overview

2. The county of Derbyshire is set in the heart of England and covers a mixture of both urban and rural areas ranging from the industrialised city of Derby in the south to the vast moorlands and countryside of the Peak District in the north. The county covers an area of over 1000 square miles, with a total population of 956,293 in 401,273 households. Derbyshire has a wealth of attractions, both natural and man-made, which makes the area a popular destination for tourists.
3. The Force consists of four territorial BCUs (divisions) at Alfreton, Buxton, Chesterfield and Derby. Each BCU is commanded by an officer of chief superintendent rank and is further split into a number of geographically based sections, each of which is managed by an inspector. Each section works closely with the local communities and consultation with those communities leads to the development of an annual policing plan for their area. The Constabulary headquarters is situated on the outskirts of Ripley which is where the corporate functions of the Force are located e.g. crime support, performance review, human resources, finance and scientific support. The strategic command team consists of the Chief Constable, Deputy Chief Constable, two Assistant Chief Constables and Director of Finance and Administration.
4. Chesterfield BCU lies in the north-eastern quarter of Derbyshire and covers 190 square miles, with 260,300 residents, 108,500 households, served by 373 police officers, 56 police staff, 53 special constabulary members and 12 recently appointed police community support officers (PCSOs). The BCU senior management team (SMT) is based at Chesterfield, the BCU headquarters. BCU staff work from five section stations located at Chesterfield, Dronfield, Bolsover, Clay Cross and Staveley. Additionally Killamarsh and Shirebrook have police stations for public access. The BCU works closely with 271 Neighbourhood Watch schemes covering 24,000 households.
5. The BCU covers three local authority areas; Bolsover District, NorthEast Derbyshire District and Chesterfield Borough Councils, section boundaries are aligned to these council boundaries. In a year the BCU deals with 66,000 incidents, 18,500 '999' calls, makes 6,400 arrests and investigates some 24,000 crimes. Operational duties also involve policing of Chesterfield Football Club, in the Nationwide Division 2.

Performance

Crime and disorder reduction partnerships

6. In accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the local authority, police, health and fire service supported by other key agencies and voluntary groups have joined together to form crime and reduction partnerships (CDRPs). There are three

such partnerships within the BCU being: North East Derbyshire; Chesterfield Borough; and Bolsover. Each of the partnerships conducted audits to identify issues of concern to the local population and as a consequence produced strategies to deal with the issues identified covering the period 2002/05. At the time of inspection new strategies were being launched for 2005/08 that for the first time included identical targets for all three CDRPs. Briefly, the 2002/05 strategies included:

North East Derbyshire

- To reduce burglary dwelling by 30%
- To reduce vehicle crime by 33%
- To reduce the incidents of crime and harassment against minority groups
- To reduce violent crime to a rate of no more than 5 incidents per 1000 population
- Drugs and alcohol abuse – To work closely with the Drugs and Alcohol Action Team who have developed an action plan to respond to the national drugs strategy
- To reduce the incidence of, and the number of calls for service received by the police in relation to anti-social behaviour from their present level to a target of less than 41 per 1000 population

Chesterfield Borough

- To reduce domestic burglary to a rate of 9.4 per 1000 population and non domestic burglary by 25%
- To reduce violent crime to a rate of 9.2 per 1000 population
- To reduce vehicle crime to a rate of 14.5 per 1000 population
- To reduce non-criminal nuisance to a rate of 51 per 1000 population; reduce criminal damage to a rate of 15.5 per 1000 population and reduce the number of nuisance complaints received by the borough council to a rate of 11.6 per 1000 population
- To increase the reporting of racial incidents by 10% and reduce repeat victimisation by 25%
- Drugs and Alcohol abuse – To use Communities against Drugs funding to enable targeted work to be carried out to reduce drug misuse and tackle drug related crime.

Bolsover

- To reduce burglary by 31%
- To reduce vehicle crime by 33%
- To reduce violent crime by 23%
- Drugs and alcohol – To protect the community from drug and alcohol related crime
- To reduce the number of incidents of anti-social behaviour in what ever form it takes by 10%

7. As highlighted, the BCU covers three CDRP areas and there is no doubt, to the inspection team, that the BCU's drive for partnership working may be overcoming variations in commitment from some partner agencies. The inspection team was impressed with the resource commitment to community safety. The inspector in

charge of the unit has access to a budget and the BCU is considering a community team at each district to co-ordinate partnership working. Presently each district has a sergeant aligned to it who are driving partnership issues forward and they were referred to positively by partner agencies, particularly in promoting information sharing, knowledge of joint working for local authority staff and were seen as a positive move towards multi-agency teams.

8. There was consistent and high praise for BCU staff from partner agency representatives met by the inspection team. One quote was “they are really strong in understanding the need to work in partnership”. Many good initiatives were raised as examples of joint working (see later). Information sharing was described, as “first class” and good consultation structures were evident. Many officers were mentioned positively, by name, including the BCU commander and community inspector, and there was a constant reference to beat managers in terms of partnership working. This was particularly the case for Bolsover where neighbourhood policing has developed significantly in a short time.
9. Community safety staff impressed the inspection team and part of the reason was that they were able to balance all the positive aspects with areas for development. These areas for development include the following:
 - Presently there may be an opportunity for some rationalisation of resources. For example the inspection team was told that there are obvious variations in workloads of crime reduction officers. This was confirmed at supervisory level.
 - Partnership officers interviewed believed that generally BCU officers do not understand their role and that their knowledge of partnership working needs improving. This is despite some efforts to market themselves and the partnership. Quotes were - “PCs still believe that they have to do everything – yet one meeting with us will resolve the issue for them and get partnership support”. “Ground level officers do not like attending meetings due to lack of partnership knowledge”. Overall, the inspection team had the impression that partnership officers have to “seek out” the problems rather than the beat managers and sergeants coming to them.
 - Partnership staff described beat manager knowledge as “patchy”.
 - There were frustrations regarding section level tasking meetings not delivering outcomes – issues are often raised and action allocated but action is slow to follow.
 - Uniform sergeants are involved in some partnership working but, whilst improving, there is a generally a lack of knowledge of structure and what partners can do for them. There was a distinct lack of knowledge of the partnership theme groups. This is particularly relevant as sergeants have line management of beat officers. It may benefit joint working to have more front line officers involved in S17 training.
10. Beat manager abstractions to support reactive teams achieve minimum staffing levels are high with such officers often conducting beat related meetings and associated work on allocated rest days. The BCU may need to consider a substantial concern that partner agencies have about beat managers being abstracted from their core role to deal with response policing. The partner agency representatives were acutely aware of

the abstraction issue, with quotes such as - “Beat managers are run ragged and pulled from beats to cover shifts”. “It has come to my attention that they are struggling to engage because of abstractions”. “Widespread disillusionment within beat managers that they get abstracted”. “It has caused a lot of concerns at forums”. These comments need to be balanced by the force view that there are differing levels at which the three local authorities themselves resource partnership working. The Force believes that this in turn may influence their view on the level of resourcing the Constabulary puts to it and is an indication that some authorities are more committed than others. As mentioned earlier, the inspection team is aware of the good partnership initiatives and contribution made by the BCU to partnership working. However, in the view of the inspection team, it may not be a great leap of faith to red circle beat managers, solve problems through them with support from the community department, reduce response demand and improve performance even further.

RECOMMENDATION 1

It is recommended that the BCU commander rationalises resources and mainstreams joint agency working on the BCU to help ensure that the CDRPs’ contribution to BCU and CDRP objectives is maximised.

11. There were some good examples of partnership initiatives highlighted during inspection. Some are listed below:
- **‘Gamezone’** – Originally set up in 2003 in partnership with the Staveley Neighborhood Management Board. This project provides supervised activities for young people in the Middlecroft area of Staveley in the form of computer games/dance mats/karaoke. This event takes place once per week and regularly attracts up to 50 young people. The Staveley Neighborhood Management Board provided the funding to purchase the equipment. (Pathfinder project.)
 - **Boxing Club** – The project first ran in Shirebrook on a temporary basis and quickly established itself as a popular activity for young people. The project was developed and rolled out to other areas in the BCU in partnership with ‘Sporting Futures’ and the local community. Transport, officer time and equipment have been provided from BCU funding. Boxing and fitness is used as the means of attracting young people in nuisance hotspot areas into constructive activity. It also cross cuts the community strategy themes of health and well being and education.
 - **Music Melting Pot** – Established by two local officer who are musicians and wanted to use music as a means of diverting young people in the area away from crime and disorder. It was established in their own time and used funding from the local community forum to purchase equipment. The BCU realised the potential of this scheme and provided duty time each week to run the project. The local college of further education provides free accommodation and local musicians regularly give up their time to assist or are employed to teach specific subjects. The project is run once per week and regularly attracts up to 40 young people.

- **Langwith Youth Crime Reduction Project** – Local residents supported by a local business have agreed to provide financial support towards the cost of a community beat officer for this area. A grant application is being submitted to the Bolsover NRF to make up the shortfall to pay for two police officers for 18 months. There is also an element of youth diversion projects involving the community in this application. Two part time youth workers have been employed to co-ordinate and run youth diversionary activities. ‘Sure Start’ has provided office space and facilities rent-free for the officers. Other aspects to the project include updating facilities for young people and making these more vandal proof. Early indications are showing that the fear of crime is reducing among residents.
- **‘Safety Crew’** – A hugely successful and popular event held each year. The safety crew event links 10 partnerships together with local schools for safety work at Boythorpe Drill Hall. The themes last year were drugs and Internet safety. Over 1600 young people from the area were given inputs into these two themes on a carousel basis with other agencies giving their input and the students move around each agency in turn. The schools take part in a competition regarding their knowledge on the aspects of safety covered during the event. Private sponsorship is also obtained.
- **Shirebrook Bottle Stamping** – The proprietors of off-licenses agreed to stamp certain brands of alcohol with unique symbols to try and identify the source of supply to underage drinkers in Shirebrook. This would not have been possible without the assistance and co-operation of the retail community. The area at this time was experiencing high levels of alcohol related youth nuisance and disorder.
- **Cracking Crime/Crime Awareness Events** – Several of these have been held in the BCU in partnership with the community safety partnerships and the local communities. These events take the form of the mobile police station being parked in a crime hotspot area. In attendance are the various agencies that service the area and representatives travel door to door informing the residents what is happening in the area, giving advice and taking referrals.

Performance against operational targets

12. BCU performance against operational targets is detailed below in several tables, charts and commentary. BCU performance data is available for all BCUs throughout England and Wales. To allow useful and fair comparison of certain performance indicators, similar BCUs are grouped together into ‘most similar groups’ (known as MSBCU) based, in general, on similar socio-economic and demographic characteristics. Figure1, below, shows crime reduction performance for April 2004 to February 2005, compared with the same period the previous year.

Figure 1 – Crime Reduction Performance (April 2004 to February 2005 compared with same period previous year)

Crime Type	Number of offences	Offence per 1000 pop/h'hold	MSBCU family average	Rank in MSBCU family	% Change
Total Crime	17915	70.40	89.25	1 out of 15	-21.79%
Domestic Burglary	1127	10.38	13.31	4 out of 15	-42.38%
Robbery	83	0.33	0.59	5 out of 15	-39.86%
Vehicle Crime	1961	7.71	12.61	1 out of 15	-45.59%
Violent Crime	4126	16.21	17.28	9 out of 15	1.75%

Source – Home Office data

- **Total Crime**

Year on year total crime has fallen by 22%. Trend analysis indicates that the fall in crime has been constant both in the short and long term although the improvements may be slowing down slightly in the most recent months. This significant improvement is widening the gap between Chesterfield and the MSBCU average and Chesterfield is maintaining the lowest levels of total crime in the MSBCU group.

- **Domestic Burglary**

Domestic burglary has fallen by 42% year on year, which has been consistent throughout the last 12 months and the BCU has been improving at a faster rate than the MSBCU average. Chesterfield's level of domestic burglary is below the MSBCU average and for the period April 2004 to February 2005 Chesterfield had the 4th lowest levels in the MSBCU group. Improvements in burglary, robbery and vehicle crime for consecutive quarters by Chesterfield means that the BCU has been flagged by the Police Standards Unit (who monitor performance) as a strong performing BCU.

- **Robbery**

Robbery levels have fallen by 40% on the same period the previous year and are much lower than the MSBCU average. The significant reductions made by the BCU have been made at a faster rate than the MSBCU average but the most recent trends indicate that the improvements in performance are slowing down. The BCU was ranked 5th for the period April 2004 to February 2005.

- **Vehicle Crime**

Vehicle crime in Chesterfield has fallen by over 45% year on year and current trends indicate that this rate of improvement has been maintained in both the long and short term. These are significant reductions and exceed, by some way, the reductions in the MSBCU average. Chesterfield has in fact recorded the largest year on year improvement in the MSBCU group and is now recording the lowest level of vehicle crime in the group.

- **Violent Crime**

Violent crime levels in Chesterfield are in line with the MSBCU average and are now stable after a sustained period of rising violent crime. Over the past 12 months the levels of violent crime have risen slightly but over the last three month period there have been some encouraging improvements although these will need to be maintained if the BCU is to improve its ranking within the MSBCU group.

13. Figure 2, below, shows BCU crime detection performance for the period April 2004 to February 2005 compared with the same period the previous year.

Figure 2 – Crime Investigation Performance (April 2004 to February 2005 compared with same period previous year)

Crime Type	Total Detections	Detection Rate (%)	MSBCU Family Average	Rank in MSBCU family	% pt Change in detection rate
Total Crime	5655	31.57%	27.77%	4 out of 15	4.93% pts
Domestic Burglary	192	17.04%	18.02%	9 out of 15	2.01% pts
Robbery	29	34.94%	30.40%	8 out of 15	16.10% pts
Vehicle Crime	161	8.21%	12.34%	12 out of 15	-4.00% pts
Violent Crime	2647	64.15%	57.65%	4 out of 15	4.65% pts

Source – Home Office data

- **Total Crime**

Year on year the total crime detection rate has risen by almost 5% points and is above the MSBCU average. The improvement in the detection rate has been sustained for the past 12 months but has started to level out in recent months.

- **Domestic Burglary**

The domestic burglary detection rate has risen year on year by 2% points but is just below the MSBCU average. Whilst the long-term trend suggests improving performance, there has been a recent decline in the domestic burglary detection rate which has been sustained over the last three to six months.

- **Robbery**

The robbery detection rate has risen significantly over the last 12 months and the most recent trends suggest that the rate of improvement may be accelerating in the last quarter. For the period April 2004 to February 2005 Chesterfield was ranked 8th out of 15 in the MSBCU group. A major factor in the improving detection rate is the reductions in the number of robberies recorded. The actual number of detections has remained relatively stable over this period but because of the falling level of recorded robberies the detection rate has risen significantly.

- **Vehicle Crime**

The detection rate for vehicle crime is a potential concern as it is lower than the MSBCU average and has fallen by 4% points year on year. Chesterfield had the fourth lowest detection rate for vehicle crime in the MSBCU group for the period April 2004 to February 2005.

- **Violent Crime**

Year on year, the violent crime detection rate has risen by almost 5% points and is currently above the MSBCU average. The trend of the violent crime detection rate remains relatively stable.

14. In summary, the BCU has achieved excellent performance and is to be congratulated. Reductions of robbery, burglary and vehicle crime are particularly impressive, which has led to Police Standards Unit interest in how they have been achieved. The BCU highlighted the targeting of offenders as the main tactic presently

and this would partly account for the excellent reductions. The fact that they limit the number of targets for each section to five is providing clarity for action. BCU managers such as section inspectors are also clear about the next areas for development to continue good performance and have constructed plans on instructions from the SMT to deal with violence, criminal damage and anti social behaviour.

15. Figure 3, below shows BCU performance for the last full year of available data (2003/04) compared against MSBCU and national averages.

Figure 3– BCU performance for 2003/04 compared against MSBCU and national averages

Best Value Performance Indicator Chesterfield (C Division) BCU	BCU performance 2003/04	BCU family average 2003/04	England and Wales average 2003/04
Complaints per 1000 officers	146.76	237.23	192.24
% of police strength from minority ethnic communities	0.85 %	1.96 %	3.28 %
Work days lost sick/police officer	10.86	8.92	9.39
Work days lost sick/police staff	11.45	11.21	10.84
Recorded crimes per 1000 population	97.48	108.79	113.08
Recorded crime % detected	26.92 %	25.70%	23.49 %
Domestic burglaries per 1000 households	19.19	20.39	18.20
Domestic burglaries % detected	14.69 %	17.17%	15.01 %
Violent crimes per 1000 population	17.47	17.94	21.13
Violent crimes % detected	59.99 %	57.06 %	46.76 %
Robberies per 1000 population	0.56	0.86	1.93
Robberies % detected	19.58 %	29.02 %	18.37 %
Vehicle crimes per 1000 population	15.04	17.92	16.94
Vehicle crimes % detected	12.57 %	10.71 %	8.97 %
Traffic collisions death/serious injury per 1000 population	0.52	0.45	0.46
Racially aggravated crimes % detected	50.59 %	41.45 %	33.50 %

Origin – HMIC matrix of performance 2003/04

Accountability mechanisms and performance management

16. The inspection team found good accountability of the BCU to Force with the BCU commander meeting all five chief officers on a quarterly basis. The PDR (Performance Development Review – appraisal) for the commander is monitored by her ACC and includes specific performance objectives set for the BCU. There is daily contact between ACC and the commander and she considers she is well supported by the ACC and her peer BCU commanders of the Force. Internal to the BCU, accountability for the SMT is via a weekly meeting every Tuesday with the commander which is minuted and has common agenda items including an update on issues raised at force level meetings. It was apparent during inspection that the SMT has worked hard to ensure that issues from that weekly meeting are communicated appropriately to other managers. The chief inspector (operations) carries out sector performance visits on a regular basis. Fortnightly tasking and co-ordination meetings and the daily tasking meeting also play a large part in accountability for relevant issues. Accountability also comes from the extent of knowledge of the SMT on what is happening on the BCU.
17. Presently PDR is not providing widespread accountability, particularly as regards to performance but will in the future with specific performance objectives currently being set to deliver priorities. Individual performance data is available and is being used by managers in various ways, some robustly, others not so. The BCU commander may wish to take more of an overview of the provision and use of this data to ensure consistency across the BCU.

Reassurance

18. As already discussed, the BCU is divided into five sections, each of which is headed by an inspector and supported by a number of sergeants and constables. Sections are divided into beats, each managed by a community beat officer and supported by reactive teams and support services such as the criminal investigation department. It is apparent that the Force and the BCU place great importance on community policing and contact with local people to deliver services responsive to their needs. This philosophy was a strong theme during inspection.
19. The BCU currently has 12 police community support officers (PCSOs). These are a very recent acquisition and there are four aligned to each CDRP. Their role is to further support community policing which is already strong. It is too early to make comment on their effectiveness having been deployed in March 2005, but PCSOs interviewed felt that they were “rushed” into the Force with little marketing of their role internally/externally. The Force accepts that PCSOs were brought into the Force in “rapid time” due to funding offers and the need to deploy staff in order to receive that funding and also acknowledge that as a consequence there were some gaps in policy and training which are now being rectified. Generally PCSOs feel well integrated and accepted even at this very early stage. They viewed their initial training as good. It was apparent that some variations in their use have developed, for example some are driving police vehicles and some are not. Whilst retaining sector ownership and deployment the BCU commander may wish to consider regular BCU level

meetings to ensure consistency of development and to create a forum for similar PCSO issues and needs to be discussed.

Intelligence-led policing

20. The National Intelligence Model (NIM) appears to be embedded across the BCU and the inspection team found a strong commitment with heavy reliance placed on the control strategy, which takes account of the BCU business plan and the force corporate strategy. There is little doubt that NIM is the main driver for performance. All meetings of the structure such as the daily tasking and two weekly tasking and co-ordination meeting are in place and appear to be driving BCU activity and outcomes in line with the BCU control strategy. Documents examined during inspection such as the tactical assessment appears professionally produced and covered the requisite areas.
21. The inspection team attended a daily tasking meeting which used the executive daily log and the daily bulletin to review amongst other issues, the staffing situation, prisoners and incidents of note. There was an appropriate level of review and the instigation of relevant tactics in response. The inspection team was impressed with the initiation of partnership work via the community inspector and also the discussion of good work, which in the case discussed on the day, is likely to result in a chief superintendent's commendation. The inspection team has seen the radio system known as "Airwave" used on another BCU to provide greater inclusivity for the daily meeting. This system negates the need for physical presence as officers have an ability to monitor the meeting remotely and this is an issue that the BCU commander may wish to consider.
22. The inspection team met a group of enthusiastic intelligence unit staff who were happy with the main aspects in their arena. They consider that there is a good quantity of intelligence submitted and they are able to examine and evaluate every submission. There is a clear emphasis from the department regarding the obtaining and development of intelligence in connection with persistent offenders. The control strategy is used appropriately and there are appropriate links with partner agencies for intelligence gathering and using them proactively. Despite a positive disposition the unit had several concerns which the BCU commander may wish to consider:
 - Firstly they believed that there were not enough proactive resources on the BCU to deal with drug intelligence, particularly dealers and as a consequence drugs intelligence was often unactioned.
 - There needs to be more result analysis for operations (links to formal performance review capability discussed later).
 - The volume crime unit is becoming "all things to all people". Consequently they believe they are too easily tasked and may have lost their focus.
23. The BCU has identified a weakness in terms of the current briefing system and this is described as 'work in progress'. The application of the National Briefing Model will help take issues forward. Uniform sergeants believe that the daily bulletin is very

good and assisting their delivery of briefings. However, there are still lots of information from different sources that they need to sift through and disseminate. Briefing is presently done via a paper copy and often photographs reproduced are of poor quality. There is no electronic system and therefore a lack of information technology such as 'Smart boards' to assist a more dynamic delivery. Often one sergeant is covering two sites and not able to personally brief both teams. Often due to reactive demands, briefings do not occur and there is little formal de-briefing. The inspection team attended a briefing that evidenced much of the above. The sergeant had to research several different sources of information and disseminate relevant information. The crime system was not available and hence a review of crimes could not occur (it was apparent that this is a regular occurrence). There was too much information given to the team – thirty plus items that they were not likely to remember. There was no direct tasking and although there was a directive patrol book there were no actions for the shift detailed in it. Information on the walls of the briefing room was often dated. There was no use of IT to assist the sergeant. The BCU is right to identify this as an issue that needs developing.

Crime Investigation and recording practices

24. The criminal investigation department (CID) is geographically located at the five sections with each section having a nominated detective sergeant. This structure is liked by CID and officers view themselves as very much part of the section. However, in reality section inspectors say they see little of their CID because of commitments to major crime holistically across the BCU. There are good relationships between CID, uniformed officers and the volume crime unit and there was evidence that they are regularly assisting each other.
25. The BCU has a large volume crime unit (2 detective sergeants, 8 detective constables and 12 police constables). The unit deals with burglary dwelling, some fingerprint and DNA identifications and is tasked by the two weekly tasking and co-ordination meeting. They have the ability to action hot intelligence or support sections. The unit is not currently monitored regarding performance and consequently the inspection team could find little performance information on which to evaluate their success. This is an area that needs consideration. The unit used to be monitored on arrests, detections, warrants and offences that prisoners had 'taken into consideration' (TICs) but this would not appear to be happening at present (see later under heading of self-review). Detective sergeants of the unit feel highly accountable for BCU detection performance and relish this accountability. However members of the team did not feel that this accountability was shared across the BCU eg section inspectors. The unit's focus as a consequence is maximising detections and persistent offenders. It was clear that the mixture of both uniform and detective staff is providing a good transfer of skills and adding to the good relationships found between teams.
26. The BCU has created a small team of officers, known as 'Pentagon' which attends all reports of burglary dwellings and conducts initial enquires. The unit is headed by a detective constable and currently has five constables who are all on restricted duties. BCU staff generally view 'Pentagon' as very positive and provide an excellent service. This view however was not shared by reactive officers who were not convinced that the unit was fully utilised whilst not attending burglaries. The BCU

commander may wish to examine this view and if satisfied that they are fully utilised communicate this to BCU officers.

27. Presently reactive officers deal with all persons that they arrest with no provision for prisoner handling units often seen in other BCUs. The lack of assistance at dealing with prisoners was a common theme raised by front line officers. There were positive comments from front line officers regarding the impact of two officer's set-aside at one section to deal with prisoners and the impact that it was having in releasing officers back to reactive duties. The inspection team could find no evidence that this was being currently evaluated but if proven to be a success the BCU commander may wish to consider the schemes extension.
28. CID officers are frustrated over lack of sexual offence liaison officers (SOLO) – first contact officers for rape and sexual assault victims. There were examples of rape victims not being dealt with as expeditiously as the BCU would have wished and it appears that there is no structure for call out of such officers often leading to significant delays. Recognising this problem the Force has recently agreed to create two specialist SOLO units (north and south) staffed by SOLO officers 24/7 managed by the crime support department at headquarters. Whilst this will offer victims an improved service it will be important to ensure that the officers are effectively utilised in any periods not employed conducting their primary role.
29. The inspection team was impressed with the positive stance taken in relation to dealing with crack cocaine dealers (Operation Saviour), the rationale being that the BCU did not want to suffer the problems of gun and other serious crime associated with drugs experienced by surrounding forces. Over 1000 hours of overtime has been put into the operation last year proactively targeting dealers and users and this positive stance will continue this year.

Use of forensic, DNA and scientific techniques

30. A forensic audit was introduced by HMIC as part of a Force or BCU inspection from January 2002 to ensure a standard approach to the evaluation of scientific support services, the effective use of resources and to identify good practice. The methodology for the inspection of Chesterfield BCU was to examine the management and recording of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) samples, fingerprints, and the procedure for the monitoring and dealing with crime scene identifications, as well as to identify any links to the intelligence system and crime analysis.
31. The inspection team examined the custody process to ensure that every opportunity to take DNA samples from prisoners is being taken. A DNA sample is currently taken from all persons arrested for a recordable offence unless a DNA sample has been previously obtained. The custody staff (force criminal justice department staff) operate a manual system to ascertain if the sample is required or not. A form is completed with prisoner details and the custody officer has the responsibility to ensure that the Police National Computer is researched to ascertain if a sample has already been taken. The form then becomes part of the custody record. HMIC, together with BCU staff conducted an audit of 50 custody records and found that there were three occasions where DNA had not been taken when it should have been.

Similar audits by custody staff recently have shown similar results. The results were disappointing in comparison with other BCUs inspected (It is common to find 0/50 or 1/50 error rate) and the inspection team believes that this error rate indicates an urgent need for further education of custody staff.

32. The inspection team examined the process for dealing with DNA and fingerprint identifications. An identification of a suspect is notified to a forensic analyst located at headquarters (each BCU has a nominated analyst). The analyst then completes an electronic file 'package' that provides details of the offence identified, associations of the suspect, other possible linked offences and the like. The inspection team examined several such packages and found them to be professionally produced and comprehensive. The 'package' is then electronically forwarded to intelligence officers of the BCU who set challenging targets for the arrest of the suspect within three days. The arrest packages are allocated to the original officer in the case via their supervisor. The packages are then strictly monitored by the forensic analyst and by the provision of colour coded weekly information from headquarters. Suspects not arrested after three days are highlighted on a spreadsheet by the colour red and hence trigger supervisory investigation. The inspection team viewed results of such identifications and the BCU compares favourably with other force BCUs. In summary the Force and BCU are congratulated on a very comprehensive system.
33. Scenes of crime officers (SOCO) are headquarters staff but physically located on the BCU. SOC staff and the provision of services are seen very positively by BCU staff. SOC officers are positive regarding their integration into the BCU. They have good accommodation; have a bay for vehicle examination, storage rooms and freezers. Currently BCU SOCOs are covering Buxton in a cluster arrangement and a lack of staff there is impacting upon the BCU particularly regarding the call out rota. Performance information is available at individual level, which is regularly monitored by supervisors. SOCOs have a prioritisation policy for attendance at scenes but generally will attend any request. The BCU is able to direct SOC resources to reflect BCU priorities via the senior SOCO or representative attending the tasking and co-ordination meeting.
34. The inspection team examined some performance comparison information of BCU SOCOs compared against others of the Force. Overall the BCU performs adequately with the attendance rate for burglary dwelling for 2004/05 at 88.8% compared against the Force average of 84.8%. The BCU had achieved 103 identifications during the year as a result of forensic work (force total 497) and had 32 identifications for burglary dwelling from a force total of 118. SOCO believe that the forensic awareness of call handlers and reactive officers could improve and value the short-term attachment process, which is not as common as it was.

Managing demand

35. The inspection team is in little doubt that BCU 'front line' activity is being driven by reactive demand. Reactive officers spoke of the SMT relentlessly pressing for the reduction of 'open incidents' (unresourced incidents). There is little doubt that workloads of reactive officers are high. Officers on average carry between 7 and 25 crime reports each (all allegedly with lines of enquiry). They state there is little in the

way of filtering calls from the public or crime reports and sergeants were in favour of better call/crime management.

36. Reactive constables cannot understand the full rationale behind them being barred from amending crime reports whilst in the station (there is a bar on 0800 telephone numbers – therefore officers have to leave the police station to use a local phone box). The Force advocates that the BCU is historically traditional and conservative and that it has been necessary to take robust action to require front line officers to use the bureau input system and remain in front line activity. Reactive officers understand that the policy is a drive to create greater visibility but feel that managers do not understand the demands that they are under and are treating them as children. They are given two warnings and a third breach of policy would lead to advice. This is a force policy clearly aimed at visibility, but the inspection team believes it needs to be rationalised better to front line officers due to their strong views against it. There was evidence that some officers are using their own mobile phone airtime on the Orange network to overcome the policy.
37. Uniform constables have a poor view of the special projects team (team established to examine specific issues at the request of SMT). The team presently monitors violent crime incidents and encourages officers with enquires providing a regular review of timeliness. Front line officers believe that the monitoring of such enquiries should be part of a supervisor's role and that the team could be better utilised by taking statements and the like to assist them.
38. The BCU custody facilities are run by officers from the criminal justice department of the Force. BCU reactive constables stated that there were often long delays in custody. Examples were given of prisoners taking 45 minutes to an hour to book in (present to custody sergeant, administration and rights detailed) with no apparent reason for delay. They stated that often the situation is compounded by the need to wait for the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) to provide charge advice despite relatively simple prisoners/decisions (one example was a shoplifter prisoner taking a full tour of duty, with a wait of two hours to see the CPS). There were also frustrations regarding getting custody sergeants to administer cautions despite them being available. Custody staff interviewed stated that they may not always be informed that the spare shift (overlap created by the shift pattern) is being used for proactivity on a particular day. The results are that prisoners often are presented at the suite without prior notification of a possible increase in demand for custody services. There were no problems with notification for pre-planned events.
39. There were positive comments regarding the impact of the recently introduced detention officers' role. It is apparent that they are completing several custody administration tasks such as fingerprints and photographs and consequently releasing officers back to operational duties quicker. It is possible that the earlier comments on delays at the custody suite may be pre-introduction of detention officers and the criminal justice department may well have plans to rectify the other issues identified but the BCU commander may wish to ensure that these findings are taken into account.
40. The BCU is currently undertaking a trial at one section (Bolsover) to run the crime management unit (CMU) as per the Centrex model for dealing with volume crime.

The BCU is currently attending 95% of crime scenes and part of the trial will be to evaluate the impact of more crime screening (dealing with crimes without attending crime scenes). HMIC welcomes the review aspect, particularly given the views (which were unable to be critically challenged given the inspection demands) of front line resources on “being run ragged”. The BCU may need to market what is happening to all section inspectors as those that were met by the inspection team believed that crime screening on the BCU is currently adequate.

41. There are a number of areas that may need development for the Special Constabulary and although the inspection team only met special officers from the Chesterfield section, the following issues are still recognised as development areas by the BCU despite some efforts to resolve:
- The Force has recently restructured the special constabulary command structure believing it to be a top heavy and inefficient hierarchy and in order to focus resources on service delivery. Whilst the inspection team understands and supports the rationale this ‘flattening’ of the structure has led to some problems at the BCU. Each section has a section officer (SO - equivalent to sergeant) with a co-ordinating role delivered by the divisional section officer who is of the same rank as the SOs. As a result it appears that specials on sectors are happy acting in silos, there is a difficulty in getting the SOs regularly together and difficulties in utilising the specials on a divisional basis.
 - There is no system for indicating which specials will be reporting for duty across the BCU itself (although they are aware at section level) and therefore resource decisions are not taken holistically.
 - Specials do not get a comprehensive briefing when reporting for duty – quote “usually the most experienced special will speak with the sergeant for deployment details”.
 - Specials stated that there are numerous occasions that the duty sergeant has not been available to issue them pool Airwave radios (because of being committed and they have the key to the store). They either wait – sometimes for hours at the station or on occasions go home.
 - Specials do not formally submit intelligence and are not trained to access the intelligence system.
 - There appears little mentoring of specials just out of training with them ‘being thrown into the deep end’ with little or no induction to BCU structures, facilities or procedures and a ‘learn as you go’ ethos. There is little in the way of a formal developmental plan or checking of competency. They are not subject to PDR at present.
 - The BCU has tried to arrange a divisional away day recently to discuss issues that the specials may wish to raise but without response from special officers in what should be discussed.

- There is no regular meeting of the Chesterfield specials “the first in four years was six weeks ago and that was called to discuss a specific reason – beat teams”.
- Specials stated that there was recently a divisional meeting of the SOs, but they had not received feedback from it.
- They describe a lack of integration with regular officers with pairing of specials not occurring often. The absence of regular pairing/contact is effecting relations with a ‘us and them’ feeling.
- The Force and BCU are in the process of integrating specials into Neighbourhood Policing Teams in line with the Force’s policing style and national priorities. However some specials interviewed are not keen on the recent integration and would prefer to be deployed alongside reactive teams. In the main it would appear that their deployment is to target nuisance youths issues. They describe coming on duty and going out all together in a van to target hotspot nuisance areas, occasionally walking problem villages, and occasional use at special events. Quote - “we never get chance to go on operations but they pay police officers overtime to do them”. Specials interviewed believe that they could be used more productively to assist reactive officers and generally they would like to be able to do a variety of roles and not just one.
- Specials stated that regular officers do not appreciate what they could do for them. Often fairly basic functional questions such as “Can you take statements” is asked of them.
- They felt that a lot of specials are ‘uniform carriers’ who do not regularly perform duties – “SOs seem reluctant to get rid of them”.

42. Not all issues regarding the Special Constabulary were negative. There were very positive comments regarding current relationships between regular and special officers and specials appreciated the commitment shown to them by the purchase and issue of personal body armour. Most of the issues highlighted above have already been identified by the BCU and will be taken forward by the new chief inspector operations commencing at time of inspection.

RECOMMENDATION 2

It is recommended that the BCU commander seeks better integration and smarter deployment of the BCU’s Special Constabulary to give additional available resources to help achieve BCU objectives.

43. All staff were aware of the BCU single crewing policy and it was clear that it is generally adhered to. All section officers are currently on 2x2x2 shift system (2 early, 2 late and 2 night shifts) including designated beat officers (although they work 2 evening shifts as opposed to nights). The inspection team is aware that the BCU

commander is project managing for the Force a system which should help decisions regarding resource allocation. The 'witness software' project will report on 1 May and targets will be set for beat managers to spend 90% of their time on their beat.

44. The inspection team believes that there may be a potential for the Force to review how BCU reactive and criminal justice inspectors are deployed and the line management they provide when NSPIS custody (computer software package) comes on line. It is possible that it will free up resources particularly if more use is made of the power to review a prisoner's detention by telephone as opposed to being physically present. Currently section inspectors work nights, but may have greater freedom to operate on shift patterns more conducive to community requirements if resources are 'freed up' from the review and this is worthy of consideration. Presently section inspectors are positive about the night shifts and provided some quotes "have time to get on with work with no phone calls". "Only time I get to work directly with my officers".
45. Reactive constables feel that a lot of other BCU officers are adhering too strictly to job or role descriptions and hence they feel that there is a 'silo effect'. They believe that they have to meet strict criteria for support role officers to assist. Despite this there were many positive comments (not just from reactive officers) regarding the support available from headquarters in respect of major crime and other force level resources such as dogs; traffic and armed response vehicles. There was an apparent good level of support for the BCU in targeting level 2 criminals (offenders who transcend BCU or force boundaries). BCU officers noted that road policing unit officers (RPU – traffic) often deploy to areas of high demand without being requested. Relationships appear very good between RPU and the BCU with RPU supporting the BCU approach to targeting persistent offenders. There was particular praise from RPU officers regarding the standard of the BCU tasking and co-ordination meeting. They described it as "punchy and focused".

Leadership

BCU Management team

46. The BCU commander (chief superintendent) has 27 years police service and has held a wide variety of roles across the Force. She has been staff officer to the Chief Constable; detective inspector and head of corporate development. She has a degree in law (LLB) and a Masters Degree in Social Sciences (Msc).
47. The superintendent (operations) has 25 years police service the majority of, which has been operational. He has led several force level projects including a Force communications project and a police reform project.
48. The chief inspector (operations) has 15 years service, predominantly in uniformed duties and has worked at all the Force's territorial BCUs. He has served on a number of strategic working parties which have included 'Investors in People', stop/search and the implementation of the PDP (appraisal system).

49. The chief inspector crime (DCI) has 21 years police service. As an inspector he has served at Chesterfield and in the Central Incident Control Room. He is a senior investigating officer (SIO) and is the deputy force lead on the Implementation of the Prolific and other Priority Offender Scheme.
50. The human resources manager is a member of police staff and has 32 years service with the police having taken up her current position in April 2004. She has gained experience in a number of roles that have included text processing supervisor and office manager for the Complaints and Professional Standards Unit. She has numerous training and supervisory qualifications including a certificate in Personnel Practise and a post graduate degree in HR management.
51. The divisional support manager is also a member of police staff and has five years police service. Prior to this she has been (amongst other roles) a branch manager at a bank.
52. The inspection team found that all members of the SMT feel part of the management team and feel valued. All are strong characters and able to say “no” if they do not agree with something or another SMT member is overstepping their role. It was apparent that the SMT is not afraid to take responsibility or make mistakes. Overall, there was a good and supportive environment. The BCU commander is heavily involved in all aspects of BCU work. For example she attends the tasking and co-ordination meeting that is chaired by the superintendent operations, but she accepts that she may be asked to “take a step backwards” if she is seen to be too involved. The superintendent values her involvement as she “brings good ideas to the table”.
53. There was consistent and high praise for the command team. A few specific quotes were “Command team have a modern approach to all things here”. “Refreshing couple of years since new commander. Genuinely interested”. “There is a lot of drive from up there”. There is an overtly strong commitment to the well being of BCU staff from SMT. In particular “People are important” was often quoted to the inspection team. These quotes capture what the inspection team evidenced in that the SMT are very approachable and personable. BCU staff are clearly encouraged to speak up if things are not right, which is described as “very healthy”. Another quote was – “Officers are more comfortable about walking down the corridor of the command team. The doors are genuinely open.” There was also praise for the stance of the Chief Constable. “The Chief Constable will take any command team to task if they don’t do things right.” Some staff working on the BCU are line managed by headquarters, such as administration staff. They spoke highly of a “family atmosphere” on the BCU. A very relevant quote was “Being managed by HQ and doing work for the division is just a technicality”.
54. The force managers and Police Authority believe that the BCU has been traditional and conservative for some time and therefore when coupled to significant financial constraints cultural change is challenging to BCU managers. Throughout inspection it was clear that current BCU managers were robustly addressing this but also able to ‘take staff with them’. In summary the inspection team found a very defined ‘can do’ attitude on the BCU and the SMT is clearly strong in listening to staff views and wishes to provide as much support as possible and make progress, which reinforces the obvious positive morale. The BCU SMT is to be congratulated.

55. A BCU Federation representative was able to detail good 'open door' relations with the SMT and was able to balance his duties along with his regular role. Some issues of concern for to the Federation which are force level issues, were the potential change to the staff pay date and the division between staff that special priority payments (monetary awards given to officers who undertake particular roles) has created.
56. The inspection team met a positive group of police staff members who told them of good working relationships within the BCU with no 'them and us' attitude from police officers. They reinforced the view of a positive environment "A joy to work here". They spoke positively regarding the recent extension to flexi-time working (8am x 6 p.m. extended to 7am x 7pm). Training was also generally seen as good by police staff.
57. The inspection team found good internal and external communication including a monthly meeting with the six police authority members who are linked with the BCU. External communication is extensive and includes the force process of citizen panels (panels that act as critical friends to the police and made up of local community members). It also includes the 'have your say scheme' (an extensive consultative method that includes consultation over a wide range of venues and members of the public being asked to prioritise police spending by placing cards representing police budget in priority boxes and police authority consultative meetings). There is a target of 80 % attendance at parish and other consultative meetings. Internal communication includes a weekly divisional order and there is a comprehensive communication strategy for the BCU. There are good contacts with the media, particularly by the community safety inspector and there is a force level meeting once per year with media representatives.
58. The inspection team found little devolution of financial control to the BCU from headquarters and the Force advocates that it has a lack of flexibility due to current funding and overtime restrictions. There is some devolution to BCU managers, for example section inspectors, but this is still relatively small. There were some examples of income generation from for example football matches, but overall there was little sponsorship on the BCU and this is an issue that the BCU commander may wish to consider.

Self-review and learning

59. During inspection the team found a void in the review of BCU performance and the BCU commander may wish to consider a more formal performance review mechanism than the BCU currently has. The mechanism could give an overview of, for example, how the volume crime unit is contributing to performance or what is the quality of investigations by uniform officers and what mechanisms may need to be put in place to improve performance. Presently, SMT strategic direction in areas such as the examples given appears to be based on a 'hands on' approach and extensive knowledge of what is happening. The lack of a formal process in this area may be problematic if personalities change. This issue was not only identified by the inspection team but also raised by BCU staff during inspection.

60. Section inspectors held a positive view regarding the BCU provision of training. It was clear that trainers regularly consulted them regarding training needs and training delivery. The BCU has a skills matrix. The inspection team met a positive group of BCU trainers and the force special training manager. Training is delivered from the BCU training plan that links into the force training plan. It was clear that local trainers (HQ staff but based on BCU) are able to deliver local needs quicker and with less bureaucracy. The overlap day provided by the current shift pattern (every five weeks) is used for training and recent inputs have been crime scene management and drugs awareness. Trainers have reasonable facilities and equipment but ideally would like their own designated training room. (Presently they use various locations but have a small-dedicated facility at a police house on the BCU). The BCU also uses a local community centre for training delivery but again this is not ideal. Detective constables raised the relevance of some force level training provision, for example a half day's course in the issue of new fixed penalties but it is apparent that officers need to be in uniform to issue them. The initial training of new specials seems impressive and the duration has been extended considerably recently. There are high attendance rates.
61. The BCU reward and recognition process was seen as adequate by BCU staff. Certificates issued for periods of work uninterrupted by sickness were seen positively. BCU staff were aware of the good BCU performance and were clearly proud of it.

HR and diversity issues

62. The BCU commander may wish to consider that the inspection team found that the responsibility for BCU personnel issues lies in various areas. There is no single embracing structure and for example, training places are allocated by Headquarters with no consultation with the BCU HR manager. Having training, development and complaint monitoring under the responsibility of one BCU manager could be more efficient.
63. There is a good structure for the management of health and safety with regular meetings and a positive attitude apparent within the SMT and managers.
64. The HR manager conducts the co-ordination of PDR management and presently the BCU and Force are moving to a new PDR system that replaces PDP. All annual reviews are being completed in the period April to May on a cascading basis so that managers can set the objectives of staff after being set their own objectives first. Quality assessment of so many PDRs being completed at once is therefore difficult and there are plans for 'dip-checking' to be completed. From what the inspection team saw there is little doubt that PDRs are developing positively recently with further specific objectives being set for individuals creating more linkage to the BCU policing priorities and impacting upon the development of staff such as role trails etc.

Equipment

65. The BCU estate appeared to be reasonable. Some staff viewed some buildings as ‘tired’ but commented that generally the state of building stock, particularly the decorative state, had improved since the BCU commander had arrived.
66. Some comments were made regarding information technology. Specifically BCU staff felt that there was a shortage of computer terminals and that network systems were slow in comparison with headquarters. The Force advocates that the ratio of computer terminals to staff is adequate and the provision of more would be wasteful of resources. It may be that many terminals are not available to 24-hour staff after office hours. Either way the commander may wish to consider this point. BCU staff stated that it was difficult to search some software packages, for example command and control, and this is undoubtedly resulting in the continued use of books such as the burglary unit book (book to register all burglaries) and station diaries. The Force is increasingly using computer based training which is designed to reduce the cost of training in both time and resource terms and allows staff more flexibility to influence their own development. However BCU staff do not view computer based training packages positively and regard it as a poor substitute for training delivered physically by a trainer.
67. There were positive comments regarding the Airwave radio/telephone system. There is a clearer signal leading to less duplication of messages and efficiency gains with custody staff able to telephone arresting officers directly with the units.

Attendance management and sickness statistics

Figure 4 – BCU Sickness data

<i>Staff Type</i>	<i>Days lost per officer 02/03</i>	<i>Days lost per officer 03/04</i>	<i>MSBCU average 03/04</i>	<i>Rank in MSBCU Family 03/04</i>	<i>% Change of days lost per officer 02/03 to 03/04</i>
Police Officers	9.47	10.86	8.92	13 out of 14	+14.68%
Police Staff	19.77	11.45	11.21	9 out of 14	-42.08%

Source – Home Office data

68. Figure 4, above, shows levels of police officer and police staff sickness for the last full year of data available 2003/04 compared with the previous year. Police officer sickness levels in 2003/04 are above the MSBCU average and are 14.68% higher than the previous year. Data provided by the BCU for 2004/05 suggests that at the end of December 2004, the BCU had an average of 9.49 days lost due to police officer sickness. This is just outside the full year target of 9 days. A sickness update in January 2005 suggested that the BCU had achieved its officer sickness target for that month. Support staff sickness had also been brought down to below 7 days making Chesterfield the best in the Force for attendance at work at this point. C division also held the least number of long and short term sickness in the Force. Police staff sickness levels fell, year on year, by 42% but remained above the MSBCU average in 2003/04.

69. There is good welfare support and flexible working policies operating within the BCU. There was evidence from staff of how these have been positively implemented. This positive approach has assisted attendance management figures in addition to the general good absence management by the BCU. There is a strong commitment by SMT in this area and consideration of positive initiatives, for example, a stress management programme and the use of reflexologist is being considered. It was also apparent that a further reason why sickness data is showing improvement is that the 'return to work from sickness' forms had, in the past, not been returned to personnel quickly enough resulting in longer recorded sickness. The HR manager has identified this and consequently managers are now completing the forms more diligently.

Complaints

Figure 5 – BCU complaint data.

	2002/ 03	2003/ 04	MSBCU Average 03/04	Rank in BCU Family 03/04	% Change from 02/03 to 03/04
Total Complaints	47	52			+10.64%
Complaints Per 1000 Officer	131.1 5	146.7 6	237.23	3 out of 14	+11.9%
Complaints Substantiated	0	1			
% Complaints Substantiated	0%	1.92 %	5.3%	3 out of 14	+1.92% pts

Source – Home Office data

70. Between 2002/03 and 2003/04 there was a 12% rise in the number of complaints recorded in Chesterfield however the number of complaints per 1000 officers is well below the MSBCU average. The BCU commander examines every complaint made against BCU officers before submission to headquarters professional standards department. The BCU monitors trends in complaints and a member of the SMT interviews any officer who receives four or more complaints in a year to understand the context of the complaints and establish if there are any developmental needs for the officer as a consequence.

Conclusions and recommendations

The inspection team wishes to thank the SMT for the warm welcome and provision of facilities to carry out the inspection, and also the staff and partnership representatives for the positive way they reacted to the process and their co-operation. The inspection team would like to make particular mention of the liaison officer assigned by the BCU who did an excellent job of drawing together the necessary documentation, preparing the programme and was very flexible for the inspection visit. He was a credit to the BCU and Force.

The BCU covers a total of 190 square miles, with 260,300 residents in some 108,500 households and is involved with three local authority areas; Bolsover District, NorthEast Derbyshire District and Chesterfield Borough Councils. In a year the division deals with about 66,000 incidents, 18,500 '999' calls, 6,400 arrests and 24,000 crimes.

BCU staff are justifiably proud of their performance. Comparing April 2004 to February 2005 with the same period the previous years, total crime has fallen by 22%. Trend analysis indicates that the fall in crime has been constant both in the short and long term and the gap is widening between Chesterfield and the MSBCU average. The BCU is maintaining the lowest levels of total crime in the MSBCU group. For the same periods, the total crime detection rate has risen by almost 5% points and is above the MSBCU average. The improvement in the detection rate has been sustained for the past 12 months but has started to level out in the most recent months.

The command of this BCU can be proud of the glowing praise it receives from staff and members of other organisations and staff refer to good morale. It was made abundantly clear to the inspection team that the management and staff of this BCU will in no way rest on their laurels in terms of the BCU's performance and will want to improve the impressive current achievements.

The inspection team considers that there are some areas for attention in how the BCU works with partner agencies to ensure the continued reduction of crime and this view was supported by many BCU staff.

It was also clear to the inspection team that there is the potential to find additional available resources to achieve objectives by better integration and smarter deployment of the BCU's special constabulary.

Overall, the inspection team was convinced that the BCU is providing an excellent and effective policing service and can go forward to even further improve its performance if attention is paid to the two key areas subject of the recommendations.

Summary of good practice

- The inspection team was impressed with the positive stance taken in relation to dealing with crack cocaine dealers (Operation Saviour), the rationale being that the BCU did not want to suffer the problems of gun and other serious crime experienced by surrounding forces associated with drugs.
- The inspection team found good internal and external communication including a monthly meeting with the six police authority members who are linked with the BCU.

External communication is extensive and includes the force process of citizen panels (panels that act as critical friends to the police and made up of local community members); the 'have your say scheme' (a consultative method where members of the public are asked to prioritise police spending by placing cards representing police budget in priority boxes) and police authority consultative meetings.

- There is good welfare support and flexible working policies operating within the BCU. There was evidence from staff of how these have been positively implemented. This positive approach has assisted attendance management figures in addition to the general good absence management by the BCU. There is a strong commitment by SMT in this area and consideration of positive initiatives, for example, a stress management programme and the use of reflexologist is being considered.

Issues for management consideration

- The BCU may need to consider a substantial concern that partner agencies have about beat managers being abstracted from their core role to deal with response policing.
- Individual performance data is available and is being used by managers in various ways, some robustly, others not so. The BCU commander may wish to take more of an overview of the provision and use of this data to ensure consistency across the BCU.
- It was apparent, that even at this early stage that some variations in PCSO usage have developed, for example some are driving police vehicles and some are not. Whilst retaining sector ownership and deployment the BCU commander may wish to consider regular BCU level meetings to ensure consistency of development and to create a forum for similar PCSO issues and needs to be discussed.
- The intelligence unit had several concerns that the BCU commander may wish to consider. Firstly they believed that there were not enough proactive resources on the BCU to deal with drug intelligence, particularly dealers and as a consequence drugs intelligence was often unactioned. There needs to be more result analysis for operations and they also believed that the volume crime unit is becoming "all things to all people". Consequently they are too easily tasked and may have lost their focus.
- BCU staff generally view 'Pentagon' as very positive and provide an excellent service. This view, however was not shared by reactive officers who were not convinced that the unit was fully utilised whilst not attending burglaries. The BCU commander may wish to examine this view and if satisfied that they are fully utilised communicate this to BCU officers.
- The lack of assistance in dealing with prisoners was a common theme raised by front line officers. There were positive comments from front line officers regarding impact of two officers set-aside at one section to deal with prisoners and the impact that it was having in releasing officers back to reactive duties. The inspection team could find no evidence that this was being currently evaluated but if proven to be a success the BCU commander may wish to consider the scheme's extension.

- HMIC, together with BCU staff conducted an audit of 50 custody records and found that there were three occasions where DNA had not been taken when it should have been. Similar audits by custody staff recently have shown similar results. The results were disappointing in comparison with other BCUs inspected and the inspection team believes that this error rate indicates an urgent need for further education of custody staff.
- The BCU commander may wish to consider a more formal performance review mechanism than the BCU currently has. The mechanism could give an overview of, for example, how the volume crime unit is contributing to performance or what is the quality of investigations by uniform officers and what mechanisms may need to be put in place to improve performance. Presently, SMT strategic direction in areas such as the examples given appears to be based on a 'hands on' approach and extensive knowledge of what is happening. The lack of a formal process in this area may be problematic if personalities change.
- The BCU commander may wish to consider that the inspection team found that the responsibility for BCU personnel issues lies in various areas. There is no single embracing structure and for example, training places are allocated by Headquarters with no consultation with the BCU HR manager. Having training, development and complaint monitoring under the responsibility of one BCU manager could be more efficient.

Recommendations

The BCU Commander is recommended to:

- Rationalise resources and mainstream joint agency working on the BCU to help ensure that the CDRPs' contribution to BCU and CDRP objectives is maximised. (Paragraph 10)
- Seeks better integration and smarter deployment of the BCU's Special Constabulary to give additional available resources to help achieve BCU objectives. (Paragraph 42)