



HMIC Inspection Report

Durham Constabulary

October 2007



Durham Constabulary – HMIC Inspection Report

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ISBN: 978-1-84726-454-1

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FIRST PUBLISHED 2007

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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

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

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

Durham Constabulary polices County Durham and Darlington Borough, which together occupy an area of 2,232 square kilometres. It is bordered by the major conurbations of the Tyne and Wear to the north and Tees Valley to the south. The boundary to the east is the North Sea coast; to the west are the Pennines. The area is predominantly rural, with more than half of the residents living in settlements of less than 10,000 people. There are 12 main towns and over 260 small towns and villages, many of which are former colliery villages. Darlington and Durham City are the largest geographical and populated areas, with populations of 97,000 and 38,000 respectively. The area offers the best of both worlds – easy access to the more industrial Tyneside and Teesside, but equally, to the west of the region, easy access to wide the open spaces of Teesdale, Weardale and Hamsterley Forest, which at 5,000 acres is one of the biggest expanses of woodland in northern England, much of which is open to the public. There are four main multi-modal corridors through the region: north–south corridor of the A1/East Coast main line; east–west corridor of A66/Tees Valley rail links; north–south corridor of the A19/Durham coast line; and east–west corridor of A69/Tyne Valley line. These transport links readily facilitate cross-border criminality across and between neighbouring force boundaries. The constabulary area also includes Durham Tees Valley Airport to the south of the region.

Demographic profile of force area

The population is estimated at 595,308 (2001 Census data), of which 1.2% are from ethnic minority groups. The minority ethnic population is not evenly distributed; some wards in the south have a significantly higher proportion of residents from minority ethnic groups. Recent years have seen an outward migration of young, economically active people, changing the age profile of the area significantly, with the proportion of residents aged over 60 likely to increase, creating a more mature demographic profile. There is also an annual influx of members of the travelling community during the early summer months.

A decline in large-scale industry has had a major impact on the local economy and social status over the past 20 years. Partnership work involving a wide range of professional agencies is now enabling a new industrial base to take shape, providing a local economy which has a more diverse structure built on the manufacturing and service sectors. The decline in the industrial infrastructure has been partly offset by an increase in the number of visitors. Tourism is still a thriving and developing business. County Durham is promoted to tourists as 'The Land of the Prince Bishops', a fitting reminder of its remarkable history. The area's industrial past also plays a key role in the growing tourism industry. Lead mining and other industrial heritage sites across County Durham and Darlington are now fascinating visitor attractions, reinforcing the area as a quality tourism destination.

Around 25% of the North East's working age population do not participate in the labour market. This is about 4-5% higher than the national average and results in a large part of the region's productive capacity being lost. The index of deprivation 2004 has highlighted that the region experiences one of the highest rates of disability and long-term sickness, and educational attainment is below the national average in some areas. Some areas suffer deprivation and low quality of life.

The region is diverse in terms of housing, with some quite affluent areas with relatively expensive housing. Conversely, much of the additional existing housing stock, closely confined and characteristic of the industrial era, is showing signs of dereliction; some of it will soon be due for demolition. The planned housing developments for the region by 2021

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will result in a net increase of some 6,000 new properties with the associated probable increase in the region's population.

Despite the social and economic pressures on the area, the partnership working philosophy is fully embedded and work is closely aligned to improve both the safety and the quality of life of members of the community.

The constabulary is policed by two area commands, North Area and South Area, which are coterminous with local authority areas and with the crime and disorder reduction partnership (CDRP) areas. The North Area incorporates Derwentside, City of Durham, Chester-le-Street and Easington local authorities. The South Area includes Wear Valley, Teesdale, Sedgefield and Darlington Unitary Authority. Each area is further broken down into six geographic police sectors, which have their own neighbourhood inspector who is responsible for identifying and addressing, at a local level, crime and disorder and the range of 'quality of life' issues that have a negative impact on communities. The inspectors are supported by criminal investigation department (CID)-designated beat officers, police community support officers (PCSOs), special constables and partners in their endeavour to find solutions to such issues. Furthermore, the constabulary is currently enhancing the 'SteetSafe' reassurance strategy via the introduction of Neighbourhood Policing. The aim is to ensure the right people are in the right place at the right time in order to create communities where residents are safe and feel safe. There have been 19 top-level areas identified in the North and 15 in the South, the whole of the constabulary now having an identified neighbourhood. The operational arm of road policing has now been devolved to areas with a strategic operations department remaining at headquarters (HQ).

The chief officer team has remained constant since December 2005, when Chief Constable Mr Paul Garvin retired. However, taking cognisance of the proposed merger of forces, Mr Jon Stoddart was appointed as temporary Chief Constable, having previously been the deputy chief constable (DCC). He was permanently promoted to Chief Constable in March 2007. Similarly, in December 2005 Mr Gary Barnett moved from assistant chief constable (ACC) to the position of DCC and has now been confirmed in post. Mr Michael Banks has remained as temporary ACC. Mr Melia has remained in post as the director of finance and support staff. The portfolio responsibilities have been slightly realigned, with Mr Melia also taking responsibility for personnel and training and development.

The constabulary vision, launched in May 2005, has been slightly amended but still fully adheres to the philosophy of delivering community-focused policing. There is a supportive, open, and business-like relationship with the police authority. As well as the full police authority meetings, there are a number of sub-committees and panels which have chief officer attendance – community safety and engagement panel; finance and audit panel; complaints committee; human resources (HR) panel; performance management panel; continuous improvement panel – as well as special meetings of the full authority convened to discuss major issues such as the 'Remodelling' programme and financial management. There is a liaison meeting between the chief officers and the chair/vice-chair, clerk, treasurer, executive director and deputy clerk of the police authority. Police authority members are also linked to specific work business areas and regular meetings are held so that there is an understanding of the policing business demands and performance. The police authority is involved in all strategic planning days and is represented on each project and programme board.

Strategic priorities

Durham Constabulary continues to be strongly community focused, with an emphasis on partnership working aimed at delivering public reassurance through the StreetSafe strategy. The urge is to be intelligence-led, striving for excellence, by empowering staff at all levels.

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The underlying culture is encompassed in the 'Vision and Values' and 'Aiming for Excellence' philosophies. These values translate into five strategic goals as described in the police authority three-year strategy for 2005–08: prevent and reduce crime and disorder; tackle drug and alcohol misuse; contribute to improving the delivery of justice; secure public safety and reduce the fear of crime; and strengthen community engagement and improve customer service.

Significant progress has been made against the Neighbourhood Policing project, which further enhances the StreetSafe philosophy. Despite the uncertainty over the proposed force mergers and the financial situation prior to the precept increase, and the potential loss of 300 police officer posts, the force has maintained a good level of performance. The most challenging strategic priority remains the remodelling agenda, which will ensure that the other priorities of:

- Protecting and improving response policing;
- Neighbourhood Policing;
- Investing in protective services; and
- Optimising support and release savings to reinvest

In addition, Durham has worked to fully align the National Intelligence Model (NIM), corporate, national, police authority and risk cycles to ensure all of the strategic priorities are fully aligned and risk assessed – 2006/07 saw local priorities of call handling, race and diversity and Neighbourhood Policing.

The priorities identified for 2007/08 are: remodelling; Management of Police Information (MoPI)/data quality; NIM; combating and protecting communities from terrorism; combating and disrupting organised crime networks; threat to life; local priorities of anti-social behaviour (ASB); Neighbourhood Policing and community engagement; serious violence; and prolific and priority offenders and persistent young offenders.

Force developments since 2006

Over recent years Durham Constabulary has fully embraced the Government's agenda on police reform and workforce modernisation, including creating a more visible and accessible community-based policing service, combined with an extensive civilianisation programme and increased multi-agency working with local business and community partners.

The constabulary has established local teams of police officers who, together with the growing number of PCSOs, work with communities to identify longer-term, problem-solving initiatives.

Following the collapse of the strategic force merger initiative in May 2006, the constabulary and the authority have had to make some tough decisions in relation to modernising the service to provide the resources to invest in protective services and a number of painful initiatives have had to be taken up to balance the budget. The recent council tax precept increase and the removal of the crime fighting fund (CFF) restrictions have gone some way to addressing the predicted financial shortfall and have provided some flexibility around civilianisation.

The remodelling programme has identified a number of areas where changes can be made to activities without a reduction in quality of service and the constabulary has embarked on an ambitious three-year programme of implementing these changes, which will see some small reductions in overall officer numbers but a significant increase in the numbers of police staff, in addition to the 172 PCSOs working on neighbourhood teams.

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Two elements of the remodelling programme have been accepted onto the national workforce modernisation programme as demonstration sites – offender management and demand management. This will mean national support to deliver these changes, which should result in improvements to the way the constabulary delivers these functions.

Strategic development, not just for the constabulary but including partners, is being developed through a review of the HQ department functions; this will result in a dedicated partnerships function, headed by a superintendent. This will ensure that the Neighbourhood Policing agenda continues to drive front-line policing activities and that the constabulary is represented at a strategic level among partner agencies.

The remodelling programme was established in the summer of 2006 in response to a predicted multi-million pound financial shortfall and the possible loss of 300 police officer posts. Since that time there have been a number of significant achievements, which have had a positive impact on the overall services provided by the organisation.

The potential impact across the whole organisation provided the opportunity to examine all of the functions and services provided and, starting from a 'clean sheet', design a range of new delivery models which ensure that the constabulary provides the highest quality of service in the most professional and cost-efficient way. The outcome of almost a year's planning has resulted in a three-year, prioritised and risk-assessed programme of changes that will see a reduction in the number of officers serving with the constabulary but a significant increase in the number of police staff. In the first year the officer numbers will be reduced by 45 – most of these will be achieved through natural wastage – while the number of police staff, excluding PCSOs, will increase by approximately 98. The underpinning rationale has been to protect and improve response policing, to deliver Neighbourhood Policing (via the Neighbourhood Policing project) and to invest in protective services. Internally, the scrutiny associated with the remodelling programme has resulted in tighter control of officer and staff levels, and the more accurate identification of 'real vacancies' and areas where there is an 'over-establishment' in relation to officers.

As part of the wider remodelling programme based around the Chief Constable's 'foundation, modernisation and collaboration' initiatives, the police authority, in consultation with key stakeholders, has also been successful in negotiating a 34.65% increase in the local council tax precept (bringing Durham almost in line with the national average). While in reality this represents a budget standstill, this increase in funding has resulted in resources and officer numbers being maintained in front-line services, including response policing and Neighbourhood Policing teams. The three-year programme achieves savings of almost £4 million and provides resources totalling £1.4 million for investment in capacity and capability. The priorities for investment in year one are: protective services (including vulnerability); intelligence; offender management; and custody assistance.

With respect to the wider policing agenda, Durham has been successful in its bid to become a demonstration site for workforce modernisation, as part of the national programme. The 'demand management' and 'offender management' projects now fall under this umbrella. In addition, the constabulary has bid, together with Cleveland Police, for a joint firearms unit as part of the national protective services collaboration programme.

During this massive programme of change, and on occasions adversity, the constabulary has continued to maintain a community-focused approach to policing with members of the public, maintain the historically good level of performance and also to deliver against additional business change requirements, eg MoPI, IMPACT, and the implementation of a new data hub etc.

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

Neighbourhood Policing

GRADE	GOOD
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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 an 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

The remodelling programme is a major piece of work aimed at producing a revised delivery model for Durham Constabulary that can provide an effective, streamlined organisation to deliver against local and national threats and priorities. The constabulary is committed to maintaining the downward pressure on crime and ASB and increasing public confidence. To achieve this, the constabulary is building on its community-policing ethos to further embed Neighbourhood Policing practices. This will involve making full use of available resources in support of Neighbourhood Policing; a continuing emphasis on customer service through prompt and effective call handling will provide a citizen-focused police service which responds to the needs of local people, respects diversity and inspires the confidence of all sections of the community.

The style of policing is one that meets the needs of local communities while observing national standards. It focuses on a readily visible, accessible and responsive service anchored in the communities it serves, informed by intelligence, working with and for local people. It will increasingly be a 'mixed economy' approach to delivering policing services, with an emphasis on enhancing front-line capability, while making full use of the 'extended police family' in the fight against crime and disorder.

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The constabulary is policed by two basic command units (North Area and South Area), which are coterminous with local authority areas. The North Area command is the pathfinder for the Neighbourhood Policing model and is well advanced in providing services with partners at customer level incorporating the local authorities. The area command is divided into east and west sectors, each with a dedicated chief inspector. Each sector is further divided into three neighbourhood police areas. Each of these areas is managed by a neighbourhood police team inspector (supported by a response team inspector). The neighbourhood police teams include sergeants, police constables, PCSOs, special constables, CID-trained sergeants and detectives. Response teams include sergeants and police constables, as well as road policing officers, as part of a continual programme of integration with the response teams.

The South Area command is divided into two sectors, each led by a chief inspector supported by seven neighbourhood inspectors (two in Darlington). Ten response inspectors lead response teams providing 24-hour cover within each sector. Each neighbourhood inspector leads a team of neighbourhood beat officers, PCSOs and special constables (with the exception of Crook and Barnard Castle, where the neighbourhood inspector also has responsibility for the management of response officers at those locations). CID officers are geographically located at all stations within the area command to support Neighbourhood Policing, with road policing unit officers based at main stations.

As part of the inspection process, a telephone survey of 100 randomly selected residents was carried out, consisting of six questions about their experience and view of how Neighbourhood Policing is being delivered in Durham. The responses gave a mixed message: two of the six indicators were above the national average range; two fell within the range; and two were slightly below the range.

Performance in respect of Neighbourhood Policing local indicators (Quarter 1 2007/08) are shown below:

- The percentage of victims who agree that the police understand issues that affect their community – 88.3% (Excellent);
- The percentage of victims who agree that the police are dealing with the things that matter to the people in their community – 80.1% (Excellent);
- The percentage of people who have confidence in the police in their area – 79.7% (Excellent);
- The percentage of victims who know their neighbourhood police officer or PCSOs by name or sight – 31.8% (Poor); and
- The percentage of victims who know how to contact any of the local police officers or PCSOs by phone or email – 37.6% (Fair).

Strengths

There is clear evidence of strong chief officer lead to Neighbourhood Policing (ACC). The constabulary has a service delivery programme board which is the mechanism for driving and monitoring the programme of work around citizen-focused policing. The ACC chairs the Neighbourhood Policing programme and project boards and attended the ACPO national conferences and national community engagement seminar; he has also hosted a sub-regional conference together with Northumbria and Cleveland (a further conference is scheduled for September 2007). The focus of the constabulary is seen as appropriate, based on enhancing community engagement and developing performance management to

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improve community outcomes. The move from being output to outcome based is a key factor.

The constabulary has identified its neighbourhoods across both area commands, with 100% coverage achieved. While there is some variation between the area commands (North Area command, 19 zones and 80 neighbourhoods and South Area command, 15 neighbourhoods and 70 beats) neighbourhoods have been identified in conjunction with local partners and communities to reflect local management arrangements.

The area commands have undertaken comprehensive self-assessments which have been shared with the national neighbourhood programme management team. The assessments show the constabulary is on course for full implementation by the target date of April 2008.

At the request of the constabulary, the area field officer of the Neighbourhood Policing programme carried out a one-day assessment of the Durham South Area command in February 2007. The visit focused on the following areas: governance/project management; communications; partnerships; NIM; HR; and community engagement.

The StreetSafe reassurance strategy has a number of key themes which support the Neighbourhood Policing philosophy and are a strong presence in the community: a clear focus on environmental and physical factors (ie signal crimes); an effective response including the use of the extended police family, thereby ensuring quality of service; and effective communication and public engagement. The strategy was introduced to address the imbalance between the actual levels of crime and disorder, which were (and remain) low, and the perceptions and/or fear of crime, which were disproportionate. The strategy harnesses the efforts of all communities and partners. Recent evaluation has shown a good knowledge and understanding of the strategy among staff. The constabulary plans to re-launch the strategy in September 2007 in order to build on the 'community presence' approach to policing.

Durham continues to develop a strategic fit in respect of the implementation of Neighbourhood Policing, aided by the improvement workshop and the subsequent action plan. In respect of Home Office plans, there is connectivity between the national community safety plan, the national policing plan and the respect action plan. The respect action plan focuses on the key areas of access (named contacts): influence (joint identification of priorities); intervention (joint tasking); and answers (sustainability and feedback).

There is strong leadership at both a corporate and area command level. The Durham 'Vision' of community-focused policing is supported by 'Aiming for Excellence' and all constabulary plans and strategies, which are focused to this goal. The philosophy of community policing has been the policing style of Durham for many years. The constabulary acknowledges the next step is to migrate to multi-agency neighbourhood management. The basis for this development has been set by the neighbourhood improvement workshop held in February 2007 and the subsequent action plan.

The constabulary has adapted the method by which the local priorities are set for the local policing plan to include the feedback from the StreetSafe survey, which was conducted in August 2006 and was circulated to 6,014 residents with a 31% (1859) response rate; collecting constabulary-wide views with the key individual networks (KINs) set up as part of the Neighbourhood Policing project which is linked to the police authority police community consultative group (PCCG) meetings; and stakeholder events. The constabulary uses such influences in setting strategic priorities and Neighbourhood Policing remains a priority for 2007/08.

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Quality assurance sampling is an integral part of the call-handling strategy; this has shown that the constabulary is 85% compliant with requirements and this is continuing to rise.

Recognition is given to Neighbourhood Policing staff in a number of forms, including appropriate training and special priority payments (SPPs). The constabulary has adopted the bounty for special constables, which is awarded based on achieving a set number of hours per year. The sum is £1,500, based on 312 hours work.

The area commands have undertaken comprehensive self-assessments, following which an action plan is in place with identified actions, outcomes and timescales.

The general feeling from neighbourhood managers was that the response and neighbourhood functions work well alongside each other. The integration of systems and processes to support Neighbourhood Policing, including call handling, continues to develop.

Durham North Area command has developed a partnership tasking structure in each of the three localities, which is dependent on the area tasking and co-ordination group (TCG) process. The meetings are chaired by the partnership sergeant and look at local issues of concern, eg, street drinking, youth nuisance, parking, criminal damage etc. Offences of damage and violence against the person have begun to rise and the area command is confident that it is now challenging its partners to make positive contributions in these areas of business.

The South Area command has a partnership tasking and co-ordinating structure linked to the NIM fortnightly process. It is supported by a CDRP-funded analyst, researcher and data inputter who work in the area intelligence unit. Within the area command there is evidence that the exchange of information is taking place through the partnership tactical tasking meetings. The area command is looking at a range of indicators, including victim profiles. The area intelligence unit can now process community intelligence with the aim of targeting partnership resources to address pressing issues identified by communities. The area will continue to use anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs), acceptable behaviour contracts (ABCs), parenting orders and dispersal orders etc in appropriate circumstances. ASBOs, criminal anti-social behaviour orders (CRASBOs) and ABCs are agreed in consultation with partners, who produce evidence to support any police applications. Further consultation work is being carried out by the local criminal justice board (LCJB) community engagement sub-group.

Each neighbourhood inspector holds a local tasking meeting with representatives from the local authority, fire service and other key agencies on a fortnightly basis, the day following the area command level 1 tasking meeting. In order to better inform this process, consultative mechanisms are still developing within each sector, with some well established and some in their infant stage.

Building on the well-established StreetSafe principles and the Neighbourhood Policing theme that is now embedded across the North Area, work has continued in the development of structures and processes, both internally and externally. For example, 24 neighbourhood community forums are now established, within all localities, to facilitate representation from local communities. Dates, venues and neighbourhood team officer contact points are advertised locally to reinforce community engagement regarding wider issues of concern and to identify priorities. This process also extends to PCCG meetings. Additionally, the forums present opportunities for the provision of improved co-ordination in the delivery of crime and disorder reduction initiatives and even greater integration with partners. Flexibility allows definition of neighbourhoods to change in consultation with communities, with current arrangements subject to review and development in partnership with local authorities and other agencies, including fire and rescue.

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In South Area, there is a well-established community policing structure which overlays the community structure within the area. The StreetSafe principles are well embedded and form the basis of ongoing partnership initiatives. In close consultation with local authorities, the area has sought to identify neighbourhoods that will be recognisable to local people and to establish 'one-stop' consultative mechanisms that build on existing local authority forums and where a range of services are represented. In Sedgefield there are five well-established area forums; Darlington is still reliant on existing ward-based consultation, although the neighbourhood structure has been agreed. In Wear Valley and Teesdale, the local authorities are in the final stages of neighbourhood identification after consultation with area staff; in the interim, neighbourhood officers continue to attend a wide range of consultative meetings. Senior managers and community officers also attend the existing police authority PCCG meetings.

Members of a key individual network spoken to during the inspection process, including local/parish councillors, members of Neighbourhood Watch/Farm Watch and a residents group, were unanimous that policing services provided by Durham Constabulary are of a good standard. Local officers and PCSOs are known in their areas and the work of the PCSOs is highly valued. A comment made was "Keep up the good work".

The process is being supported by the feeding of public priorities (through StreetSafe etc) into local and strategic tasking processes. The authority provides an overview through the community safety and engagement panel.

Partnership activity is evident in the area commands with some close working relationships and co-location of staff. An example is the collocation of neighbourhood wardens with the neighbourhood team at Peterlee. The working relationships have helped develop effective joint problem-solving arrangements. This needs to be effectively supported by a problem-solving model that fully engages staff across all disciplines, the community and partners.

In the Durham North Area command there is a close working relationship between the neighbourhood investigators and the neighbourhood beat teams. Detectives take on responsibility for more serious investigations and deployment of technical equipment, whereas beat officers provide a great deal of time supporting CID at crime scenes, providing high-visibility patrol and reassurance visits. Resilience is an issue for the detectives, as they are required to provide cover across the constabulary.

Staff in Durham South Area command feel that, given overall resourcing levels, the balance between the neighbourhood and response function is fair. However, there was concern that potential changes to the deployment criteria would allocate a greater proportion of calls to the neighbourhood function and this would be unsustainable.

Each neighbourhood unit in the Durham North Area command has a morning intelligence meeting attended by staff from the different policing functions, including neighbourhood officers. The meeting is chaired by the neighbourhood detective inspector and staff are tasked against the area priorities based on recent intelligence. The meeting is considered to be a valuable source of information where genuine cross-pollination of the various functions takes place. One example given was the PCSOs raising an issue of concern from the community regarding speeding vehicles, which was addressed the same day by the road policing unit.

The partnership group (formally TTAC) in the Durham South Area command is chaired by one of the neighbourhood inspectors. An appropriate tactical assessment is used to drive activity. A wide range of partners is involved, with active engagement evident at the meeting attended by HMIC. The meeting was well chaired with a clear focus on priority areas, the tasking of resources and holding people to account for actions.

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KINs highlighted the continuity of staff as a key issue in respect of developing relationships and understanding of local issues. This is understood by the constabulary, which works to ensure continuity of staff. The benefits of such an approach have been shown through the delivery of Neighbourhood Policing in Barnard Castle and the leadership of the local inspector.

There has been a considerable change to the structure of Neighbourhood Policing in Durham South Area command over the past 12 months, with a mature understanding that structures needed to continue to evolve. The area command has learned from the development of Neighbourhood Policing in the pathfinder area command and developed existing structures in conjunction with partners. Consequently, the service provided in the area command is tailored to suit the needs of the communities and partnership structures.

The constabulary is moving to a comprehensive area assessment focusing on the following:

- Ambition – what matters here (in Durham) and to whom (focus on outcomes);
- Prioritisation – risk-based assessment process;
- Implementation/capacity – annual scorecard regarding the use of resources; and
- Performance assessment – joint area review (rolling inspection regime proportionate to area risk assessment).

Durham South Area command has introduced a 'level zero' community intelligence desk in the intelligence unit to deal with community-based intelligence. There is a partnership analyst in place in two of the three local authorities and it is planned that the posts will be mainstreamed in due course.

The area commands have followed a 22-point action plan around counter-terrorism issues (Operation Harlequin). The constabulary is being careful to ensure that awareness is raised in the communities without unduly increasing the fear of crime.

The constabulary continues to develop a performance management framework – at constabulary level with the police authority; at area command level with the executive and senior management teams; at departmental level with the executive and senior management teams; and at neighbourhood level with the senior management teams and inspectors. Performance measures feature confidence and satisfaction indicators as appropriate.

In respect of internal governance, a range of meetings is in place which effectively drives the framework. These include the executive management group, the remodelling board and the management board.

Progress has been made in respect of demand management. This has been helped by the STORM command and control system. The process will be aided further with the introduction of Symposium.

The increase in precept has allowed the increase in protective services provision while maintaining delivery in respect of response and Neighbourhood Policing. A shortfall in budget would inevitably have led to a reduction in response and neighbourhood service delivery. The constabulary is making appropriate use of funding streams such as BCU/Neighbourhood Policing/DSP (funding is not used to support permanent posts but is used for temporary posts, eg, analysts).

In the majority of the South Area command stations, response and neighbourhood officers are co-located. The new working arrangements across the area command have helped

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bring about performance improvements and increased staff morale. Staff felt valued and supported. The restructure of proactive CID/converter unit allows a greater integration with Neighbourhood Policing while retaining a proactive capability and an improved flexibility to deal with serious crime. The provision of an additional chief inspector has been well received across the area command and the structure now provides resilience within the command team and a clear reporting structure for staff across all disciplines. Other structural and procedural alterations designed to aid improved performance and integration include:

- Neighbourhood inspectors in Crook and Teesdale having responsibility for the deployment of uniformed resources within the sector;
- A uniform crime team in Darlington consisting of core and beat officers; and
- Co-location of the road policing unit and CID staff.

The constabulary HR strategy specifies the role definitions for neighbourhood staff and staff have an understanding of what their role is and the expectations of the organisation. The deployment of PCSOs was seen as a positive development adding a visible presence. The role undertaken and their involvement within communities are valued by the communities themselves (KINs) and by police officers. There does, however, remain some confusion with members of the community about PCSOs' powers and the difference in role to that of police officers.

Intelligence links with partners continue to improve. Community intelligence can now be recorded in the intelligence units and is discussed through the tasking and co-ordinating process. Intelligence units are tasked to complete problem profiles for neighbourhood issues.

The LCJB independent advisory group (IAG) has a number of initiatives with which it has been involved where progress has been seen. These include the introduction of a prayer room at both Teesside Crown Court and Aycliffe Court and the placing of the Koran in cells at Chester-le-Street police office.

There was strong support for PCSOs across the organisation; they felt involved and valued and that they contributed well to the policing of their divisions. Deployment was in the main seen as positive, with effective supervision provided.

There is strong support for the Special Constabulary, which is in the main aligned to neighbourhood beats. Recruitment is conducted at a local level and training procedures are very good, with alternative opportunities in support of the scheduled training events.

Staff in the area commands value the contribution of the Special Constabulary, believing members are well trained and effective in supporting Neighbourhood Policing.

There is strong leadership and control for special constables and a mature approach to leading and developing staff. The Special Constabulary inspector works in conjunction with the local co-ordinator to ensure that staff receive the appropriate level of training and that developmental opportunities are provided. Special constables are now supervised by neighbourhood inspectors, although there remains an 'administrative' rank structure and staff are given the opportunity to take on additional responsibilities within the structure.

Operational staff across the organisation have been trained in problem-solving techniques (PAT and scanning, analysis, response and assessment). Plans are in place to provide core leadership module training for neighbourhood staff.

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Neighbourhood staff, including special constables, have their performance development reviews monitored by the inspector, from which they are set targets and objectives. Performance measures set by the performance unit are seen as appropriate.

A satisfaction survey working group has been established and key actions identified to allow for further improvement. Research was undertaken to correlate those actions which may significantly affect the satisfaction from the diagnostic questions and these were used as the starting point for the working group. Examples of these are the amendments to both the crime field form and Prosec 85, which allow for supervision to closely monitor compliance while feedback is given back to front-line staff via the quality performance units (QPUs) and senior management teams (SMTs). This process will be integrated as part of the new crime management IT system, which will be rolled out during 2007.

The amendment of ring-back guidance has also taken place in order to reflect the diagnostic questions of the survey to heighten the awareness of victims and drive customer satisfaction.

Performance is also managed as an integral part of the performance management framework at various levels, including the police authority performance management panel, force management group (FMG) and in the area commands' accountability meetings.

There is an appropriate response to victims of hate crime and vulnerable people in line with the victim code and national quality of service commitment across the constabulary.

The constabulary-wide StreetSafe survey resulted in a more even sampling of the population. Further work has also been carried out through ASB community forums, where the views of those directly affected by ASB could be consulted. These, combined with the survey results, were presented to the LAA in April 2007 to identify key multi-partnership actions to tackle the issues.

Perception of ASB is a stretch target in the LAA and ASB is a local priority for 2007/08.

Work in progress

The constabulary acknowledges the need to continue to develop communication and effective response arrangements. This is being taken forward through the implementation of a number of initiatives including: a review of the deployment protocol; a review of demand management profiles; the implementation of national call handling standards; the identification of actions highlighted in 'Beyond the Call'; an emphasis on deploying staff in public facing roles (increase in PCSOs); and quality of service commitments implemented across Durham.

The constabulary review of resource deployment (February 2007) highlighted the following:

- With recommendations to remove the category 'refer to neighbourhoods', Durham will have call-grading criteria aligned to national standards;
- Recommendations were made to improve the quality of service for immediate response incidents. However, the percentage of immediate response incidents is not a cause for concern, being similar across the most similar force (MSF) group. Immediate incidents were graded correctly and were not unnecessarily classified;
- It was identified that road policing officers needed to be considered and used more efficiently for initial response to immediate response incidents; and

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- It is a recommendation of the review that officers have a greater awareness of the call grading and response protocol and take more responsibility for incident updates and closure.

Members of the community highlighted that the service offered by the communication centres in respect of contacting the constabulary was seen to have improved; however, a number of individual examples of poor service were also given. Further improvements are therefore sought and this remains work in progress.

There has been a significant investment in the geographical information system within the local authority and there is support within the constabulary to allow police data to be entered onto the system (ie, all ASB categories). This will provide a far clearer picture for the police and the local authority as to vulnerable locations. The system is work in progress and is due to be live by July 2007.

Work is ongoing to update the intelligence system (MEMEX); this will include providing capacity to store confidential data. A system administrator has been employed to manage the system.

Intelligence processes in the area commands are not as mature in relation to the neighbourhood agenda as the SMTs would like. A commitment has been made to support neighbourhoods through the strengthening of analytical support.

The increased number of PCSOs has created a challenge for neighbourhood constables to continually provide support by tutoring the new staff. This has resulted in practical training responsibility being passed on to the more experienced PCSOs. This allows the beat officers to concentrate more on the daily direction of PCSOs.

A template for neighbourhood profiles has been designed as a first step in embedding joint problem-solving through the NIM. The constabulary is looking to develop this through an IT based solution with an appropriate link in respect of LAAs. Neighbourhood forums are being established across the constabulary area with a key aim to enable community priorities to be addressed and fed into the NIM. This in turn will develop and strengthen the 'rich picture' in respect of level 2 activity and counter-terrorism.

The authority and the constabulary are in the process of updating their consultation strategy and expanding it to become a community engagement strategy, supported by an action plan and toolkit for front-line service deliverers. A working group has been established with representation from the area commands, the LCJB and the authority to take this work forward. Initial progress has been made by establishing a set of ten corporate principles for how engagement activities will be carried out. The North Area command has introduced key individual network and neighbourhood focus groups as part of the Neighbourhood Policing agenda. Additionally, the area links closely with local authorities through local strategic partnership arrangements to ensure there is collaboration and synergy in community engagement. The South Area covers a complex political landscape, with a unitary authority, two district councils and one borough council set within a two-tier council structure. The area command has sought to develop consultation mechanisms with its partners in the local authorities rather than creating a distinct and bureaucratic standalone consultation structure. This process has proved challenging but is progressing.

The police authority has identified the need to tap into partner resources, with a number of threats identified in respect of service delivery. These include funding, partnership working for strategic responses and local government restructuring.

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The LCJB strategic IAG continues to make progress with the development and understanding of its role. The group has identified a number of areas for development, including youth engagement and third party reporting. The introduction of new members to the IAG (looking to increase numbers from 9 to 13) and the training of new and existing members are seen as key issues for the effective use of the IAG in the future. In addition, work is ongoing to re-establish the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender IAG, with new IAGs for disability and youth.

The training of staff linked to Neighbourhood Policing, including PCSO powers, roles and responsibilities, remains work in progress and needs further development.

Areas for improvement

While there was a strong feeling that the communications department had improved over the last 12 months, there were some concerns that operational staff in the area commands were not always getting the quality of service required. Often, incidents of disorder were being placed in the delayed queue despite neighbourhood officers being available in the locality at the time.

There are some concerns with the rotation of staff around the various desks in the South Area communications room, resulting in a lack of knowledge of locations and issues in different beat areas and a poor rapport between staff. Staff had been informed that rotation was due to the stress of working on the Darlington desk; however, this could be more indicative of imbalanced staffing levels across the various desks in the area communications room.

There have been some frustrations from neighbourhoods that they are not being serviced by the intelligence function in a timely manner. Neighbourhoods have developed intelligence systems to fill the perceived intelligence gap. Beat and area profiles are now being developed locally.

Briefings for Durham South officers, including neighbourhood officers, are not considered to be of high quality as they are often out of date and do not focus on key areas of business. This had resulted in greater use of personal networks between locally based officers, often bypassing the intelligence unit completely. While this shows innovation and teamwork, the loss of focus on constabulary and area command priorities and the potential for intelligence to be lost at a divisional level are significant.

There is an acknowledgement of the need to improve and integrate strategic partnership arrangements. The focus on this area is now being driven by the DCC and is to be strengthened through the creation of a strategic post (HQ partnership superintendent).

An acknowledged area for development is the need to develop the statutory performance measures and focus further on quality of life performance indicators. This will include a link to reduce fear of crime/disorder associated with ASB in conjunction with the LAA (stretch target). This work will help develop the fit of a 'whole partnership agenda'.

Durham has a history in respect of problem-solving; however, this needs strengthening further. In addition, the recording and auditing of initiatives and the sharing of good practice remain areas for improvement. Again, there is a need to develop IT-based opportunities.

The constabulary has appropriate policies in respect of the abstraction of neighbourhood staff and the use of community volunteers. However, they are recently introduced and further improvements need to be seen in respect of neighbourhood officers.

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Concerns were expressed by Unison over the deployment of PCSOs, which varied between stations. This included the areas of shift patterns, deployment as custody assistance and deployment as front-counter staff. Unison has established a sub-group to examine the issue. A Neighbourhood Policing programme assessment highlighted the delivery and co-ordination of PCSO training as an area for development.

The constabulary is not maximising the potential of community volunteers to the same degree as better performing forces in this area.

A number of issues continue to impact on the effective roll-out of Neighbourhood Policing, including an appropriate estates strategy and IT requirements. These issues are particularly prevalent in the South Area command. The move to increase the number of neighbourhood hubs has added to the problem, as more IT solutions are required.

The Durham Constabulary website is not user friendly and does not maximise opportunities offered. This is particularly relevant in respect of the identification and contact arrangements for neighbourhood officers and the engagement of young people etc. This is an area of improvement highlighted in previous HMIC reports.

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 corporate plan has two elements – ‘management control’ and ‘business change’ – which enable the constabulary to distinguish between ‘delivery and performance’ activities and ‘developments for the future’. The management control level shows how the Durham ‘Vision’ is delivered through the range of strategies, the actions from which are fed into each appropriate area and departmental business plan. The performance management framework measures progress against each part of the corporate plan to provide the accountability mechanism to demonstrate that across the constabulary, each individual team is working to deliver the ‘Vision’ as well as accountability for the delivery of each corporate strategy. The business change level illustrates how developmental work helps to achieve the aims of the force vision. The constabulary has in place a programme board structure to effectively manage pieces of development work. There are currently five programme boards in existence; each one is directed by a member of the executive and oversees a number of relevant corporate projects. The management control and the business change levels fit together to form the delivery mechanism for the corporate plan.

The remodelling programme board, which includes all the chief officers, area commanders and departmental heads, will work to progress changes across a wide range of functions over the next three years, including:

- Resource functions – ensuring the right mix of skills and experience from front-line responders, including further integration of road policing officers;

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- Neighbourhood Policing – modernising the structure and resources of neighbourhood teams across County Durham and Darlington; the neighbourhood model itself will be greatly enhanced with the introduction of an extra 100 PCSOs;
- Community safety – workforce modernisation of community safety resources and integration into neighbourhood teams;
- Call handling – workforce modernisation of the call-handling function within communication offices; and
- Protective services – further investment in protective services to areas identified as weaknesses in the HMIC ‘Closing the Gap’ report, and considered to pose a risk to local communities.

The FMG has a clear focus on performance; NIM level 2 update; service provision; improvement and efficiency; people; customers and stakeholders; and strategic risks. The meeting agenda has also been developed to include the NIM strategic assessment as appropriate. The planning cycle has become fully aligned with the process. The local policing priorities and indicators are presented and discussed at the FMG and performance is monitored via this forum and then into the police authority via the performance management panel.

The police authority continuous improvement panel provides external programme assurance to the constabulary change programme and incorporates all five programme boards.

Work is ongoing with the planning manager to further integrate the NIM processes with business planning. The changes remain an evolving process. However, the strategic assessment has become a more meaningful and informative document. The additional accountability will facilitate driving the business to those areas outlined in the control strategy, and the constabulary will be able to assess performance against it.

Durham is in the process of populating a ‘customer data hub’, which will search all the constabulary systems and draw out performance data in a single format. The system is being phased in, with a planned completion date of 2010.

The constabulary has a suitable risk management process which is integrated with corporate meeting structures. The strategic risk management board is chaired by the assistant chief officer and attended by the police authority and senior representatives from every department. Each area command and department has its own local risk register and issues can be moved between constabulary and departmental level depending on current assessments. Key issues of concern are shared with the FMG.

Strengths

The local policing plan has identified outcomes and appropriate lines of accountability. The remodelling programme board is chaired by the Chief Constable, who has demonstrated strong personal leadership and commitment in this area. A three-year programme is in place. There is a clear realisation of the financial constraints facing the constabulary and the impact of these.

The programme board meets on a monthly basis (previously two-weekly). It is focused on outcomes and a number of ‘quick wins’ have been identified, resulting in savings in excess of £300,000.

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The reduction in the number of projects (40 down to 17) has had a significant impact in terms of project management and an opportunity to deliver an effective outcome.

The FMG, chaired by the Chief Constable and attended by all chief officers, is provided with a detailed programme and project update with an appropriate focus on the following boards: remodelling and modernisation; race and diversity; service delivery programme; service support and infrastructure programme (includes Neighbourhood Policing; citizen focus agenda; NIM/National Centre for Policing Excellence (NCPE); Every Child Matters; protective services provision; partnership development; and customer data hub); and the organisational development programme (which includes PROtect and workforce modernisation including PCSOs). The ACC undertakes a detailed performance review process.

Business change is fully integrated into corporate development activity and is providing an appropriate focus and direction for the constabulary. The change in chief officer portfolios giving a dedicated focus on specific areas of business, is seen as beneficial.

Business change is focusing on the key strategic issues and has had an impact across the whole organisation. There has been an appropriate focus around the areas of citizen focus, quality of service, workforce modernisation etc.

The FMG and executive management group were introduced in May 2006 and are now fully embedded as the strategic management meetings. They are fully aligned to the corporate wheel, ie, the four themes of service provision, customers and stakeholders, improvement and efficiency and people. Performance is reviewed against all of the themes and NIM and programme board updates are given at every FMG meeting. Each area command and department provides an exception report update and business cases and policies are reviewed and ratified at the meetings.

The strategic tasking and co-ordination group (STCG) meeting has been included as part of the FMG meeting. The FMG is held every month with a standing agenda item enabling updates regarding NIM issues on a regular basis. Holding the full STCG as part of the FMG enables it to be an integral part of the whole business arena, rather than being restricted to the operational and intelligence arena.

The control strategy has been written by referring to the strategic assessment and to the existing sub-strategies (eg, crime and drugs strategy, intelligence strategy, MoPI project plan). In this way, the existing strategies can be amended to reflect new issues and threats identified in the strategic assessment and business plans will be automatically populated, with lead officers held accountable for their areas of responsibility.

The constabulary has identified four local priorities in the local policing plan: ASB; Neighbourhood Policing; serious violence (domestic violence/hate crime); and prolific and priority offenders and persistent young offenders. The FMG has an appropriate focus on performance; NIM level 2 update; service provision; improvement and efficiency; people; customers and stakeholders; and strategic risks.

The 'Aiming for Excellence' philosophy remains strong with a clear focus on the four pillars of leadership, role clarity, accountability and communication. The vision for policing has moved away from being the best at community policing to 'community-focused policing'.

Durham continues to develop an integrated performance management process with partners through the use of shared tasking. Performance at a corporate and area command level is strong across a range of indicators and continues to show improvement in many areas (CDRP performance in respect of Public Service Agreement 1 targets need to show improvement in respect of all eight CDRPs, with none on track to meet their target.

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However, it should be noted that the performance of a number of the CDRPs is above the most similar CDRP average and two are at the top of their group).

Durham has undertaken activity analysis to establish staff workloads and where there is an unequal balance of activity has attempted to 'spread the load'. Some difficulties have, however, been encountered due to staff not always accurately recording their status on Airwave or logging onto the duty management system.

The constabulary held a performance review focus day in May, attended by all senior members of staff. The day was used as a means of ensuring the executive message is delivered and the appropriate focus on priorities areas is maintained.

Finance is fully integrated into programme/project management arrangements, including the remodelling programme. Savings identified for the last financial year amount to £2.5 million. However, with growth in respect of protective services this still leaves a shortfall of £1 million. The constabulary has increased the scrutiny of devolved budgets through the financial risk management group, chaired by the assistant chief officer. Effective management of budgets in support of constabulary priorities is evidenced through the oversight of the forensic budget for volume crime scene investigators. A potential overspend identified was assessed and evaluated in response to matching priorities.

The constabulary has identified a resource model to ensure the effective delivery of services. This equates to 49% of all officers being allocated to response policing and 20% to Neighbourhood Policing. This is supported by dedicated area-based community safety functions and a strengthening of protective services (investment of £1.4 million with an additional 18 officers and 30 staff). The constabulary has undertaken an extensive review of demand across the organisation.

Durham continually reviews the performance management framework to ensure all aspects of performance are considered and not simply the key performance indicators (KPIs). The national performance indicators, local priority indicators and executive-mandated indicators are all added to the appropriate area/department KPIs to monitor contribution against these.

Work has been undertaken with some departments (eg strategic operations) to ensure the indicators used reflect the outcomes required by the department but also align with key strategies (eg, the roads policing strategy) and this is continuing as current strategies come up for review. The KPIs are also developed in line with the local priorities identified and not those simply included as indicators – eg, the communications department has call-handling times for 999 calls and single non-emergency number (SNEN) calls as KPIs, since call handling was a priority in 2006/07. This is contextualised by supervisors dip sampling the calls and ensuring the quality of the service is as expected. It is also measured against the percentage of staff who have been customer-care trained and the outcome indicators associated with this (the SPI on ease of contact).

The criminal justice unit (CJU) has a number of IAGs established, with race and diversity being a key area for the constabulary, and there are supporting indicators, eg the number of times each IAG has been consulted and the feedback given. These will be reviewed and changed annually if necessary.

In some departments, performance cannot be measured simply and easily by KPIs alone; in these instances contextual data is provided – eg, for HQ CID an update of operations and the expected outcome.

The project indicators included in corporate development's KPIs are underpinned by the programme and project board work, which adheres to PRINCE 2 methodology etc.

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The framework has been adapted to further enhance the alignment of financial planning with constabulary priorities. The remodelling project work will promote workforce modernisation, investment in protective services and Neighbourhood Policing and will ensure a balanced budget. The approach adopted is fully risk assessed and controlled via the business change manager.

The police authority is fully engaged with the constabulary with effective review processes in place through the continuous improvement panel and active involvement in a number of areas, including executive planning days and membership of programme boards.

The performance review process is seen as driving performance with the area commands and HQ departments. The review process at ACC level takes place monthly; this is supported by a quarterly review process, in which the full executive visits the area commands and undertakes a more detailed analysis. The focus is on qualitative as well as quantitative measures. There is an acknowledgement that, while performance across the constabulary is good in comparison to the MSF group, further improvements could be achieved.

Durham delivers a whole package of performance information at area command level on a wide range of subjects. Within the area commands, data is broken down to team and officer level via the QPUs. While there are differences in the way that the area commands assess some issues such as KIN surveys, community forums and other local priorities, the QPUs provide a valuable service at a local level. Throughout the constabulary there is a strong drive for a reduction in offences committed over detections; this is supported by qualitative data being captured and presented at performance development meetings. The work undertaken by the area command QPUs is additional and not a duplication of the work carried out by the centre.

The DCC chairs the training user group, which has been effective in ensuring the delivery of training on priority areas at a time of financial constraint. Increases in the training budget for 2007/08 have seen the focus shift to customer service training. A fine of £100 has been introduced for the area commands if staff fail to fill an allocated training place.

Staff throughout the organisation have a clear understanding of their role and how they contribute to constabulary priorities.

The tailoring of performance targets to individual areas of responsibility is evidenced through the force intelligence unit (FIU), which has developed a detailed performance management pack looking at a wide range of indicators across a range of functions including: covert standards; authorisations; chemical liaison; field intelligence; road policing unit field intelligence; prison liaison; data management; analysis and research; and external agency support. The pack also extends to areas such as letters of appreciation. Staff believe there has been a cultural shift in respect of performance management, with teams rather than individuals being held to account and a greater emphasis on reduction and other qualitative data rather than a single focus on detections. This understanding needs to be extended throughout the organisation (see Areas for improvement).

Unison and the Federation stated that communication within the constabulary had never been better. Both have full involvement in relevant programme and project boards (including the remodelling board). Staff morale is in the main positive and is improving following a difficult period in respect of the financial position of the constabulary and the possible impact of staffing levels.

The inspection team attended an area command daily management meeting. The meeting was well managed and held inspectors throughout the area command to account. There

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was an appropriate focus on the key crime areas for each neighbourhood and on vulnerable people, including missing persons. Staffing levels were also discussed.

Work in progress

The constabulary has commenced an extensive remodelling programme, aided by the precept increase and the relaxation of the CFF rules. Remodelling is focusing on the priorities of response policing, Neighbourhood Policing, protective services and effective and affordable support. In excess of 100 proposals for change have been identified over a three-year timeframe. There is an understanding that such a demanding programme will not be delivered in the short term. This is understood and accepted by the police authority.

Both the constabulary and the authority have an understanding of the need to deliver on the investment received through the increase in precept. There remains a need to continually inform members of the public, partners, local politicians and staff that the increase in precept does not equate to an increased budget in real terms but ensures the constabulary has a stand-still budget for 2007/08.

At the present time the development of strategy takes place outside of the FMG, although all strategies go to the FMG for ratification. This makes it difficult to identify what action is being taken to provide a corporate overview; there is an opportunity to develop this.

The constabulary has introduced a number of corporate themes to ensure there is an appropriate prioritisation of resources and activity. The themes, all of which have a designated chief officer lead, are service delivery, race and diversity, remodelling, organisational development and service support and infrastructure.

There is recognition that the constabulary is not fully sighted on the strategic links between the LAA, local strategic partnership/CDRP, and criminal justice/LCJB. There is a need to have a vision that provides a corporate overview. There is also a need to incorporate protective services and Neighbourhood Policing within the wider environment. The planned Introduction of a partnership superintendent will help bridge the gap and provide a clearer overview.

It was acknowledged that the NIM was not driving business. Issues identified within the strategic assessment are now being risk assessed through the strategic risk management group and actions are being created to mitigate risk. Once all areas of business, including HR and finance, are brought together the constabulary will have a clearer picture of its business and priorities.

The constabulary has an established programme of work under the governance of the DCC and a comprehensive project plan to ensure compliance with the code of practice on the management of police information by 2010. The constabulary has already implemented a number of process and system changes to enable better information handling in high-risk areas, eg, back-record conversion of child protection and domestic violence records, improved nominal creation in intelligence and crime systems and the introduction of an information compliance unit to deliver improved disclosure, security and audit functions. An information management strategy, in accordance with MoPI requirements, was recently approved and work is ongoing to develop a business case for a central information management department and a dedicated chief information officer.

The next phase of work will focus on policy development and revised structures and processes to deliver them. The force is currently a top performer in the use of the IMPACT nominal index and has recently approved plans to start to deliver data extracts to the

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IMPACT Cross-Regional Information Sharing Project (CRISP) in line with timescales for the region in November 2007. However, despite system changes and prohibitive costs, the force will be fully compliant with IMPACT CRISP extracts by 2008. There is also a considerable programme of work ongoing within the force to deliver a much improved data warehouse facility (customer data hub) with ORACLE, which will allow single search facilities across all key operational systems and enable the necessary information to be delivered into IMPACT CRISP/PND from all systems by 2010.

The constabulary has been sending out a strong message that focus should be on reductions over detections; however, staff still appear to have the perception that detections are their key performance measure. It will take some time to change this culture. The introduction of fixed penalty notices has further skewed performance towards detections. National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) compliance has greatly improved, but again this has resulted in an 11% increase in recorded crime.

Areas for improvement

There is a need for greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities for performance management between the police authority and the constabulary. The authority expressed some frustration regarding the position of the constabulary in respect of scrutiny.

Links to the CDRP priorities for joint plans are not mature and need to be developed. There is an intention to link HR and financial plans into the business planning process at an early stage. There have been difficulties with the NIM and strategic planning working in silos; however, there has been a move this year towards a more joined-up approach between the corporate planning manager and the strategic analyst. There is a need for greater clarity on how constabulary and area command priorities are harmonised and which has primacy. A series of computer screen-savers showing the constabulary and police authority priorities have been developed.

A bid for growth was submitted as part of the remodelling programme in December 2006 to enhance the audit function within the corporate development department. While it was generally accepted that this was an area which could benefit from investment, the bid was rejected, as there were priorities which were deemed to be of higher importance. Agreement was reached, however, that other areas and departments would provide assistance as necessary to conduct audits. This has commenced with the secondment of a constable from one of the area commands to conduct an audit of the deployment protocol. The constabulary acknowledges that this remains an area for improvement.

As part of the remodelling programme, a new information unit is to be established to include the MoPI arrangements and the associated audit function in relation to data input.

The constabulary has a number of officers performing acting roles, at different levels of the organisation. In some cases this is despite a number of officers having successfully attended promotion assessment processes. The situation creates uncertainty among staff and a lack of stability.

Intelligence units in the area commands are set up in different ways; this causes some difficulties in co-ordinating activity from the centre. There is a need to increase the amount of intelligence that is referred up to level 2 from level 1 tasking processes.

The effective marketing of the many successes of the constabulary, on both an internal and an external basis, remains an area for development.

Developing Practice

TITLE: Integrating NIM within the business planning process

PROBLEM:

The strategic assessment is used to identify the appropriate control strategy at a constabulary-wide and organisational level. Previously, this would be little more than an intelligence strategy that was not integrated into any other business plans or processes, and did not drive business. In conjunction, the strategic planning process would take place to highlight the constabulary priorities in relation to business change and priorities, including the national and police authority priorities, and a third process was being developed to identify the strategic risk register with an additional set of priorities. None of these totally aligned the direction of the constabulary or identified any ranking from the numerous priorities.

SOLUTION:

The strategic assessment/control strategy was developed to cover all aspects of business (not just intelligence). The planning and performance management framework had already developed in such a way to allow inclusion of actions from disparate sources into one plan. The control strategy actions were assigned leads and included in this process. However, this resulted in duplication (where actions were already being undertaken as part of a different set of priorities/actions/strategies), and a lack of immediacy (leads were only aware of the control strategy actions when filling in business plan returns and at accountability meetings).

Concurrently, the STCG meeting has been included as part of the FMG meeting. The FMG is monthly and attended by all areas, departments and staff associations. Standing agenda items include performance, programmes and the NIM, thus allowing consideration of issues on a regular basis rather than waiting for the next STCG. This enables a holistic and integral approach to all business areas, priorities etc rather than restricted to certain operational and intelligence arenas.

At the next stage, the control strategy has been written by referring to the strategic assessment and to the existing sub-strategies (eg crime and drugs strategy, intelligence strategy, MoPI project plan). The existing strategy actions can be risk assessed and amended if necessary to reflect new issues and threats identified, with the accountability process remaining the same. This work will also look to fully align the corporate assessment, strategic assessment and risk assessment into one control strategy document which takes account of ongoing actions, projects and strategies and is fully risk assessed.

OUTCOME(S):

The changes outlined above remain an evolving process. To date, the strategic assessment has become a more meaningful and informative document understood by all strategic managers in identifying the threats to local communities. Using this new process has enabled the control strategy to become a more useful, overarching strategy. The additional integration and development alongside the corporate planning cycle, risk assessment process and current accountability mechanisms will facilitate driving the business to those areas outlined in the control strategy, and the constabulary will be able to assess performance against it.

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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

Durham is taking a more holistic and inclusive approach to the definition of vulnerability. The threat to life strategic assessment captures all vulnerability issues. Links have been made with the critical incident definition and critical incident training.

The constabulary is proposing to create a strategic executive management board for safeguarding vulnerable people. Board members are to be at executive level and would include the Chief Constable. The board would be additional to the current arrangements, which include: County Durham and Darlington domestic abuse forum; strategic management board for multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPa); local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs); safeguarding adults' boards; and the LCJB multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC). These boards would still exist both strategically and operationally, reporting to the executive management board, which will be responsible for examining partnership service provision across the spectrum of vulnerability. In this way, the work from the existing boards would feed into the executive board, which would ensure work is streamlined, resourced appropriately and where the executive members would co-ordinate and influence vulnerability work in each of the partner organisations. Proposed terms of reference and the business benefits have been defined.

The police authority has introduced a protective services panel, which includes protecting vulnerable people (PVP); the ACC and head of CID are members. This follows an acknowledgement that the authority was not fully sighted on developments in the PVP arena.

The authority, through the Constabulary, has introduced a number of actions to deliver the strategic priorities for 2007/08. Within the Derwentside and Easington districts,

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arrangements have been made through the individual strategic community partnerships to co-ordinate multi-agency risk assessments focusing on repeat victims and perpetrators. This work will be extended to Durham and Chester-le-Street during 2007. Through the domestic violence co-ordinator, a generic domestic violence risk assessment process will be developed, which can be utilised by all partners. In liaison with the co-ordinator, the constabulary will continue to monitor the current position and future training requirements in line with the modules provided by the NCPE. Relevant modules will continue to be delivered through the training/briefing programmes. Through the LCJB, updates will be provided on the progression of MARAC in County Durham and Darlington, encouraging partnership information-sharing.

Strengths

The constabulary has well-established vulnerability units located within each area command. These units deal predominantly with child protection, domestic violence and adult protection. The HQ detective chief inspector represents the constabulary at partnership level across the range of disciplines and has been instrumental in the redrafting of partnership child protection procedures. A major project underway and running throughout 2007/08 is Every Child Matters: change for children, which will look specifically at partnership working; identify children in need; provide support by identifying lead professionals to co-ordinate these services (via the Children's Trust and Local Children's Boards in both County Durham and Darlington); Stay Safe; Be Healthy; and Make a positive contribution.

Adult abuse is incorporated within the vulnerability unit. There are good relationships and working arrangements with partners from both adult services and mental health services.

Reality checks have been carried out on the intelligence function as a part of the NIM project and improvements made, including the introduction of issues posing a threat to life, MAPPA information, missing from home (MFH) data etc as standing items in the tasking and co-ordinating processes.

PVP partners were unanimous in their praise for the level of service provided by the constabulary. Effective working relationships were reported with the vulnerability unit and the co-location of resources is reported as being very effective in the public protection unit (PPU).

Partners reported strong links with the neighbourhood teams, who send representatives to case reviews on a regular basis, and that the communications staff now have a greater awareness of the vulnerability agenda.

There is a strong focus on vulnerability in the area commands, with the subject featuring as a priority in the daily tasking process, including the area of missing persons. Staff feel very much held to account by management.

Information-sharing processes with partners are seen as mature and MARACs are being established involving all relevant agencies, including outreach workers. Funding has been secured to second a full-time co-ordinator to the MARAC.

PVP features significantly in the performance accountability meetings, with actions allocated to dedicated members of staff. This is well evidenced with minuted records of meetings and actions, eg the North Area command performance review with detailed performance information produced across the area of vulnerability. Actions allocated included: the superintendent to review performance on domestic violence; adult protection; and child

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protection – the detective inspector to examine the feasibility of the intelligence unit preparing ‘bad character’ packages.

In response to an area for improvement identified in the 2006 HMIC baseline assessment, each area command has a detective sergeant and two constables operating at weekends to provide specialist supervision for all child protection, adult protection and domestic violence incidents.

All staff working in the area of vulnerability have or are going through the Initial Crime Investigators’ Development Programme (ICIDP) process; this training should be completed by the end of 2007. Achieving best evidence (ABE) training has taken place and staff within the units are trained in this area. In addition, under the ACPO investigative strategy, there is sufficient resilience for volume ABE requirements. There are also occasional training inputs from the LSCB.

Work in progress

The constabulary is producing a revised crime and drugs strategy, an intrinsic strand of which directs action towards improvements for PVP. The strategy recognises that there are individuals and/or sections of society who may be more vulnerable than others, by virtue of ethnicity or sex, or by their vulnerability within a domestic, institutional or peer-led relationship, which is prone to violent behaviour.

The vulnerability IT system (PROtect) is available across the constabulary and can be accessed via the communications and intelligence departments as well as the criminal records bureau. Additional work is in progress to further develop the system so that it can be used to provide enhanced functionality to analyse the extent and nature of emerging issues.

Staffing resilience within area command vulnerability units has proved difficult. The detective chief inspector monitors this closely, with regular discussions with the vulnerability detective inspector. The majority of backfilling is provided by reactive CID, with some further resilience from officers on restricted duties.

Areas for improvement

Partnership structures within the PVP agenda have not yet become fully aligned. The ACC has an overview of the area, sitting on the Children’s Trust, LAA (including domestic violence/child matters etc) and level 2 tasking.

The level of audit and inspection function that exists within the constabulary is poor and is an area for improvement.

There were frustrations expressed within the area command intelligence function that a large number of problem profiles for MAPPA3/domestic violence offenders cannot be actioned and that there is no realistic possibility of undertaking the necessary investigative work. Staff believe that a great deal of analytical research and investigative work have been completed with little if any gain.

Protecting Vulnerable People – Child Abuse

GRADE	GOOD
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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

Every Child Matters: change for children is the programme of local and national action through which the transformation of children’s services is being implemented. The Children Act 2004 provides the statutory framework for delivery. The Act places a duty on chief officers and police authorities to co-operate with local authorities in the force area in order to improve the wellbeing of children and young people. The Chief Constable also has a duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. This is because the work of the constabulary has a significant impact on children’s services within County Durham and Darlington, and it has direct responsibility for the provision of services for children and young people. The constabulary and the authority are members of the shadow children’s executive boards for Durham and Darlington, which will develop into the children’s trust in the coming year.

The constabulary will also become a member of the local children’s boards when they are established and will continue with its membership of the LSCB. The shadow children’s executive board and the LSCB sit alongside each other at a county/borough level. The shadow board deals with a wide range of child-based issues, whereas the LSCB deals only with the issue of child safety. The local children’s boards sit at a district level.

Strengths

The ACC has specific portfolio responsibility for PVP, including the investigation of child abuse, and takes an active interest.

An incident review group has been established under the LSCB, having identified the need to co-ordinate reviews undertaken by the different agencies following serious incidents. The group has the following terms of reference: development of a system that avoids a range of isolated or duplicating enquiries to be conducted, but takes into account the need to satisfy a range of differing and at times conflicting Government guidance; development of a process of standard notification between processes; outcomes that improve the quality of inter-agency communication.

Written accountability embraces national guidance documented within 'Working Together to Safeguard Children'. NCPE guidance on child abuse investigations has been used to 'health check' the constabulary's performance and the resulting areas for improvement have been actioned through the business planning process. Performance and statistical data against workload are contained in the performance management pack.

The health check against the NCPE guidelines looks at compliance against the areas of: knowledge assets; systems assets; source assets; people assets; report/discovery of child abuse incident and initial response; continuous risk assessment; joint agency discussion and investigation planning; intelligence/information recording; child abuse investigation and development of intelligence; case management; case closure and debrief; and management review. Lead officer responsibility is outlined.

Within Durham, child protection investigators take primacy where:

- A child (under 18) has been or is alleged to have been the victim of sexual or physical abuse by a relative, carer or other professional – or the victim of sexual abuse by a person who has an element of control over them;
- A child has sexually abused another child within their own family or where the circumstances of the abuse are unusual or give rise to concern regarding the child's behaviour;
- The welfare or neglect of a child is of such concern that it is likely to constitute an offence under Section 1 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1933; and
- A 'Schedule 1' offender has moved into a household where there are children.

Sudden unexplained death incidents are dealt with initially by the area detective inspector fully supervised by the on-call senior investigating officer (SIO). Child murders or suspicious deaths are dealt with by the major crime team and designated SIO. Vulnerability staff will be involved with these cases where the appropriate specialist knowledge and experience are required to support the investigation.

Less serious non-familial sex abuse cases which fall outside the remit of the vulnerability unit and could include internet crime would be carried out by the CID where appropriate, with the assistance of computer crime investigators.

Durham currently has 22 child protection officers. These officers' supervisors have joint responsibility for child protection, adult protection and domestic violence.

Officers only deal with investigations within their own remits. They do provide occasional assistance when making arrests, interviews etc but the caseload remains with officers from the respective discipline.

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The constabulary strategic assessment captures all areas of vulnerability. Additionally, the constabulary is developing a problem profile in respect of 'threats to life'. The profile includes the area of child abuse.

There is a QPU based in each area command. Both units gather performance information on behalf of their vulnerability units. This information is used during quarterly accountability meetings, which take place between the area command SMT and vulnerability staff.

Performance data is gathered in respect of: number of arrests; number of NFAs (no further action); number of persons outstanding on bail; number of sanction detections; number of non-sanction detections; number of MEMEX (intelligence) reports; number of child protection referrals; number of ABE interviews; number of suspect interviews; number of shift briefings attended; number of occasions where support is given to the core; number of occasions where support is given to the beat teams; number of referrals checked for NCRS compliance; number of referrals checked for quality issues; and average number of days sick.

The PROtect database is the constabulary IT system for all child and adult protection matters and also covers domestic violence. Where appropriate, paper records are filed in order to support and enhance the capability of PROtect, which is accessible within all six vulnerability units. The system has also been put into both communication centres, as well as intelligence units, which will ensure out-of-hours access and provision of data to operational officers in the command and control environment and increase accessibility for intelligence purposes.

This system is not only a database, but allows for the active management and progression of investigations to be monitored in accordance with constabulary policy. In addition, the system flags an early warning system for nominals in a 12-month rolling period.

The database is searchable across disciplines, eg an individual can search on a name/location/unique reference number anywhere in the county and the results will cross reference any information held within all the vulnerability disciplines. Every person residing in the constabulary area and subject to the MAPPA procedures has a MEMEX/PNC flag and this information can be accessed through the constabulary/area command intelligence units. The command and control also highlights addresses (identifying individuals living at the address subject to MAPPA procedures) to officers attending the address for operational reasons.

All child protection officers must complete the ICIDP and ABE training courses. All staff who are working in the area of vulnerability have or are going through the ICIDP process. Training in this should be completed by the end of 2007. ABE training has taken place within the constabulary and staff within the units are trained in this area. In addition, under the ACPO investigative strategy, there is sufficient resilience in respect of volume ABE requirements. To further develop this area, the LSCB provides training as the occasion requires.

All job descriptions for police officers and police staff including supervisors accurately reflect the role and are documented on the constabulary intranet. Role profiles have been determined in line with the integrated competency framework.

Force 'wallpaper' recently displayed information regarding the accurate recording processes for child abuse investigations in order to better inform staff. This information is also on the constabulary intranet. PROtect is the IT recording /management tool for all vulnerability issues (including child abuse investigation). MEMEX supports this area of business through accurate recording/analysis of intelligence in line with the NIM.

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Work in progress

The process for other agencies making referrals to the constabulary is catered for in the child and adult procedures for County Durham and Darlington. Referrals come almost exclusively from social services directly into the vulnerability units. Procedures are being written with regard to referral between social care, health and the police; these are to stipulate the required process and will define the level and quality of information required. Completion was scheduled for June.

The multiple entry of information is to be reviewed as part of the customer data hub project. This will ensure all information is in one central hub. The current search facility is via i2. An additional front-end mining tool will be developed to search all systems. Once this is available, it may no longer be necessary to double-key information. In the interim, this must continue as the operational information required for officers on a day-to-day basis is an absolute necessity and double keying is currently a necessary process to maintain accessibility.

The constabulary contributes positively to case conferences, strategy meetings and joint investigations with social services. The LSCB memorandum of understanding contains agreed standards to which member organisations must conform. The LSCB performance framework builds on these standards and sets monitoring arrangements. A performance framework has recently been agreed.

Areas for improvement

Staffing levels were determined as part of a constabulary review in 2003 and based on a mathematical formula based on research by Lloyd and Burman. The recent remodelling programme has impacted on this work and improvement continues.

Within the new crime and drugs strategy, a future action will reinforce area command accountability to profile personal caseload against available staffing levels.

Although caseloads are not formally monitored, supervisors determine an officer's caseload in three ways: by attending all initial strategy meetings; daily updates from officers regarding current caseload; and the PROtect IT system.

Protecting Vulnerable People – Domestic Violence

GRADE	FAIR
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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/liason 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

Domestic violence has been raised as an area of concern, both within the organisation and via the external consultation process, due to the increasing number of domestic-related homicides which occurred during the past 12 months compared with that of previous years. In an attempt to reduce these figures, the constabulary is participating in a pilot of a domestic homicide review to identify if intervention by partners and the police was appropriate and whether or not the homicide could have been prevented. A Durham and Darlington review board has been formed, consisting of all relevant partner agencies including health, social services and probation.

In addition to this work, the revised crime and drugs strategy includes specific actions to further improve the constabulary’s service to domestic violence victims as part of the PVP section.

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The vulnerability strategic group is considering the corporate response to domestic violence and its data quality, reviewing constabulary policy and implementing investigation and recording protocols.

Involvement in developing MARAC and MAPPA joint-agency risk assessment and referral schemes has influenced the timeliness of implementation for new structures and procedures. This project has been ongoing since 2006, when interim arrangements were established prior to developments based on the NCPE guide being progressed. The constabulary has raised its response with domestic violence officers (DVOs) being made investigators and six administration clerks put in place.

The definition of the percentage of domestic violence incidents with a power of arrest where an arrest was made has changed. It is recognised that this can be prone to perverse incentives. It has also been flagged nationally that the differences in forces' results suggest issues with data quality. A national audit has been undertaken.

Notwithstanding these comments, domestic violence remains a focus for the constabulary with the application and review of a new domestic violence policy. Performance is monitored at all levels and positive action actively promoted.

Strengths

The ACC is the chief officer lead for domestic violence and is a member of the county-wide multi-agency domestic abuse executive group. The ACC, together with the full executive, has viewed the DVD highlighting domestic abuse and used in the training of staff both across the organisation and externally with partner agencies. The head of CID chairs the MARAC project management board.

A written accountability framework is in place. Performance figures are generated and are input into the area business plans. These plans are then discussed at the accountability meetings, which are held every quarter with the area command SMTs and the executive. Actions from the business plan are discussed and this could include the necessity to address performance issues at a team or individual level by referral to the appropriate supervisor, for example inadequate domestic violence form completion. The constabulary has an internal communications strategy/structure.

A new sub-group of the county-wide domestic abuse forum was set up to look at referrals in respect of child protection issues and through consultation with the LSCB, police and health, an interim procedure has been produced and agreed by the LSCB. The procedure has also been included in the updated child protection procedures.

The approach to domestic violence incidents has developed with the use of the NIM. Previously, the response was very reactive and at best a trigger/response plan would be created. Now incidents receive a full target profile where required.

Consultation on the action plan is undertaken through the county-wide abuse forum, with representatives from all agencies. This plan is cascaded down to CDRPs/domestic abuse action groups and local area domestic abuse forums, so that their work is also reflected within it, but they still have the ability to devise their own plans which reflect work that they feel should be done on a local level due to local need. The North Area commander chairs the domestic abuse/violent crime operations group.

Durham has introduced homicide reviews and the head of CID is assisting nationally in information-sharing.

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The domestic violence policy is monitored through the strategic co-ordinator:

- ACPO implementation, July 2005/policy review July 2007;
- New additions to the policy will include performance measures and the introduction of a new risk assessment;
- Intention is also to introduce an audit and review section to the policy;
- The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) has seen an improvement in the quality of the files and evidence gathered, including statements taken; and
- Action in crime, drugs and alcohol strategy for reviews to be undertaken.

The constabulary has highlighted minimum standards for key areas, including leadership and accountability:

- The ACC is part of the county-wide, multi-agency domestic abuse executive group;
- The head of CID chairs the MARAC project management board;
- The superintendent (SIO) chairs the constabulary forum group;
- The superintendent (SIO) chairs the homicide review multi-agency board;
- The constabulary strategic co-ordinator is a member of the county-wide domestic abuse multi-agency forum;
- The strategic co-ordinator also links in with all the external agencies, both statutory and voluntary, on a regular basis. This includes all the domestic abuse co-ordinators, refuge and outreach workers. The co-ordinator attends the local domestic abuse forum/action groups/CDRPs at relevant points during the year;
- The constabulary strategic priorities were recently agreed by members of the constabulary remodelling board, senior managers and members of the police authority. A further meeting then took place to establish which areas would receive significant investment over the next three years and domestic abuse has been agreed as one of these areas.
- Within the police authority policing plan, domestic abuse will be placed under serious violence with the core areas being PVP, domestic violence and hate crime;
- Domestic violence is a local policing priority within each area command as part of the NIM, ensuring that relevant action is taken at local level as well as being led from the centre;
- The strategic co-ordinator updates the executive regarding policy, procedures and new initiatives, eg MARAC; and
- Domestic abuse is contained within the constabulary's threats to life policy and the NIM strategic assessment.

The decision-making process involves all relevant external agencies. A stakeholder event was held in February 2007 which also involved young people. Domestic abuse is a target within the LAA.

The constabulary operates a citizens panel, with membership of approximately 1,200 people. The panel is consulted to ensure that local views and opinions are represented within plans, eg the policing plan. All agencies have signed up to a county-wide domestic abuse strategy.

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Officers are proactively using head cams when attending incidents so that evidence is gathered from the point of arrival of the police.

Staff are receiving improved scripts in relation to domestic abuse to ensure that relevant information is obtained to allow for an immediate officer response.

Centrally, the compliance of recording domestic violence incidents is monitored and the findings are reviewed in the area accountability meetings. Locally, the QPU also checks on a daily basis the domestic violence incidents on the incident log to ensure correct response and NCRS compliance. Their findings are reported to the command team at the daily tasking meetings.

The amended domestic violence policy form is more stringent in relation to the quality of information and action. This will include details on whether an arrest has been made and the rationale behind any decision not to arrest.

The command and control system provides information to the operator, showing previous incidents where police have been called to that address and for what reason. Operators also have access to PROtect, MEMEX (intelligence system), constabulary knowledge base and crime recording and custody systems. Where appropriate, 'trigger plans' are generated according to risk. These plans are regularly updated and communication operators have access to the information so that the attending officers have accurate/relevant information to ensure the appropriate response.

Domestic violence sits within the control strategy and as such features heavily in Durham's tasking and co-ordinating process. Daily intelligence briefing documents circulate information on trigger plans and offenders. The knowledge base holds current information on injunctions.

A 'splash screen' is now fully functional within PROtect, warning officers that a person has entered the system three times in a rolling 12-month period. Guidance for operation has been produced.

There is evidence that management information is used to inform strategic development, eg data in respect of the Easington pilot/use of head cams. The constabulary is able to effectively monitor relevant statistics, one of those statistics being the percentage of domestic violence incidents which have resulted in a recorded crime.

Tactical management falls to a chief inspector and a strategic domestic violence co-ordinator with responsibility for training, joint-agency liaison and policy. A detective inspector in the two area command-based vulnerability units, which encompass domestic violence, has responsibility for overall performance, with a detective sergeant managing the DVOs and departmental support staff.

All DVO posts, which are dedicated posts, are filled. This has been extended to reserve cover, which has been secured for Darlington and Durham/Chester-le-Street while DVOs are on maternity cover.

Durham has established a pilot domestic violence unit in the Easington district (North Area command). The constabulary has provided three additional members of staff, namely a detective sergeant and two detective constables. The area DVO will also be based within this unit, as will an external member of staff who will have an 'advocacy' role. If successful, it is expected that similar units will be established across the constabulary (looking at two additional units being set up in the next financial year).

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A vulnerability sergeant is on duty every weekend to provide cover. Child and family protection members of staff cover on a rota basis. The new unit in Easington will also provide cover at weekends, as would any subsequent units that are set up across the constabulary area. The pilot has been extremely well received and is supported by partners (the only downside is the increased number of referrals to partners and their capacity to deal with them).

Domestic violence in the Durham North Area command is developed around the NIM to identify the top five offenders/victims in order to establish a more proactive approach. Neighbourhood inspectors are advised and tasked by the vulnerability co-ordinators and the information is fed into the strategic assessment.

The strategic domestic violence co-ordinator is delivering a constabulary-wide training programme for all front-line officers, including traffic, CID, neighbourhood officers etc. The training is extremely indicative, as it shows officers attending a domestic violence incident reported by a neighbour which on arrival appears to be a completely normal domestic situation. Investigation reveals a recording of the preceding actions showing the victim subjected to a profound attack leaving little visible evidence. This is resulting in raised awareness for officers dealing with this type of incident. Communications staff have also received awareness training. The correct classification tagging and the qualifiers of these types of incidents have been reinforced and are closely monitored. In the rewrite of the policy, specific directives will be included for communications staff to further drive improved recording.

The strategic co-ordinator has also delivered multi-agency training to magistrates, the CPS, health and social care. Through the annual domestic abuse budget from the Home Office, a domestic abuse training provider has delivered training on a multi-agency basis to over 120 professionals from both the statutory and voluntary sector (including police DVOs).

Joint training has taken place in the Durham South Area command, with multi-agency partners and the police attending a one-day domestic abuse training session delivered by an external agency.

The constabulary has worked with the CPS on bail issues and how the CPS would view abuse cases and develop relationships with officers at the initial charge sites. The constabulary co-ordinator has remained involved in reviewing discontinuances of abuse cases and ensuring that where police issues are raised, these are addressed so that improvements can be made.

The co-ordinator has also become involved in some of the high-risk abuse cases; this has involved liaising with the CPS to ensure that charges are not reduced, bad character evidence is utilised and support for the victim is adequately resourced.

With the improvements in the overall police initial response and the gaining of evidence through the proactive use of the new head cams, this will work towards ensuring that greater evidence is available to the CPS.

The CPS, through the sensitive/specialist Court programme, is looking at abuse cases being turned around more quickly, which ultimately assists the victim in dealing with the case and then moving on.

Funding has been sourced from the probation service to provide a domestic violence advocate to offer support to victims between charge and court.

DVOs receive all notifications of domestic violence incidents via PROtect. Notifications include all repeat victims of domestic violence and all victims identified for a raised level of

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response in line with Durham's domestic violence policy. On these occasions, DVOs make every effort to contact the victims to ensure support and referral to other agencies where appropriate. On occasions DVOs will offer experience and expertise to an investigation but should not routinely become 'officer in the case'. Allocation to a particular investigation is dependent on the nature of the offence and authorisation from the vulnerability unit detective inspector.

The PROtect database is the constabulary IT system in connection with all child and adult protection matters, together with domestic violence. Where appropriate, paper records are filed in order to support and enhance the capability of PROtect. The system is accessible within the six vulnerability units and has been put into both communication centres, as well as intelligence units. This ensures out-of-hours access and increased accessibility.

Procedures for the timely assessment of risk were put in place after thorough consultation with all vulnerability staff. Risk identification factors were gained from information from the Metropolitan Police following homicide reviews on domestic abuse murders and ACPO risk factors. All DVOs, vulnerability sergeants and some front-line officers/sergeants have been trained in risk assessment. The constabulary has adopted new procedures including MARAC risk assessment, grading etc. There are appropriate links to MAPPA.

Risk assessment is initially documented on the Comms Rel 87, which is the constabulary's domestic violence report form. The level of intervention from police and other agencies is dependent on the level of risk identified using the 'risk identification' scale. The form is currently subject to review and the revised document will adopt the MARAC risk assessment.

The Comms Rel 87 document requires the officer to document all children who reside in the house where the domestic incident has taken place. The form directs an officer to submit a child protect 1 form where involvement of child abuse investigators is necessary. There is also a tag which can be added to command and control (vulnerability tag), and this ensures that the information is forwarded to child abuse investigators in the appropriate circumstances.

DVOs have up-to-date job descriptions agreed as part of the policy introduced in 2005. A pilot is underway which has a dedicated detective sergeant responsible for supervision of this unit and adult protection issues. The South Area command DVOs each work from a vulnerability unit and are supervised by a detective sergeant with joint responsibility for domestic violence, adult protection and child protection.

Work in progress

The domestic violence policy is being reviewed and re-written. The recording of domestic violence incidents is part of the audit undertaken by the strategic co-ordinator. The constabulary, through the head of CID, has encouraged area commanders to develop and maintain bad character evidence packages for prioritised domestic abuse cases. A full audit is being undertaken with the terms of reference covering the end-to-end process involved in domestic violence incidents to ensure appropriate recording, investigation, subsequent actions and that the disposals are appropriate and in line with constabulary policy.

Domestic violence receives a considerable focus and has been highlighted as a priority for 2007/08. MARAC training and implementation is in its final stages of completion, only requiring approval and signatures of partnership agencies.

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The training being delivered is assisting in raising awareness and the overall profile of domestic abuse with officers; this will impact on the response at initial attendance. The training in the North Area command allowed for discussion regarding attitudes and honest concerns when dealing with domestic abuse incidents, but also allowed for heightened awareness regarding evidence gathering and the importance of gaining as much information as possible during that first contact with the victim. The feedback from the training has demonstrated a tangible impact on officers' attitudes and their approach to dealing with abuse.

Durham has previously trained a number of individuals as domestic violence champions. Changes to the shift pattern have meant that these officers are not always available and are used inconsistently. There is an intention to rejuvenate this area, with the provision of additional training courses.

The domestic violence markers on STORM command and control have recently been improved and the constabulary has developed a risk assessment form which includes a wider range of risk indicators (based on the Cardiff model) to be completed by the officer at the scene and signed by their supervisor. The new form has its benefits in that it makes a clear link to child protection and will be used as the child protection referral form.

There has been a commitment from the North Area command SMT that all operational officers would receive training in domestic abuse by June 2007. The training would be provided by the strategic co-ordinator and involve the use of a DVD of a real-life domestic abuse incident and then debriefing the issues highlighted. The training is seen as an opportunity for the co-ordinator to consult with officers regarding their relationship with the CPS, discuss changes to a new domestic violence form and introduce a risk assessment. Officers highlight issues or any suggestions they might have for improvement.

The South Area command SMT has agreed to release 100 officers to participate in domestic violence training delivered jointly by the Darlington Borough Council domestic abuse co-ordinator, together with an officer who previously held the role of DVO. This training was scheduled to be completed by June 2007. The South Area command will also receive the DVD training provided to the North Area command later in the year or in 2008.

Officers attending domestic violence incidents are required to submit a domestic violence form, which includes risk indicators. At present, the DVOs then review the form and determine the level of response that the victim requires.

HMIC has undertaken an audit of domestic violence arrangements in Durham; it identified areas of work in progress. The constabulary has identified that domestic violence is a vulnerable area and is in the process of initiating new policy and procedures so that all incidents are reviewed by trained DVOs. An updated risk assessment process (Cardiff model) is also being progressed. The success of accurate data quality revolves around initial capture and this is recognised by the new constabulary lead and co-ordinator.

Areas for improvement

The issue of positive action being taken in respect of domestic violence in terms of arrest followed by the perpetrator being quickly released on bail has previously been highlighted. This issue is to be addressed by the sensitive case courts and has been discussed with the CPS to ensure there is no delay in the decision to charge.

Management information specifically in relation to bail management is being developed; this will allow area command management teams to review why and when offenders are being

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bailed. Once the issues have been identified, training specifically in domestic violence will be given to custody officers by the strategic domestic violence co-ordinator.

Outside of the work being carried out in the Easington pilot, the domestic violence function is seen as reactive. There is a shortfall of appropriate support which is preventing DVOs from getting out and dealing with victims as they would like.

Partners raised the provision of panic alarms for victims of domestic violence as an area for improvement, with greater numbers available in some authority areas than in others. This is a funding and allocation issue which needs to be resolved, as it is impacting on the constabulary.

There has been some confusion between the National Standard for Incident Recording (NSIR) and ACPO definitions of domestic violence, resulting in a difference in the recording of incidents. This can have a significant impact on the service provided. The introduction of Symposium will help to break down issues and ensure clear evaluation.

The main issue identified by HMIC auditors was the under-recording of reported domestic violence incidents onto the PROtect database. An NSIR audit carried out against 'web storm' identified that approximately 30–40 % of domestic violence incidents were not being given the correct qualifier code and hence were not being flagged or referred to domestic violence staff for PROtect entries. The audit assessed the management arrangements as poor.

The audit also identified that incidents are not tracked from report to resolution and the sample demonstrated issues in relation to consistency of data recorded in separate systems as a result. Individual validation of incidents is conducted under NSIR on open and closing codes only, which if not initially qualified as domestic is not captured. The auditors further commented on a number of incidents with clear crime allegations which could not be traced as recorded and no cross-reference links were available in these cases. This process is disjointed and worthy of review to ensure all domestic incidents are captured and that data is consistent throughout the constabulary systems. The constabulary move to its new crime IT system may allow capture of all incidents in one place, which may be a future consideration for all domestic incident recording rather than multiple system entries.

The areas for improvement highlighted in last year's review suggested that policy needed to include performance measures and their implications. This is still in the process of review but delayed due to the implementation of MARAC. Training for specialist officers has been carried out with ICIDP including NCPE domestic violence modules. Timeliness and accuracy of data input and staff access to the PROtect system is still an issue yet to be resolved.

The constabulary has accepted the findings and is working to address them.

Operationally, the Constabulary prioritises domestic violence but its data recording processes do not accurately capture the SPI indicator to best effect. Communications staff have all had recent guidance but tend to rely on personal knowledge to identify domestic incidents with the ACPO definition being applied by PROtect input staff. The constabulary captures incidents involving under-18 year olds but relies on manual exclusion from returns.

Management of recorded PROtect data on domestic violence falls to the vulnerability sergeants in each area command, delegated to the support staff to notify the HQ performance team monthly. The recording process is initially paper based, with officers completing Comms Rel 87 forms (domestic violence incident form) and clerks inputting the data onto PROtect. This data is then electronically collated via emails on a monthly basis by the deputy NSIR registrar without any further quality assurance. An Excel spreadsheet is

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then completed and the Home Office return produced. DVOs only provide advisory support to uniform staff if the case is considered to be above 'standard' risk. DVOs will then become involved at differing response levels. Uniform supervision is currently responsible for ensuring domestic incident reports are all recorded but internal audit has highlighted this is not effective due to a failure to flag or non-submission.

Once in the PROtect system, data is managed but updates can be affected due to access restrictions preventing update by non-authorized investigating officers. Arrest data then becomes an issue in the system due to a failure in update, particularly in relation to delayed post-incident arrests. Not all DVO staff are NSPIS-custody trained and therefore cannot easily research named nominals, and the custody system has no direct domestic violence flagging facility to ensure the data is retrievable. While any outstanding suspects are identified in a mandatory field on PROtect that allows an explanation for non-arrest, no evidence was found that the outcome of these cases is chased and many entries seen by auditors had no outcome. Some officers still attempt to utilise the old custody system 'S-Term' in an attempt to validate data. It was established by auditors that limited dip sampling is carried out on domestic violence incidents by the detective inspector on the vulnerability unit, but this was not apparent in the sample. The constabulary is aware of these issues and new procedures and measures are planned.

Staffing levels were originally determined from a best value review held in 2003, thereafter through the remodelling programme and caseload. Although caseload is not formally monitored, supervisors determine an officer's caseload in two ways – daily updates from officers regarding current caseload and the PROtect IT system. There is a perception of an imbalance between the resourcing of domestic violence issues in the North and South area commands. This needs to be evaluated to ensure appropriate resources are in place across the organisation.

The percentage of domestic violence incidents with a power of arrest where an arrest was made relating to the incident is below the MSF average. The percentage of partner-on-partner violence is below the MSF average.

Protecting Vulnerable People – Public Protection

GRADE	GOOD
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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 MAPPAs, 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 MAPPAs, 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 MAPPAs, 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 (MAPPAs).

In 2003, the Home Secretary issued MAPPAs guidance to consolidate what has already been achieved since the introduction of the MAPPAs in 2001 and to address a need for greater consistency in MAPPAs 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

The PPU comprises police, probation and youth engagement service personnel who are dedicated to the management of sex offenders and dangerous persons. This unit was the pilot site for the implementation of the violent and sex offenders register (ViSOR) and this is an area where IT development is underway (although dependent upon a Home Office funding review) as part of the IMPACT programme. The development would allow a one-stop search facility locally across several IT systems.

The constabulary's approach to public protection is supported by the establishment of a strategic management board, chaired by the head of CID and an assistant chief probation officer.

The PPU has been in place as a joint enterprise since 2003 and works exclusively as a partnership. Staff are co-located away from police premises.

A review of the way the constabulary investigates rape allegations is to be carried out in a bid to increase conviction rates. The work will lead to the creation of a policy that will set the guidelines for all investigations.

Strengths

The head of CID is the joint chair of the strategic management board (together with probation). Public protection is a standing agenda item at senior practitioner meetings and the area can be raised through the executive accountability meetings and constabulary forums. The ACC chairs level 2 tasking and co-ordination meetings at which a supervisor from the PPU provides an update on high-risk (MAPPA 3) offenders.

The PPU is a multi-agency unit, which is co-located with probation in Durham City. Plans are in place to employ a MAPPA co-ordinator jointly funded by the police and probation. There are further plans to employ an administrative assistant to input data onto ViSOR.

PPU staff take lead responsibility for the management of registered sex offenders (category 1) in view of the statutory registration and notification requirements for these offenders. The level of involvement in the management of category 2 and 3 offenders will depend on the MAPPA level at which the offender is being managed and which responsible authority is the lead agency under MAPPA.

There is good representation from the PPU at MAPPA conferences, especially in respect of attendance at initial case conferences. The senior probation officer chairs all level 2, and both police and probation attend level 3. The PPU detective sergeant attends all cases involving sex offenders.

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Constabulary policy on the minimum standards in respect of the frequency of visits is: low risk – every 12 months; medium risk – every 6 months; high risk – every 2 months; and very high risk – monthly as a minimum or more frequently as deemed necessary. Visits are recorded on the 'activity log page' on ViSOR. Relevant information from the intelligence submission is also recorded on the MEMEX intelligence system, eg new vehicles, associates and change of address etc.

The PPU is a specialist central unit which deals with registered sex offenders and other offenders who fall within the MAPPA process. It does not deal with child abuse investigations, domestic violence or vulnerable adults. Within the unit, in addition to police officers, there is a senior probation officer, six probation officers and a senior youth engagement officer.

The team is managed by a probation assistant chief officer. The unit's role is to manage all sex offenders who are subject to probation service supervision (sentence to sentence expiry date). The PPU is a single, fully centralised unit servicing the whole constabulary, with centralised strategic and operational accountability and control.

Visits to registered sex offenders are conducted jointly by police and probation staff. There has been a recent change to the minimum timescales for visits as follows:

- High risk – two-monthly;
- Medium risk – six-monthly (previously four-monthly); and
- Low risk – annually (previously six-monthly)

There is a clear understanding that risk levels change as offenders' circumstances change, and consequently it is not unusual to monitor lower risk offenders on a more regular basis, depending on available intelligence. Many of the low risk offenders have been successfully managed to that category from high risk and this is a considered factor in determining risk.

The police use Matrix 2000 for assessing risk. Probation and the prison service use OASYS.

Durham makes effective use of sexual offences prevention orders and has recently taken out its 100th such order. This is seen as a positive move in restricting the activities of offenders; however, the unit is looking at opportunities to monitor offenders more robustly through proactive interventions.

All registered sex offenders (RSOs) are known to the PPU from the point of conviction or police caution. The PPU is informed by means of a 'certificate of finding' issued by the Clerk of the Court. If a pre-sentence report (PSR) is requested by the Court/Judge, then this will be allocated to the probation staff within the PPU.

The PSR interview will be conducted jointly by police and probation staff of the PPU. Systems are also in place for liaison between the probation service and PPU officers to notify in advance of the imminent release of register able sex offender who is in a custody setting.

Any serving prisoner will be risk assessed by prison MAPPA/probation service and referred into the PPU MAPPA process as necessary and where appropriate. All dealings relating to RSOs are recorded on the ViSOR national database. All referrals, minutes, action plans and review meeting minutes of level 2 risk management meetings and level 3 MAPPAs are recorded both on IT systems and in a hard copy paper archive system. Copies of these are sent to the intelligence unit for inclusion on the intelligence system in line with the NIM. The PPU has close links with the vulnerability units, CID and the probation service dedicated

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victim liaison officer, who monitors all relevant 'victim' issues under statute. As one of the pilot sites, the ViSOR system and back-record conversion and data cleansing have been completed.

The PPU produces detailed information for the steering group focusing on the key areas of: sex offender register; probation statutory supervision; risk management meeting/MAPPA; sexual offence prevention orders; and good practice.

There is a strong commitment to MAPPA. The constabulary policy for attendance at level 2 risk management meetings has been agreed at geographical inspector level (or above) and at level 3 full MAPPA meetings at detective chief inspector (or above). All level 2 meetings are chaired and facilitated by probation, which is co-located within the PPU.

In the Durham North Area command, all MAPPA meetings are attended by the community sergeant/inspector to ensure involvement of neighbourhood officers at an early stage. There is a good working relationship between the PPU and neighbourhood officers, who are made aware of all high-risk offenders.

Offenders falling outside MAPPA are the responsibility of area commanders. They are identified and prioritised through the NIM processes/domestic violence risk assessment. Area command resources are allocated through the tasking and co-ordinating process.

PPU staff ensure that referrals coming into the unit are risk assessed and dealt with by means of a review meeting. This would take place after an agency has become aware of an individual, fulfilling set criteria of a sexual or violent offender, or someone who has committed offences and who may cause serious harm to the public. Agencies are held to account for any actions that have been allocated to them during the risk management meetings by staff within the unit.

Level 1 cases are managed on a 'sole agency' basis.

All officers are trained in Risk Matrix 2000 and ViSOR. One officer has attended and completed the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) foundation course in understanding sex offenders. Proactive onsite training/supervision by the supervisor in the unit takes place on a daily basis by means of accompanying officers on home visits and intrusive management of cases using the ViSOR IT system.

ViSOR incorporates a 'risk assessment' and a 'risk management plan'. Any change (increase or decrease) in the level of risk automatically triggers electronic notification to the PPU supervisor for their attention.

Durham was a pilot force for ViSOR and the system is now fully implemented. Back-record converting has been complete for some time. PPU staff are satisfied that ViSOR is fit for purpose as a tool for delivering public protection services and that it has improved over recent years. The system is used for managing their caseload and diaries as well as providing a clear profile of the offenders they supervise. ViSOR is being rolled out to the national offender management service, prison service and probation and will consequently hold a great deal more information about an offender.

Information-sharing between partner agencies is seen as an area of strength, with staff from the different agencies working jointly on initiatives. This is in spite of the fact that agencies presently use different IT systems, with health not being able to accept any identifiable information via email.

Command and control identifies the home address of registered sex offenders when input into the system. The Automatic Number Plate Recognition system is routinely updated and

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if the person is high risk, a target profile can be generated in accordance with the NIM. Electronic daily intelligence briefing documents also keep non-specialist staff informed.

The command and control system has been adapted to enable a 'flag' to be raised when an incident involves a known sex offender. This is audited regularly by PPU staff. If a flag is raised, then the command room supervisor will access ViSOR and brief the attending officer. PPU staff will brief local officers on offenders of particular interest if the need arises (via the briefing system) while an operating protocol is in place for the 'outing' of a sex offender.

A thematic report on the police responsibility in respect of rape has been completed. Initial findings are that a high percentage of allegations of rape are committed by suspects previously associated with the victim. The standard of investigation is generally good, although there are areas for improvement in matters such as file maintenance, documented evidence of managerial scrutiny of the investigation, resilience in force medical examiner provision and the use of policy files.

PPU staff do not deal with victims of rape. The constabulary employs 19 sexual offences liaison officers who attend bi-annual forums to identify and rectify any issues that are raised within the field. The first of these was held in December 2006. Counselling for victims is provided by the sexual assault referral centre, which is based at the Meadowfield Suite and Blacketts Medical Centre in Darlington.

The interview suites are used for the following purposes:

- The interview of victims of sexual assault;
- The ABE interviews of children and vulnerable adults in accordance with County Durham and Darlington child and adult protection procedures;
- The ABE interview of children in accordance with the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999;
- By police officers, social workers and practitioners from external agencies throughout County Durham and Darlington; and
- By members of external agencies, eg the rape and sexual abuse counselling centre and victim support outreach workers. In the longer term, victims will be able to self-refer without any investigation by the police.

The current caseload of RSOs is approximately 85 offenders per officer. All officers have their own designated geographic areas and responsibilities and work closely with staff from County Durham Probation Service. Workloads of staff are constantly monitored by the police supervisor within the unit in respect of risk and are re-allocated if there is an imbalance of offenders in one particular area.

Police staff are managed by a detective chief inspector based at constabulary headquarters who has strategic responsibility for public protection, adult protection, domestic violence and child protection. The most recent increase in establishment was one constable in March 2007, with the increase based on workload.

The strategic head of vulnerability is the police operational lead for the centralised PPU, who reports directly to the head of CID. The unit sergeant oversees the daily supervision of the core business and PPU staff. Regular meetings are held to discuss all cases and any staff issues. From these meetings, the PPU sergeant attends the monthly public protection steering group meeting and reports any issues raised by PPU staff.

Work in progress

Threats to life and serious violence have recently been adopted by the constabulary as a priority. As a result, a problem profile has been drafted encompassing the following elements:

- A baseline assessment of serious violent crime;
- Identification of which life-threatening crime constitutes the biggest threat; and
- Identification where possible of enablers and drivers of life-threatening crime.

Hate crime (specifically those crimes driven by race and homophobia) has been considered outside the scope of the profile.

Areas for improvement

There are some frustrations for staff outside the PPU in respect of the limited access to the ViSOR database.

The system is seen to have some constraints, namely in the ability to provide management information. Consequently, parallel systems (primarily Excel spreadsheets) have been developed to manage this. The consequence of this is to limit the amount of information available to officers when dealing with cross-border issues.

The PROtect IT system is extremely slow, particularly at peak periods and at certain locations. This has created a backlog of entries to be added onto the system, eg Peterlee. Staff are working flexi-shifts and at the weekend to input data at times when the system is quicker and some reports are being transferred to other offices to balance the workload. The matter has been raised on the constabulary risk register.

Resilience in the PPU is an area of concern for staff and is particularly prevalent in respect of supervision. The unit is managed by a detective sergeant who works directly to the detective chief inspector. The postholder has strategic responsibility for policy development and a national role in respect of ViSOR. Opportunities for direct front-line supervision are limited. Succession planning is a further area for consideration.

Staff highlighted that no national training courses are in place for public protection officers and opportunities are limited. However, a member of staff has attended the NCIS foundation course and the constabulary is responsible for providing appropriate training and maximising opportunities. Some training has been delivered by probation and two members of staff have attended training events in other forces (Manchester and Cleveland).

Protecting Vulnerable People – Missing Persons

GRADE	FAIR
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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

Durham Constabulary has no IT-based system to support the investigation of missing persons. This is a risk to the organisation.

All missing persons are tagged for the chief officer log, head of CID and the senior command briefing. The constabulary MFH policy, which is rigidly adhered to, defines level of risk, subsequent review timescales and the level of investigation required. The policy also identifies the appropriate reviewing officer. Daily updates are given to the head of CID and the detective superintendents until any missing person is located.

The area command detective chief inspectors review every missing person report (medium and high risk are also reviewed by the HQ-based SIOs); however, the process is not seen as effective and can involve driving significant distances in order to view a report which should be stored on a single database.

The constabulary has previously recognised that there are a significant number of missing persons who are reported from within the 'looked after' system who are not only vulnerable but also contribute to significant inefficiency and a drain on police resources. The matter is being addressed by the County Durham and Darlington LSCBs. Work is also progressing to address issues with the County Durham Social Services 'Runaway' project. Work has been undertaken on a local basis in the Durham South Area command to resolve this; a member of staff within the education department has responsibility for children 'missing from education'.

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Strengths

The ACC has specific portfolio responsibility for missing persons and provides a strong lead. All missing person reports are flagged daily for the ACC (executive), head of CID and the senior command briefing.

Durham has a written accountability framework for missing persons which includes the role of SIO. The constabulary missing person's policy describes action to be taken and outlines individual responsibilities at all stages of the investigation. The detective chief inspectors/SIOs use a corporate template to ensure a robust standard of review.

The constabulary missing persons policy is consistent with ACPO guidance. It has been updated during 2007 and is available to staff via the constabulary intranet. The policy contains tactical options and suggested lines of enquiry as guidance.

Procedures are in place setting out the recording process, with an appropriate focus on the areas of risk assessment, tactical options and supervisory responsibilities. Senior managers are satisfied that officers have a good understanding of their roles in respect of missing persons, risk assessment and the review processes.

Reported missing persons are a standing item in the area command daily tasking meetings. During the inspection HMIC attended a morning meeting chaired by the South Area superintendent at which missing persons featured, with staff tasked and held to account for their actions.

The MFH policy is comprehensive and rigidly adhered to. It ensures that all enquiries are appropriately investigated according to risk and subsequently reviewed/overseen by the appropriate supervisor. The level of supervision is identified by the policy and regular updates are given to the identified reviewing officer. All missing persons are subsequently documented onto the PROtect system, which then captures the vulnerability aspect of the enquiry and cross-refers all available information for repeat incidents etc.

There is evidence that the missing persons policy is well known and understood by operational staff; this is reflected in the quality of investigations undertaken.

It is constabulary policy for the area command detective chief inspectors to review all missing persons. However, there has been no change in policy since the number of area commands were reduced from six to two, therefore greatly increasing the officers' workload. Detective chief inspectors also review every rape case, which again raises some questions in respect of resilience.

Risk identification and assessment processes are in place and operational links have been made. The constabulary has provided critical incident training – an exercise has recently taken place in respect of a child rescue alert.

Missing persons have a high profile within the divisional tasking processes and feature at the daily tasking meetings.

Missing persons forms are retained in the vulnerability unit and are quality assessed by the unit detective inspector.

The constabulary has agreed a process for the appropriate referral of children reported missing in the 'looked after' system with the Children's Service. A review established that 50% of missing persons referred to police by carers should not have been referred. A prompt is now on the command and control system for call-takers to establish if a risk assessment has been conducted by the carers before contacting the police.

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Children who are in 'looked after' system are subject to regular review. Area QPUs not only look at individuals but also the location from where the child has gone missing, eg it may be that there is a particular problem with a specific care home and not the missing person. Regardless of whether it is an individual or a particular location, a NIM-based partnership approach with relevant agencies (eg social services) is adopted.

When a missing person is entered onto PROtect the splash screen within the system will identify repeat incidents and trigger points. This information provides the opportunity for a strategic meeting if deemed appropriate.

Management information is used by senior managers to monitor performance, and actions around audit and review of processes are built into the crime, drugs and alcohol strategy for the area commands and the head of CID.

Work in progress

Policy dictates that a strategy meeting is held whenever a person goes missing on three separate occasions. The meeting should include the relevant neighbourhood inspector and members of the vulnerability unit. However, the lack of IT support and human error means that on occasions instances are tied together at the time of report.

Areas for improvement

The information systems and technology strategy 2007–2012 is supported by analysis of the financial implications of future projects. An IT solution for a missing persons database is scheduled for the latter part of 2007/08. The constabulary has determined user requirements. However, it is unclear how the terms of reference and desired outcomes were determined. There is a frustration that key users of the system, including the area command detective chief inspectors, have not been consulted and have therefore had no influence on the product.

The constabulary does not have dedicated missing persons co-ordinators in either of the area commands. Managers believe previous experience, which saw the role filled by an officer on restricted duties, resulted in a significant improvement in the standard of reports and quality assurance.

Partner agencies believe that more could be done on missing persons from a partnership perspective through addressing the trigger points in respect of children who go missing from care homes etc. There is, however, a recognition that this would be a significant resourcing issue for the partners.

The communications department keeps an ongoing record of the number of missing persons; this is reviewed regularly at a senior level. However, the system is not seen as foolproof, as some long-term missing persons have on occasions not been recorded.

Due to the process presently in place, there is concern that previous cases involving an individual are not always taken into account during the course of an investigation and it is often very difficult to identify what action has been taken by investigating officers.

A number of the areas for improvement have been previously identified. The NCPE capability assessment 2004/05 highlighted: "Durham Constabulary does not have an identified advisor or area (BCU) inspector with responsibility for all MFH co-ordination; "The force is actively seeking to purchase a suitable IT system in late 2005" (deemed medium risk); and "The force does have a data warehouse and is involved with the development of

CRISP. The MFH data is currently stored on a paper system and is not regularly searched” (deemed medium risk). A health check of the assessment highlighted “No electronic monitoring of MFHs available, requiring review officers to travel to site of written form. Dynamic management of MFHs is compromised”. These are matters that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

RECOMMENDATION 1

The lack of an IT-based system to support the investigation and review of missing persons is a risk to the organisation. The introduction of a system (scheduled for the latter part of 2007) should be progressed as a matter of urgency.

Developing Practice

INSPECTION AREA: Protecting vulnerable people – children and family court advisory and support service (CAFCASS)

TITLE: Improved vetting procedure by using record of research sheet, numbering incidents and placing in sequential order and sharing information with the PPU/area commands

PROBLEM:

Due to the high volume of paper research from PNC, MEMEX, I2, Disclose, Firearms and Protect and large amount of 'hits', it was difficult to keep track of the decision making. One incident may be recorded on more than one system, causing difficulty and confusion when typing the incidents onto an office note for the ACC. Also, when sex offenders were identified as being relevant to the application, the PPU was unaware and when any office notes were approved by the ACC, the area commands were unaware that a CAFCASS application had been received.

SOLUTION:

A facing sheet was designed, not only to monitor the systems that had been researched and the operator responsible, but also a record of the decision-making process, follow-up action, pending actions, etc. The numbering of incidents facilitates the placing of incidents into date order. The PPU is notified when sex offenders are identified as either being an applicant or a third party. The area commands receive a copy of the office note when received from the ACC.

OUTCOME(S):

- The research sheet, and numbering of incidents, minimises the possibility of mistakes due to failure to check systems. It also provides a clear view of events for the ACC to view in order to assist with the decision-making process.
- It ensures a clear audit trail on one piece of paper.
- It logs the decision-making process.
- It facilitates research in that the status of the vetting check can be clearly established by another operator.
- Two-way communication as the PPU has the opportunity to supply any further information, is aware that a CAFCASS application has been received and can also update/supplement its information.
- By contacting the area commands high-risk issues, ie repeated incidents of domestic violence that have resulted in no further action. This may also provide intelligence on relevant third parties.

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Recommendations

Protecting vulnerable people

Recommendation 1

The lack of an IT-based system to support the investigation and review of missing persons is a risk to the organisation. The introduction of a system (scheduled for the latter part of 2007) should be progressed as a matter of urgency.

Appendix: Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

A

ABC	Acceptable Behaviour Contract
ABE	Achieving Best Evidence
ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ASB	Anti-social behaviour
ASBO	Anti-Social Behaviour Order

B

BCU	Basic Command Unit
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C

CAFCASS	Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CFF	Crime Fighting Fund
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CJU	Criminal Justice Unit
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CRASBO	Criminal Anti-Social Behaviour Order
CRISP	Cross-Regional Information Sharing Project

D

DCC	Deputy Chief Constable
DVO	Domestic Violence Officer

F

FIU	Force Intelligence Unit
FMG	Force Management Group

H

HMI	Her Majesty's Inspector
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
HQ	Headquarters
HR	Human Resources

I

IAG	Independent Advisory Group
ICIDP	Initial Crime Investigators Development Programme

K

KIN	Key Individual Network
KPI	Key Performance Indicator

L

LCJB	Local Criminal Justice Board
LSCB	Local Safeguarding Children Board

M

MAPPA	Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements
MARAC	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
MFH	Missing From Home
MoPI	Management of Police Information
MSF	Most Similar Force(s)

N

NCIS	National Criminal Intelligence Service
NCPE	National Centre for Policing Excellence
NCRS	National Crime Recording Standard

NIM	National Intelligence Model
NSIR	National Standard for Incident Recording
NSPIS	National Strategy for Police Information Systems

P

PCCG	Police Community Consultative Group
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
PNC	Police National Computer
PPU	Public Protection Unit
PSR	Pre-Sentence Report
PVP	Protecting Vulnerable People

Q

QPU	Quality Performance Unit
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R

RSO	Registered Sex Offender
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S

SGC	Specific Grading Criteria
SIO	Senior Investigating Officer
SMT	Senior Management Team
SNEN	Single Non-Emergency Number
SPI	Statutory Performance Indicator
SPP	Special Priority Payment
STCG	Strategic Tasking and Co-ordination Group

T

TCG	Tasking and Co-ordination Group
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V

ViSOR Violent and Sex Offenders Register