INSPECTION OF OLDHAM BCU
GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE

DECEMBER 2006

Contents

OLDHAM BCU INSPECTION REPORT

1   Executive Summary

Methodology and Focus of Inspection

1.1   The inspection of Oldham basic command unit (BCU) in Greater Manchester Police (GMP) began with the BCU completing a self-assessment based on the seven police performance assessment framework (PPAF) domains and underpinning frameworks. A leadership audit was subsequently conducted in which staff were surveyed and interviews held with key members of the command chain. The self-assessment and leadership audit were used to identify the issues that reflect the greatest risk to performance improvement, namely:

- human resource management;

- neighbourhood policing and problem solving in partnership;

- national intelligence model; and

- contact management (specifically, the management of demand to meet business and customer needs).

Attention was also given to the areas of leadership and performance management across all of the areas under consideration.

BCU Leadership

1.2   The BCU Commander, Chief Superintendent Caroline Ball, was appointed to the post in August 2005 and has some 20 years' service with GMP. Describing Oldham as ethnically diverse, geographically varied and having a reputation for straight-talking, she says, *'it requires a very particular approach to policing – one that listens to people's concerns, agrees practical courses of action and, importantly, delivers results.'*

1.3   A consistent and unequivocal message given to the inspection team was the high degree of confidence that staff, partners and other key stakeholders have in the BCU Commander. Her relationship with the GMP chief officer team is positive, solidly rooted and improving. This reflects a strong dynamic for driving performance improvement. There is clear evidence that the post holder has brought fresh impetus to policing in Oldham underpinned by personal visibility, effective communication and a focus on achieving results through collaboration and teamwork.

1.4   Most survey respondents had a positive understanding of their role, their contribution to BCU priorities, and lines of accountability and responsibility. The term 'Team Oldham' has been introduced relatively recently and the challenge for all managers across the BCU is to give it substance by promoting a more integrated approach, both internally and with partners, to managing demand, solving problems and raising service quality. Demand management and intelligence are key areas for improvement that emerged from the inspection.

BCU Performance

1.5 Crime reduction is poor when compared to peers in the most similar BCU (MSBCU) family. The BCU ranked worse than peers in five out of the six key crime categories: total crime, BCS comparator crime, domestic burglary, robbery, and vehicle crime for the period. Performance in relation to all six key crime categories has deteriorated over the last 12 months, however an assessment of recent performance (latest three months) to historic performance (previous 12 months) shows a deterioration in only domestic burglary, with stable performance for all crime, BCS comparator crime, vehicle crime, robbery and violent crime.

1.6 Performance in relation to sanction detections also needs to show improvement. The BCU performs worse than peers in respect of total crime, BCS comparator crime and vehicle crime. Domestic burglary, robbery and violent crime sanction detections are in line with peers.

Human Resource Management

1.7 With the development of devolved HR and finance functions to BCUs and departments there has been a significant number of changes to processes at a force level. As a consequence, the HR function in the BCU has become far more proactive and an understanding of key HR issues at a middle management level is now apparent. PDR and sickness absence are two cases in point, and the inspection team found evidence of effective management, monitoring and accountability.

1.8 Resourcing levels in the BCU and the loss of experienced officers from the response function to specialist support were among the most prevalent causes of concern among staff.

Neighbourhood Policing and Problem Solving in Partnership

1.9 Oldham BCU is the neighbourhood policing (safer neighbourhoods) pathfinder site for GMP. The development of safer neighbourhoods builds upon an earlier project in Oldham that sought to increase public reassurance by targeting signal crimes and addressing public concerns through community consultation and partnership collaboration. The BCU is divided into six safer neighbourhood areas known locally as townships. Each township is comprised of three or four local authority wards and is resourced by a combined team of police officers and police community support officers (PCSOs) equipped with personal issue mobile telephones for ease of contact by their communities. Five of these townships are led by an inspector; the other is led by a sergeant.

1.10 Resources were originally allocated to the safer neighbourhoods on an equitable rather than demand basis. Each team consisted of one sergeant, two constables and three PCSOs. Greater flexibility to match demand has subsequently been introduced by redeploying one constable from each team to form three geographic task forces to deal with specific neighbourhood problems. There remains a perception amongst neighbourhood officers that they are regularly abstracted from their neighbourhoods in order to support response policing.

1.11 Further work needs to be undertaken with partners at both a strategic and tactical level to ensure the effective delivery of neighbourhood policing and problem solving.

National Intelligence Model

1.12 An internal review of the operational policing unit (OPU) was completed in August 2006. The BCU Commander subsequently invited the force national intelligence model (NIM) team to review the findings. An action plan for improvement has prompted functional and procedural changes intended to match the business priorities of the BCU, particularly neighbourhood policing.

1.13 While alignment through the Greater Manchester Against Crime (GMAC) partnership initiative to local area agreement priorities provides a strategic framework for multi-agency planning and problem solving, the principles around partnership tasking are not yet embedded. The inspection team found evidence of a disconnection within the intelligence function.

Contact Management

1.14 In the 2005/06 HMIC baseline assessment GMP was graded poor for contact management. Improvement in this area is a key priority for the force. The developing structure around contact management is being project managed with clear governance and lines of accountability. There has been active involvement of chief officers and the police authority.

1.15 The fact remains, however, that there is in many divisions in the force a permanent list of outstanding unresolved incidents. This is a major concern for Oldham and significant resources are consumed within the BCU dealing with service recovery.

Recommendations

1.16 Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary makes the following recommendations to drive further improvement in the BCU.

- That the 'Team Oldham' concept is developed within the resource management element of the BCU business plan with clear goals, targets and lines of accountability to ensure a flexible and collaborative approach to intelligence-led deployment.

- That the BCU uses the principles of 'Team Oldham' as a platform for developing productive partnership arrangements that enhance intelligence-led collaboration between partners and communities within the crime and disorder and safer neighbourhoods framework.

- That the BCU continues to develop intelligence processes by ensuring that the purpose of the various functions and responsibility is clear, and by further improving accountability.

- That the BCU adopts a proactive intelligence based approach to managing demand supported by analysis, in collaboration with the force operational communications branch.

2   Introduction

2.1   BCUs are fundamental building blocks in the delivery of policing services. Aligned to communities, they represent the local interface with the public and are therefore highly influential in the police service's aims to reduce crime and disorder and to increase community confidence. While they may vary in size and composition, all share responsibility for the delivery of the national community safety plan as it affects them and, with Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) colleagues, the delivery of the local community safety strategy priorities. As such, individual BCUs will continue to be subject to increasing performance scrutiny from both Government and local communities.

2.2   The range in performance outcomes between BCUs presents an opportunity to continuously improve and to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of this tier of policing. A key ingredient of successful BCUs remains focus, the most successful being those that maximise focus through effective leadership at every level. They will also have a firm grip on performance, striking the right balance between holding individuals to account and providing support for those in most need. The NIM will be fully embedded and mainstreamed across the BCU, driving proactive intervention through the systematic and skilled interpretation of intelligence. Successful BCUs will also have a thorough appreciation and desire to meet the needs, wishes and expectations of their primary customer – the communities they police.

2.3   Following a five year rolling programme of BCU inspections, HMIC has moved to an intelligence-led approach whereby only a small number of BCUs are selected for inspection. This follows an examination of their relative performance within their MSBCU family. All BCU inspections are now directly aligned to the baseline assessment frameworks and PPAF domains, and evidence gathered at the BCU tier can easily be used to help assess overall force performance.

Methodology

2.4   The Inspection began with a self-assessment completed by the BCU. This was based on the seven PPAF domains and underpinning frameworks. A leadership audit was subsequently conducted in which staff were surveyed, key members of the command chain interviewed, and focus groups held with the senior management team (SMT) and service deliverers. Diagnosis of the self-assessment and leadership audit were used to identify key issues for more detailed examination during a visit to the BCU.

2.5   The inspection was undertaken by HMIC staff officers on behalf of HM Inspector Ken Williams, CVO, CBE, QPM, BA between 4 and 8 December 2006. The inspection team met key partners and stakeholders as well as some 100 members of staff during interviews, focus groups, business meetings and informal visits to particular places of work in the BCU. This report sets out the inspection findings and makes recommendations for improvement.

2.6   Her Majesty's Inspector would like to thank the BCU Commander, assistant chief constable, BCU/headquarters staff, partners and stakeholders, for giving up their valuable time to assist with the inspection.

3   Force Context

3.1   GMP serves one of Britain's largest and most heavily populated metropolitan areas. The force has a budget of £493.9 million, over 12,000 members of staff, and serves a resident population of almost 2.6 million people. For operational purposes the force is divided into twelve BCUs (divisions); Oldham, Bolton, Bury, Rochdale, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, and Wigan correlate with their respective local authority areas; North Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan, and South Manchester cover Manchester itself.

3.2   The vision of the force is to fight crime and protect people by:

- making Greater Manchester safer;

- bringing criminals to justice;

- being visible on the streets; and

- respecting, reassuring and responding to local communities.

3.3   The strategic priorities of the force are to:

- reduce crime and disorder with partners;

- investigate and detect crime;

- build safer communities with partners; and

- provide a well led and accountable service that is efficient and effective.

3.4   The 2005/06 baseline assessment for GMP acknowledged that *'the force has made significant reductions in levels of crime. It has emphasised the importance of leadership, introducing a pioneering programme of leadership and development initiatives, and has received Investors in People re-accreditation. The force is seen as an exemplar of best practice in investigating organised crime and counter-terrorism and wants to be at the forefront of developing shared support services between forces.'*

4   BCU Context

4.1   Oldham BCU is coterminous with Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council. It covers an area of approximately 55 square miles and has a resident population of some 218,000 people. Approximately 13.86% of the population is made up of black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, mainly of Pakistani and Bangladeshi origin, (compared to 5.56% of the population of the North West region as a whole). BME groups are concentrated in the areas of Coldhurst, Westwood, Alexandra and St. Mary's where they represent approximately 60% of the combined populations of those wards. Within the BCU there are 37 mosques and two Hindu temples. There are also 411 asylum seekers, housed mainly in the Werneth and Clarksfield areas of Oldham.

4.2   The BCU combines industrial and rural areas. Oldham was once the world centre for cotton spinning and home to many textile mills. By day the town centre is a busy retail shopping area. At night it has a substantial night-time economy which attracts many revellers. Saddleworth, by contrast, is very rural. The four wards of Werneth, Coldhurst, Alexandra and St. Mary's are ranked among the 10% most deprived wards in England and Wales. Saddleworth and Lees, on the other hand, three miles away, are among the 10% least deprived.

4.3   In May 2001 there was serious disorder in Glodwick, which lies to the south of Oldham town centre. This and similar outbreaks elsewhere in the north of England were the subject of an independent review. The subsequent report recommended that the policing structure of Oldham should be reviewed with a view to aligning it to identified communities and their problems.

4.4   The BCU Commander, Chief Superintendent Caroline Ball, was appointed to the post in August 2005 and has some 20 years' service with GMP. Describing Oldham as ethnically diverse, geographically varied and having a reputation for straight-talking, she says, *'it requires a very particular approach to policing – one that listens to people's concerns, agrees practical courses of action and, importantly, delivers results.'*

4.5   Safer neighbourhood policing lies at the heart of the BCU's policing style and structure. For operational purposes, the area is divided into the six townships of Failsworth, Royton and Shaw, Chadderton, Saddleworth and Lees, Oldham East and Oldham West. Each of these townships has a policing team, five of which are led by an inspector, the other by a sergeant, 'whose responsibility is to consult with local communities, monitor potential crime hotspots and ultimately reduce crime.' In addition there is a dedicated team for Oldham town centre led by a sergeant. The townships are supported by five PACE/incident inspectors who provide 24/7 supervisory cover.

4.6   The BCU priorities are aligned to the force strategic priorities:

Reduce crime and disorder with partners

- to attain a reduction in the number of offences of burglary dwelling and robbery.
- to attain a reduction in violent crime.
- to attain a reduction in vehicle crime.

Investigate and detect crime

- to attain an increase in the number of detected cases for domestic burglary and robbery.
- to monitor the number of murders.
- to achieve a 35% detection rate for offences of violence against the person.
- to monitor all detection rates to ensure proportionality across all the community via the drug action team (DAT).

Build safer communities with partners

- in respect of hate crime, to meet the force target of 26% sanction detections.
- in the field of domestic abuse, to ensure the effective use of the public protection investigation unit (PPIU) by increasing the number of sanction detections by 5% against the 2005/06 baseline (231). Also monitor the number of arrests by the unit.
- to reduce the instances of criminal damage to 5,652 (5%).
- to increase arrests relating to the supply of controlled drugs against the 2005/06 baseline (68).

Provide a well led and accountable service that is efficient and effective

- to reduce sickness levels for both police officers and police staff.
- to ensure that the BCU achieves budgetary control to within the force target of 3% (1.5% cashable; 1.5% non-cashable).
- to ensure that 90% of appraisals are completed on time and all encompass areas of the BCU business plan.

4.7   At the time of the inspection the BCU had 458 police officers, 37 active members of the Special Constabulary, 56 PCSOs, and 87 police staff.

4.8   The BCU headquarters at Oldham is undergoing a programme of refurbishment which is not due for completion until December 2007. The impact of this disruption should not be under estimated. Management of the project consumes resources. Building work is an everyday distraction which inhibits communication and undermines concentration. Most disruptive of all, teams of staff have had to be temporarily relocated to other buildings in the BCU which is making teamwork and collaboration all the more difficult. The intention in the longer term is to use this situation as an opportunity to break down parochial attitudes and introduce more flexible working practices. In the meantime, given the strain under which people are working as a direct consequence of the refurbishment, morale among staff is commendably high.

4.9   Performance improvement, public tranquillity and community cohesion are major challenges. BCU performance in relation to reducing crime and increasing sanction detections is generally poor compared to peers in its MSBCU. Local and parliamentary elections and football hooliganism have led to tensions between white and BME communities that have on occasions erupted in violence, and considerable energy is being invested with partners in addressing issues of unemployment, deprivation and diversity that undermine community cohesion.

The Leadership Audit: Rationale and Methodology

4.10   The leadership audit is a key component of the process by which BCUs are inspected. Based on the premise that effective leadership is a prerequisite for good performance, its purpose is to examine the activities and styles of the BCU chain of command and their impact on those who deliver services. By undertaking this audit HMIC seeks to identify where leadership is having a positive impact on performance and, crucially, where it could be improved. The results of this diagnosis are used to identify key issues for more detailed examination during the full inspection that follows.

4.11   There are three parts to the leadership audit:

- a staff survey of 40 questions.

- interviews with key members of the chain of command, i.e. the chief officer line manager; BCU Commander; BCU business manager; and any BCU superintendent(s). These interviews serve to identify potential anomalies between the perspectives of respondents to the survey and the SMT. They also test the strength and effectiveness of the relationship between the BCU Commander and their line manager.

- focus groups with the SMT and service deliverers, i.e. inspectors and police staff equivalents; sergeants and police staff equivalents; constables and police staff equivalents; Special Constabulary; and PCSOs.

4.12   In this instance, given the recent high level of HMIC activity in Oldham BCU, the inspection team agreed with senior managers that only the first two stages would be followed. This deferred the opportunity to triangulate some of the findings.

4.13   Questionnaires were emailed by the BCU to all members of staff in which respondents were asked to score their response to each question or statement on a scale of 0 to 5. Scores of 3 or more are regarded as positive responses.

4.14   A total of 144 (24%) questionnaires were completed and returned, of which 11 were excluded because they came from staff who indicated their intention to retire or resign within the following two months. A total of 89 (67%) of the accepted responses came from police officers and 39 (29%) from police staff; the status of 5 (4%) respondents was not indicated.

4.15   Interviews were subsequently held with the ACC line manager, BCU Commander, divisional finance and administration manager, superintendent (operations) and superintendent (operational support). Interviewees were asked to score a series of questions and statements complementary to those in the survey using the same scale of scores.

The Leadership Audit: Conclusions

4.16   The BCU receives appropriate support from the chief officer - line manager: The relationship between the GMP chief officer team and the BCU

Commander at Oldham is positive, solidly rooted and improving. The BCU operates within a corporate framework in which the BCU Commander feels focused, empowered, supported and accountable. The relationship with line manager (ACC) is underpinned by an appropriate level of personal contact and a culture in which the BCU Commander feels part of a wider force team with opportunities to innovate and shape events beyond her immediate area of responsibility. The inspection team believes this relationship reflects a strong dynamic for driving performance improvement.

4.17 The BCU has an appropriate structure which is aligned to the force strategy: Majority of responses from the survey suggested that, while most respondents are positive about understanding their role, contribution to priorities and lines of accountability and responsibility, there remains room for improvement. This was borne out by comments from some of the SMT who acknowledge that there have been occasions when the activities or omissions of some individuals and teams have indicated a lack of understanding of their own role or of what others do. Staff perceptions about PDR were very positive but discussions with members of the SMT suggested a need for better processes in respect of quality assurance to improve timeliness, content and submission rates. Respondents and interviewees were agreed that resources could be managed more effectively. The staff survey identifies team balance as an area for improvement while discussions with members of the SMT suggested that abstractions need to be more effectively managed. Health and safety arrangements appear to be effective and staff indicated that they feel safe.

4.18 The BCU has a performance culture with integrity: Interviewees corroborated results from the staff survey which indicated that learning and development, recognition and reward, innovation and the quality of service could be improved. While respondents were very positive about the degree of interest shown by their line manager in their performance and development and the effectiveness of NIM processes, members of the SMT believe there may be impediments at middle management level to the promotion of learning and development opportunities, acknowledgement of good performance, and encouragement and support for new ideas and ways of working. Partnership tasking was identified in the interviews as an area for improvement and concerns were expressed that fundamental improvements to call handling and demand management are required to raise quality of service.

4.19 Diversity: Most questions and statements on the theme of diversity received high scores in the survey, indicating that diversity is well embedded across the BCU, fairness at work procedures are effective, decision-making is consistent, and that confidence in line managers to inspire and solve problems is high. Management of sickness and welfare issues and abstractions other than sickness, despite the recent introduction of an annual leave policy, were considered by both respondents and interviewees to be areas with potential for improvement.

4.20 Personnel Management: Respondents gave high scores in respect of personnel management, reflecting strong support from line managers and positive outcomes of staff feeling trusted, valued, included, proud of the service delivered and prepared for future challenges. The SMT may wish to consider raising awareness of coaching and mentoring opportunities and interviews with staff suggested that more could be done to make police staff feel more trusted, valued and included.

4.21 Communication: Significant time is invested by the SMT to maintain visibility across the BCU and the results of the survey suggest that their efforts are bearing

fruit. The majority of respondents indicated that the profile of the BCU Commander and SMT, their availability and response to feedback are good. The communication of relevant information by line managers, and their availability and response to feedback are also effective. Respondents were less confident about consultation arrangements and comments from some interviewees suggest that there may be blockages at middle management level.
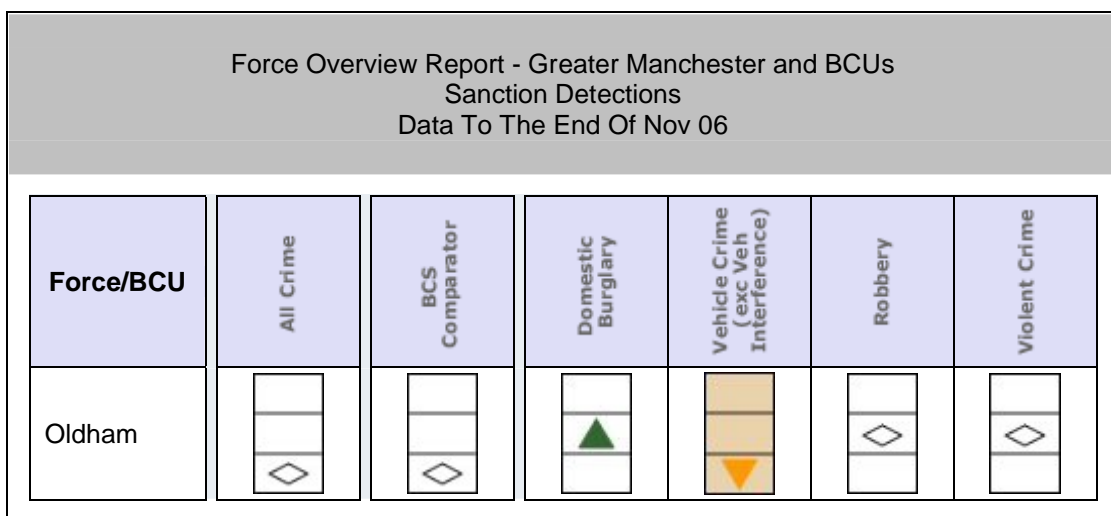
5 BCU Performance

5.1 Crime reduction is poor compared to peers in the MSBCU family. The BCU ranked worse than peers in five out of the six key crime categories: total crime, BCS comparator crime, domestic burglary, robbery, and vehicle crime. Performance in relation to domestic burglary is deteriorating.

Force Overview Report - Greater Manchester and BCUs Crimes Data To The End Of Nov 06						
Force/BCU	All Crime	BCS Comparator	Domestic Burglary	Vehicle Crime (exc Veh Interference)	Robbery	Violent Crime
Oldham	◇	◇	▽	◇	◇	◇
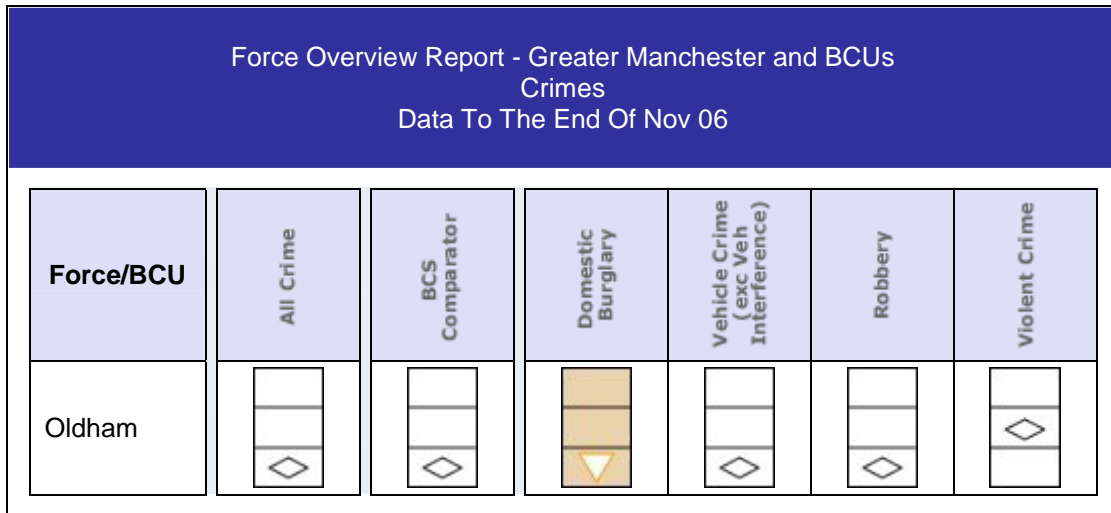
5.2 However an assessment of the most recent performance (latest three months) to historic performance (previous 12 months) shows a deterioration in only domestic burglary with stable performance for all crime, BCS comparator crime, vehicle crime, robbery and violent crime.

5.3 In respect of sanction detections the BCU performs worse than peers for total crime, BCS comparator crime and vehicle crime, however, performance is clearly improving for domestic burglary and is now in line with peers.

Force Overview Report - Greater Manchester and BCUs Sanction Detections Data To The End Of Nov 06						
Force/BCU	All Crime	BCS Comparator	Domestic Burglary	Vehicle Crime (exc Veh Interference)	Robbery	Violent Crime
Oldham	◇	◇	▲	▼	◇	◇

5.4 The table below shows the crime performance data for the latest 12 month period (December 2005 to November 2006) compared to the previous 12 month period and the MSBCU group:

Performance Indicator	Performance Dec 04 to Nov 05	Performance Dec 05 to Nov 06	% Change	MSBCU Group mean	The BCUs ranked position
Recorded crime per 1,000 population	106.35	118.28	11.22%	107.53	12
Recorded crime sanction detection rate	22.22%	23.40%	1.18 p.p.	26.91%	12
Domestic burglary per 1,000 households	21.11	24.51	16.10%	15.21	15
Domestic burglary sanction detection rate	8.29%	13.46%	5.17 p.p.	18.60%	12
Robberies per 1,000 population	1.67	2.45	46.58%	1.27	15
Robbery sanction detection rate	20.00%	20.19%	0.19 p.p.	23.19%	11
Vehicle crimes per 1,000 population	15.47	20.32	31.36%	15.41	14
Vehicle crime sanction detection rate	7.11%	6.00%	-1.11 p.p.	12.11%	15
Violent crimes per 1,000 population	19.69	23.25	18.07%	22.27	9
Violent crime sanction detection rate	49.87%	45.49%	-4.38 p.p.	49.01%	12

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

6   Findings

An initial examination of the most recent performance information for the BCU, together with the evidence provided in the self-assessment return and leadership audit, provided a focus for the on site validation by HMIC on the following key areas:

- human resource management;

- neighbourhood policing and problem solving in partnership;

- national intelligence model; and

- contact management (specifically, the management of demand to meet business and customer needs).

Attention was also given to the areas of leadership and performance management across all of the areas under consideration.

The evidence is structured under the headings relating to the key areas and is set out in terms of strengths, work in progress, areas for improvement and recommendations.

6.1   Human Resource Management

Strengths

- With the devolution of HR and financial management to BCUs and departments there has been a significant amount of change to processes and the BCU is now making headway with appropriate systems and procedures in place. As a consequence, the HR function in the BCU has become more proactive. Awareness and understanding of key HR issues at a middle management level is apparent. Management of PDR and sickness absence has improved with evidence of effective monitoring, management and accountability.

- A resource management group meets fortnightly, chaired by the HR manager and attended by one or more of the superintendents, chief inspectors and a roll-call officer, to consider personnel related issues and ways of improving performance through different ways of working. The HR team hold probationer development meetings with each relief inspector every five weeks to monitor outstanding appraisals, sickness absence and training needs.

- Members of the HR team regularly visit stations across the BCU to liaise with members of staff based away from the BCU headquarters and ensure they are fully aware of relevant disciplinary, performance and sickness management issues. Assistance from the HR team is balanced with greater expectation that managers and supervisors discharge their role responsibilities for managing HR issues. Accountability for managing sickness through monitoring and intervention is reinforced through the BCU GRIP process.

- There has been a significant improvement in the contribution made to the BCU by members of the Special Constabulary. A sergeant has been given specific responsibility for managing the relationships and developing special constables. Special constables feel supported with a clear and well managed development framework and feel they are treated as equals by regular officers and are seen by them as an asset. Their deployment across the safer neighbourhoods, undertaking response functions and on special events has met with broad approval and is seen as evidence that the BCU is being flexible and responding to the individual needs of the officers. Special constables considered their training to be timely and of a high standard. Refresher training is provided as appropriate.

- All probationer constables receive an attachment to the PPU. This raises their awareness, instils knowledge and develops investigatory skills.

- PCSOs are making a positive contribution and drive safer neighbourhood work. The organisation is learning how best to make use of this resource and is currently taking stock of the role. Nevertheless PCSOs consistently show willingness and flexibility and are acknowledged to be a source of good intelligence.

- The BCU Commander has initiated regular meetings with elected representatives of staff and support associations. Representatives of minority groups spoke positively of the culture and relationships with colleagues in the BCU. Support association representatives are involved in the divisional diversity action group.

Work in Progress

- Although the BCU Commander has introduced the concept of 'Team Oldham', there is evidence that teams and agencies are still working predominantly in separate functional silos and greater collaboration and teamwork are required, both internally and with partners. A team culture is being promoted across the BCU to encourage all members of staff to work within their roles but more collaboratively towards a common purpose. To this end police staff middle managers and supervisors have attended a development day with the SMT. Individual managers and supervisors have since cascaded requirements to their teams, to improve overall awareness, understanding and communication. A second development day is planned for February 2007 and joint away-days with police officers may be considered in the future.

- The BCU headquarters at Oldham is undergoing an extensive refurbishment due for completion in December 2007. This is a major disruption to operations however the SMT is using the situation as an opportunity to review accommodation, processes and to introduce more flexible working arrangements.

- A local duty management system was developed by the BCU to improve duty management and maximise efficiency. Implementation has since been superseded by a corporate solution linked to the command and control system. The enforced changes have retarded progress in the short term.

- Courses are being provided for constables to equip them to take responsibility for managing PCSOs. There remain some concerns amongst sergeants who were clearly uncomfortable about the proposal and made specific reference to the completion of PDRs for PCSOs. The force position is that beat managers should be provided with training to complete PCSO PDRs, but the reality is sergeants have retained this responsibility.

Areas for Improvement

- The overall level of resources and the loss of experienced officers to specialist support functions within the BCU are key issues. Resources are being allocated to priority areas to improve performance, however, the BCU needs to ensure that internal reorganisation is carried out against specific goals which are evaluated to ensure the potential benefit gained in one area is not outweighed by loss of performance in another.

- There are delays in processing prisoners meaning that arrested persons and their escorting officers sometimes queue at the custody centres for a considerable time. This has a major impact on officer availability for deployment. Current arrangements also involve transporting detainees on a regular basis to other areas of the force which further exacerbates the situation.

- There needs to be a consistent understanding among managers, supervisors and communication officers of the roles and responsibilities of PCSOs and of their conditions of service to ensure appropriate and effective deployment. It is intended that a PCSO forum will be introduced in the near future.

RECOMMENDATION 1
That the 'Team Oldham' concept is developed within the resource management element of the BCU business plan with clear goals, targets and lines of accountability to ensure a flexible and collaborative approach to intelligence-led deployment.

6.2   Neighbourhood Policing and Problem Solving in Partnership

Strengths

- Oldham BCU is the neighbourhood policing (safer neighbourhoods) pathfinder site for GMP. The development of safer neighbourhoods builds upon an earlier involvement in the national reassurance policing programme The BCU is divided into six safer neighbourhood areas known locally as townships.

- The townships comprise three or four local authority wards each resourced by a combined team of police officers and PCSOs equipped with personal issue mobile telephones for direct contact with members of the community.

- Multi-agency ward level action plans, reflecting priorities identified from surveys with local residents, exist for each ward in the BCU. These are submitted to the sustainable neighbourhoods' management group for approval and progress is monitored through periodic updates to the group.

- The Special Constabulary is structured to support the safer neighbourhood model.

- Five of the townships are led by an inspector with Oldham town centre led by a sergeant. There is a clear framework for safer neighbourhoods with five key elements: public confidence in choices and solutions; visible control; targeted working in accordance with the NIM; joint action with the police, public and other agencies all tackling a problem together; and dedicated resources.

- Resources were originally allocated to the safer neighbourhood on a ground cover rather than on a demand basis. Each team consisted of one sergeant, two constables and three PCSOs. Flexibility to match demand has subsequently been achieved by redeploying one constable from each team to make up three geographic taskforces to provide an intelligence-led resource capable of dealing with specific significant problems within neighbourhoods. Changes in the approach to neighbourhood policing have been communicated to members of staff and externally to partners and representatives. One constable remains in each safer neighbourhood area to act as a manager for PCSOs (three).

- A total of 56 PCSOs currently work on the BCU and this number will grow to 79. During the validation exercise the HMIC team consistently received good feedback about the work of PCSOs, upon whom the BCU is becoming increasingly reliant for working with partner agencies at the township level.

Work in Progress

- Working relationships between safer neighbourhood, investigative and response teams are constrained by the refurbishment programme and parochial geographical affiliations. The 'Team Oldham' concept aims to achieve performance improvements through more flexible and collaborative working practices. This remains work in progress.

Areas for Improvement

- Although there are examples of effective local partnership arrangements, in general the BCU needs to benefit from more productive crime reduction and neighbourhood management relationships with partners. Whereas the GMAC structure provides a framework for developing relationships between partners and agencies at the strategic level, evidence of filtered down added value in Oldham, expressed in terms of more effective, collaborative neighbourhood management and problem solving, is limited. Structures exist for problems to be taken from the neighbourhood area action teams to a higher, sustainable neighbourhood management group, for the allocation of more resources, however the performance management arrangements around these structures need to be reviewed and improved.

- There is a perception among safer neighbourhood officers that they are frequently abstracted from their core role. The BCU needs to be confident that abstraction rates are at an acceptable level and only occur when absolutely necessary.

- Safer neighbourhood teams do not consistently timetable resources to deal effectively with demand. These are particularly significant when low level crime and anti-social behaviour problems occur and this has a significant impact on the workloads of response teams. Problem solving activity needs to take account of the BCU priorities, including the need to manage the demand for policing services.

RECOMMENDATION 2
That the BCU uses the principles of 'Team Oldham' as a platform for developing productive partnership arrangements that enhance intelligence-led collaboration between partners and communities within the crime and disorder and safer neighbourhoods' framework.

6.3   National Intelligence Model

Context

HMIC has previously recommended a re-examination of the structure and function of the operational policing unit (OPU) and the divisional tasking and co-ordinating processes to ensure that tasking across the BCU is directed by the OPU in support of control strategy priorities. Key issues included: the quality, processing and collation of intelligence; the format, membership and purpose of the daily review meeting; and the effectiveness of tasking and co-ordinating.

Strengths

- An internal review of the OPU was completed in July/August 2006. The BCU Commander subsequently invited the force NIM team to take an overview. Findings from each review were combined in an action plan for improvement which has prompted functional and procedural changes intended to match the new business priorities of the BCU, particularly neighbourhood policing.

- The main tactical tasking and co-ordinating meeting, chaired by the superintendent (operations), has representation at the appropriate level from all key areas of business and partners, including Trading Standards and the community safety co-ordinator. A large part of the meeting is devoted to safer neighbourhood priorities, providing representatives with the opportunity to bid for additional resources to address local problems.

- The effect of safer neighbourhood policing changes and the creation of three task forces is that resources have been increased in the high crime areas and

organised in a way in which they can be readily tasked and held to account for specific outcomes.

- Beneath the GMAC umbrella within Oldham there is a NIM based partnership framework for data sharing and activity co-ordination. A six monthly strategic threat assessment is commissioned by the sustainable neighbourhoods' board co-chaired by the BCU Commander and local authority chief executive. Analysis of partnership data is carried out within the community safety unit supported by the OPU. This assessment informs opportunities strategies for each partner agency, setting out priorities for intelligence, prevention and enforcement activity. The sustainable neighbourhoods' management group chaired by the head of the community safety unit provides tactical oversight of activity carried out at safer neighbourhood level through six area action teams.

Work in Progress

- HMIC has seen improvement in the management of intelligence processes and the support provided by the OPU, however, the BCU needs to ensure that the purpose of each of the meetings within the structure is clear and that the information/intelligence provided is specific to that purpose. Absence of focus can result in a drift away from a forward looking assessment of intelligence towards a review of historical information. There was evidence that daily tasking incorporated a review of incidents for critical incident management, performance management and policy compliance purposes as well as discussions around available intelligence. Clarity of purpose should enable the OPU to commit resources to the most productive areas and provide a basis for effective intelligence-led decision-making and task allocation.

- The role of the intelligence officers (FIOs) has changed over time. In the past they were aligned to townships and they subsequently took on thematic responsibilities. They have now switched focus to produce target packages in support of intelligence requirements identified within the OPU. There is evidence that there is some uncertainty about their role and that they are occasionally being tasked directly by township inspectors outside of the process.

- Plans are advanced to introduce a new proactive unit by February 2007. Members of the unit (21) will be recruited from existing crime operations departments to target volume crime, including burglary. The stated aims of the unit are to: assist the BCU in attaining targets; investigate all positive line volume crimes; improve the time of positive line crimes to arrest; deal with 'today's' crime 'today'; target prolific offenders; incorporate traditional intrusive policing; and conduct quality professional investigations taking fully into account three-day remands in custody, advanced interviewing techniques, search tactics and making full use of offences taken into consideration (TICs).

Areas for Improvement

- Actions from tasking and co-ordinating meetings are recorded and minutes circulated on the day of the meeting. The BCU needs to ensure that systems

and processes for monitoring delivery and the outcomes of allocated tasks are fit for purpose.

- While alignment of the GMAC partnership initiative to local area agreement priorities provides a strategic framework for multi-agency planning and problem solving, the principles around partnership tasking at a tactical level are not yet embedded and although evidence of good practice exists this does not extend to consistent high levels of performance and added value from the partnership environment.

- Communication between the safer neighbourhoods and the OPU is seen to be inconsistent and needs to be developed.

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RECOMMENDATION 3

That the BCU continues to develop intelligence processes by ensuring that the purpose of the various functions and responsibility is clear, and by further improving accountability.

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6.4 Contact Management

Strengths

- Details of safer neighbourhood staff, their personal issue telephone numbers, and the dates and locations of 'surgeries' are published locally and members of the public can make direct contact.

Work in Progress

- In a number of BCUs in Greater Manchester there is a perpetual list of outstanding unresolved incidents (FWINs – force-wide incident numbers). The extent of the problem varies. In Oldham during the period of HMIC validation the list extended to 14.9 computer screen pages, each page having the capacity to record 10 incidents. Significant resources are allocated to managing this list. Incident management is therefore constantly involved in service recovery and it is difficult to proactively address quality of service issues.

- The BCU is responding to issues around call management shortfalls by piloting a dedicated FWIN sergeant from the response teams from 0700 hours to 2300 hours. Processes are being developed to commit resources to the management of excess demand in the form of FWIN-busting days. The BCU has deployed officers to a 'FWIN-busting unit', the purpose of which is to process and resolve outstanding FWINs. Funding allocated to this has been spent and the BCU now relies on restricted duty officers which can lead to inconsistency.

- The force has devised a process where grade 1 and 2 incidents, and most grade 3 incidents, are managed within an 'IS' queue, and delayed response

grade 4 and some grade 3 incidents are managed within an 'RI' queue. The former are the responsibility of response officers; the latter are dealt with by safer neighbourhood officers and PCSOs. This distinction is a useful step forward which could be enhanced by greater flexibility to deploy resources across the boundaries of these queues.

- Response teams have been withdrawn from the outlying areas to central locations for reporting and briefing purposes. This creates the potential for greater flexibility and collaboration to deal with the numbers of incidents and manage the FWIN queues more effectively.

Areas for Improvement

- The public has the means of contacting safer neighbourhood officers direct through mobile telephones. This facility improves community access to policing services, however the BCU needs to monitor the extent to which this activity represents additional demand for services and falls outside of formal contact management and recording processes.

- Information entered on incident logs by call centre staff is not always recorded in a way which supports the requirements of the NCRS. There is some confusion over the actual requirement under certain circumstances and this can lead to the inefficient use of scarce resources being reallocated to incidents for process management purposes. The force is developing a training package to better inform members of staff.

- Quality of service in relation to call management is largely measured by response times. Call takers in the operational communication rooms (OCRs) are measured by the speed of call pick-up, while response officers in the BCU are measured by the speed of their response to incidents. If public satisfaction is to be improved there needs to less reliance on response times and more on the qualitative aspects of the service.

- There is a perception among some response teams that safer neighbourhood staff do not contribute enough to dealing with demand despite clear evidence that the latter monitor and volunteer to take incidents in the IS queue as well as dealing with their own RI demands. Such perceptions undermine the vision of 'Team Oldham' and action is required to clarify roles and to ensure a better understanding between all teams of each team's contribution to BCU priorities.

RECOMMENDATION 4
That the BCU adopts a proactive intelligence based approach to managing demand supported by analysis, in collaboration with the force operational communications branch.

6.5   Leadership

Strengths

- A consistent message to the HMIC team was the high degree of confidence in the BCU Commander among members of staff, partners and key stakeholders. The current post holder is personally visible in key areas and has an agenda to develop people, to improve communication and business processes and to focus on improving performance through collaboration and teamwork.

Work in Progress

- Prolific repeat offending is a major problem for the BCU and is being addressed by working in partnership with other key criminal justice agencies. The inspection team heard frequent reference among staff to the 'revolving door', reflecting the widely held perception that while offenders are being caught and charged, the courts are too quick to release them. A solution is being sought by the BCU Commander.

Areas for Improvement

- There is a need for consistent high standards of leadership and corporacy at all levels in support of BCU goals.

6.6   Performance Management

Strengths

- Since the arrival of the BCU Commander there has been a sea change across the BCU. The new BCU monthly GRIP process is making people accountable for delivery to an extent not previously seen.

- The chief inspector responsible for operations has held extended briefings to improve awareness of performance issues and has directed teams to hold 5-weekly performance scrutiny meetings.

- The BCU has a crime evaluation unit located in OPU, consisting of one detective sergeant and five detective constables, all specifically trained and versed in crime management, Home Office counting rules and national crime recording standard (NCRS). The focus of their role is to review all crimes and ensure correct standards in investigation. Crime allocations are governed by policy.

Work in Progress

- There is no clear understanding of the NCRS processes to the extent that members of staff are not confident about the requirement and, in consequence, there is over-compensation. Whilst impacting on the BCU this is a force issue which needs to be addressed.

Areas for Improvement

- Whilst acknowledging the local BCU GRIP process is having an impact on members of staff with teams and individuals more robustly held to account for outcomes, the process could be further improved by the availability of better information and analysis. Accountability is currently focused towards areas where information is readily available.

- A gap in investigatory skills within the BCU is acknowledged as a consequence of experienced investigators being lost to the force major incident team. A further drain of experience is expected when the proposed anti-terrorism unit is formed in 2007 (potential loss 10 detectives per BCU).

7   Recommendations

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary makes the following recommendations:

1.   That the 'Team Oldham' concept is developed within the resource management element of the BCU business plan with clear goals, targets and lines of accountability to ensure a flexible and collaborative approach to intelligence-led deployment.

2.   That the BCU uses the principles of 'Team Oldham' as a platform for developing productive partnership arrangements that enhance intelligence-led collaboration between partners and communities within the crime and disorder and safer neighbourhoods' framework.

3.   That the BCU continues to develop intelligence processes by ensuring that the purpose of the various functions and responsibility is clear, and by further improving accountability.

4.   That the BCU adopts a proactive intelligence based approach to managing demand supported by analysis, in collaboration with the force operational communications branch.

Appendix A

GL3 Notional Contract

Purpose

The Notional Contract follows an HMIC inspection of Oldham BCU, Greater Manchester Police, which was conducted between 4 and 8 December 2006. The contract sets out the action required by the BCU together with the improvement outcomes required. The contract is between HMIC, the BCU Commander and the ACPO line manager.

Action Required

BCU inspection reports published by HMIC contain a number of recommendations. Recommendations must be implemented by the BCU, unless there are exceptional circumstances which make this inappropriate or impossible.

HMIC will re-assess the BCU position in relation to these recommendations by 31 January 2008.

Recommendation 1

That the 'Team Oldham' concept is developed within the resource management element of the BCU business plan with clear goals, targets and lines of accountability to ensure a flexible and collaborative approach to intelligence-led deployment.

- This recommendation is focused on developing organisational culture and confident, capable leadership which promotes a flexible and collaborative approach to deployment and managing demand. There is a need for a clear understanding of responsibilities and for staff to be effectively held to account for delivery.

- The BCU needs to ensure that vision, values and standards are clearly understood and to work with the force to establish as quickly as possible a level of leadership in the BCU capable of delivering improved performance. Members of staff should be clear about the concept of 'Team Oldham', and understand what it means to them.

- HMIC will be looking for evidence of effective leadership at all levels of the BCU and for organisational development leading to improved performance outcomes.

Recommendation 2

That the BCU uses the principles of 'Team Oldham' as a platform for developing productive partnership arrangements that enhance intelligence-led collaboration between partners and communities within the crime and disorder and safer neighbourhoods' framework.

- This recommendation is about working towards cultural and leadership development among partners. It is aimed at more effective collaboration, productive working relationships and developing joint intelligence and performance management structures that are capable of delivering greater and improved benefits to communities.

- The BCU needs to assess the value of current partnership working arrangements.

- HMIC will be looking for evidence of added value as a result of resources deployed in partnership, reflected in improved outcomes for BCU business plan priorities.

Recommendation 3

That the BCU continues to develop intelligence processes by ensuring that the purpose of the various functions and responsibility is clear, and by further improving accountability.

- The recommendation is aimed at establishing clarity of purpose for: critical incident management; performance review; proactive intelligence-led tasking; and effective task management. It is also focused on improving leadership and performance management.

- The BCU should consider arrangements for developing intelligence processes in partnership.

- HMIC will look for evidence that performance improvement is solidly rooted in quality intelligence products.

- HMIC will look for evidence of effective leadership from managers and supervisors and clear understanding among all members of staff of their role responsibility for developing positive outcomes from intelligence.

Recommendation 4

That the BCU adopts a proactive intelligence based approach to managing demand supported by analysis, in collaboration with the force operational communications branch.

- This recommendation is about extending intelligence and decision making processes to demand management. There is no doubt that this is an issue which affects the whole force, nevertheless current levels of performance have a significant and negative impact on the ability of the BCU to deliver a quality service to communities.

- The BCU, working jointly with the operational communications branch (OCB), needs to develop analysis and decision making processes for deploying resources to meet demand.

- HMIC will be looking for evidence of decision making and co-ordinated activity based on an understanding of demand profiles and the reduction of outstanding FWINs to acceptable levels.

Improvement Outcomes

References to performance improvements in future assessment include the BCU's position in relation to its business plan priorities and targets and its position in relation to peers in its MSBCU family.

HMIC will look for evidence of progress in the specifically identified areas for improvement in this report.

There will be occasions when circumstances change beyond the control of either the BCU Commander or the force whereby the implementation of certain recommendations or improvement outcomes is rendered unrealistic and void. Account will be taken of any such factors when the HMIC revisit is conducted within the timescale described herein.

BCU Revisit and Review

Oldham BCU will be revisited in February 2008 to determine whether this Notional Contract has been fully discharged. The HMIC will make an overall assessment that will fall within one of the following four options:

1) Fully discharged;
2) Partially discharged with further revisit scheduled;
3) Fully or partially discharged with aspects voided; or
4) Not discharged with PCSD referral.