

contents

Acknowledgements	3
Preface – Sir Keith Povey	4
Executive Summary	
Nature and extent of the Problem	5
Impact on communities	6
The Police Response	6
Recommendations	8
Introduction and methodology	11
Today's emerging picture	11
The Thematic Inspection – Methodology	12
Chapter 1	15
Nature and Extent of the Problem	15
The problem of definitions	15
The emerging picture	16
Law enforcement intelligence	19
Where are the guns coming from?	22
Firearms dealers	22
Home made weapons	23
Home made ammunition	23
The Internet and importation through the post	24
The Northern Ireland connection	24
Specialist weapons	25
War trophies	26
Illegal importation from the Continent	27
The Eastern European influence	27
Converted and re-activated weapons	28
Imported imitation firearms	30
Who carry the guns and why?	30
The influence of gang culture	32
Where is this happening and what guns are being used?	34
Summary	35
Chapter 2	37
Community Impact	37
Causes and not just symptoms	38
Reassurance – supporting victims and witnesses	39

Witness Protection	41
Police: support for victims and witnesses generally	42
Reassurance – rebuilding trust	43
Community leaders	46
Consultation	47
Independent Advisory Groups	48
Early intervention – diversion strategies for young people	50
The question of funding	52
The Role of the Black Police Associations	52
Faith groups	55
The role of the media	56
Summary	57
Chapter 3	59
The Police Response	59
Introduction	59
Police Leadership – national level	60
Leadership – within forces	62
Leadership – Strategic	63
Leadership – Operational	66
Incident Commanders	67
Leadership – Tactical	68
Authorised Firearms Officers – numbers	70
Intelligence	75
Forensics	76
Forensic – costs	77
Forensic – timeliness	77
Forensic service providers	77
Proactive policing initiatives	78
Partnership working	80
Criminal Justice System	84
Supportive Legislation	85
Summary	86
Conclusion	87
Appendices:	89
A: Inspection team members	89
B: Glossary of Terms	90
C: Joint Action Plan	93

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary would like to take this opportunity to offer thanks and appreciation to the police authority members, chief constables and staff of the forces visited by the inspection team. Many of these forces were heavily committed to ongoing policing operations yet found time to accommodate their visitors. Thanks are also offered to the other organisations and community representatives who contributed to the inspection. He is also grateful to those who supplied helpful comments as critical readers of the emerging draft.



PREFACE

Incidents involving the criminal use of firearms understandably attract public attention and political concern. At a time when considerable policing effort is being put into public reassurance and reducing the fear of crime nationally, action taken to address problems in relation to the criminal use of firearms assumes an increased significance.

During the course of this inspection in 2003, a number of tragic and high profile incidents occurred which served to increase public concern. As a direct response to these events, the Home Secretary hosted a series of summits to consider what more could be done to address the issue and both the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) contributed to that process. A timely Thematic Inspection enabled HMIC to make a positive contribution to this work which was duly reflected in a joint Action Plan published in November 2003.

In order to build upon this close working relationship with ACPO and the Home Office, the inspection was led by the Assistant Inspector responsible for the HMIC Crime and Operations team based at Queen Anne's Gate. The lead HMI (Crime) Mr David Blakey provided invaluable advice and assistance to the team as the inspection progressed.

The inspection revealed that although concentrated in a small number of forces, the criminal use of firearms presents a growing threat to many of our communities. Building on their experience over a number of years, evidence was found in the forces visited of policing initiatives delivering some impressive results on the ground. What also became apparent was the extent to which many of these initiatives were founded upon strong relationships with the local community and other statutory agencies.

I am pleased that HMIC has been able to contribute to important and ongoing initiatives to tackle the challenges presented by gun crime and I am confident that the recommendations contained in this report will assist in addressing the problems identified.

I commend the report to you.

Sir Keith Povey QPM BA (Law)
Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The title of this report Guns, Community and Police identifies the three main areas considered during the inspection and highlights the extent to which they are inextricably linked. When the three elements converge they have the potential quickly to develop into critical incidents some of which may potentially result in loss of life.

The widespread media coverage of high profile shootings in various parts of the country reflects the concerns shared by government, police and the public when such incidents occur. During the course of this thematic inspection it became apparent that a number of forces had developed positive initiatives to tackle gun crime locally but that the wider picture was more mixed. It was reassuring to find that the police service was already taking steps to address this fact and to improve the strategic response to the emerging challenge.

In support of this work, HMIC has been working closely with ACPO and the Home Office to ensure that early findings from the inspection have been made available in order to facilitate the development of the strategy. Such prompt action prior to the completion of full inspection activity dispensed with the need for a number of recommendations.

Nature and extent of the problem

- Whilst representing only half of one percent of reported crime, gun crime is still increasing albeit at a slower rate than in recent years
- The majority of shootings do not result in injury and homicides are infrequent
- In terms of international comparisons, fatalities from gun crime in the UK remain relatively low
- In the UK, 66% of recorded firearms crime occurs in London, Birmingham and Manchester but serious incidents are occurring elsewhere
- To date there is no evidence of large-scale illegal importation of firearms from the continent
- A wide variety of firearms are available in this country but a significant number of those routinely carried are imitation weapons or blank firers, some of which have been converted to fire live ammunition



- Statistical data on firearms incidents and gun crime is incomplete. Action currently being undertaken jointly by the Home Office and police will go a long way to addressing this issue and will provide more timely information
- Law enforcement intelligence at national level is in need of greater co-ordination. Action being taken nationally by police and the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) is intended to improve this situation
- There is evidence of the increasing use of guns on the street by criminals, frequently such incidents are related to drugs

Impact on communities

- Gun crime may occur anywhere but there is evidence to show that the problem is significantly greater in some areas, particularly within cities
- In order both to facilitate police investigations and to achieve longer term solutions to the problems which underpin gun crime, the active support of the community is essential
- A core issue is that of public reassurance
- At the heart of this lies improved support for the victims and witnesses of crime
- Traditional methods of consultation do not always relate to those most at risk. *Independent Advisory Groups (IAG)* offer a potential way forward
- Whilst police have a key role to play they cannot succeed alone and a close working relationship with other agencies both statutory and voluntary is required
- There is deep concern within communities as to the effects of gun crime and a real determination to address the problem at local level
- A number of local initiatives have been developed. The challenge is to determine how these may be better supported and further developed. The funding arrangements for such groups need to be simplified

The Police Response

- To achieve long term improvement, a comprehensive range of actions need to be taken including prevention and diversionary intervention as well as pro-active and reactive enforcement
- The deployment of armed officers is an important but partial solution to the problem

- The general arming of police is not advocated
- At an operational and tactical level the experience, knowledge and understanding of key personnel is crucial in managing firearms incidents
- Each stage of the process relies heavily on individuals who are skilled, trained and equipped confidently to carry out their roles both as individuals and as part of a team
- In line with Home Office Codes of Practice, forces are currently reviewing their arrangements for managing firearms incidents. Additional work is recommended for ACPO and HMIC to assess the overall position including consideration of the numbers of authorised firearms officers (AFO).
- An indication of the skill and professionalism of the British police service in resolving situations peacefully is the extremely low numbers of shots fired by officers compared to the numbers of firearms incidents attended
- The National Intelligence Model (NIM) provides a sound framework for operational tasking and co-ordinating
- Recent developments with regards to forensic support and intelligence are welcomed but more needs to be done



SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1:

That by December 2004, the Home Office should consider the role Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP) can play in addressing the wider issues in connection with gun crime.

Recommendation 2:

That by December 2004, ACPO (Race and Community Relations) should circulate good practice guidelines on Independent Advisory Groups.

Recommendation 3:

That within four months of receiving the legal advice, ACPO (Police use of Firearms) provide all forces with revised guidelines in connection with the full range of cross border operations.

Recommendation 4:

That by December 2004, ACPO Strategic Tasking and Co-ordinating Group for the Criminal Use of Firearms develops a suitable performance assessment framework to measure achievements against gun crime at force and BCU level.

Recommendation 5:

That by December 2004, ACPO (Police use of Firearms) gives consideration to defining, adopting and including the term *Investigative Assessment* within the ACPO manual of Guidance on the police use of firearms.

Recommendation 6:

That commencing in December 2004, ACPO (Police use of Firearms) and HMIC jointly undertake a review of the risk and threat assessments completed by forces, as set out in the Code of Practice. The review should include an analysis of whether the numbers of AFOs appear proportionate to the demands being made of them.

Recommendation 7:

That by September 2004 all forces review the use they make of NCIS firearms tracing service in light of revised ACPO guidelines.

Recommendation 8:

That by December 2004 ACPO (Criminal use of Firearms), jointly with FSS and other providers, explore ways in which forensic services can be organised so as to maximise intelligence opportunities.

Recommendation 9:

That by December 2004, ACPO (PNC Policy and Prioritisation Group) review arrangements by which firearms markers are managed.



INTRODUCTION

- 1 The origins of modern firearms can be traced back to the 12th century and since that time guns have been widely available within the community at large albeit used primarily for hunting, sporting purposes or warfare. Intermittently, firearms have been used to settle disputes between parties known to each other. Self evidently, where violence broke out between neighbours or within families the mere presence of a firearm meant that there was a risk of it being used in the heat of the moment, occasionally with tragic results.
- 2 The use of firearms by criminals, however, has been both more frequent and more calculated. To commit robbery requires the use or threat of violence and guns provide an ideal method of obtaining compliance without the need to come too close to the victim.
- 3 In their own time and place, the footpad of the 18th century and the armed robber of the 1960s simply used the gun as a tool of their trade. Generally speaking, however, forty years ago criminals did not carry weapons on them as a matter of course and would have regarded those that did as being reckless.

Today's emerging picture

- 4 Times have changed and in more recent years society has witnessed a significant change in attitude towards the possession and use of firearms. It has become apparent that increasingly some young men are carrying firearms – sometimes real, frequently imitation – as a matter of routine.
- 5 It was against this backdrop that, in 2002, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary determined to undertake a Thematic Inspection into the Criminal use of Firearms and its focus was, naturally, on the policing implications of this emerging trend.
- 6 Events in Birmingham in the New Year of 2003, when Letisha Shakespeare and Charlene Ellis were shot and killed in a drive-by shooting, dramatically projected the problem of gun crime into the public conscience. Family and friends despaired at the tragic and wasteful loss of young lives.
- 7 On 5 November 2003, the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on gun crime published the report of its findings. Having taken evidence from a range of sources, including police and community representatives, a number of their recommendations were directly aligned with the issues identified both within the HMIC inspection and within ongoing Home Office led work.



Introduction

- 8 In addressing community concerns directly, the Home Secretary had already undertaken to host a third *Gun Crime Summit* in London on the 25th November 2003 which provided an opportunity for all parties to review progress to date and to determine the way forward. A joint ACPO/HMIC/Home Office paper was used as a basis for discussion.
- 9 On the afternoon of 26 December 2003 another incident occurred which starkly re-emphasised the risks confronted by unarmed police officers as they patrol the streets. In Leeds, West Yorkshire Traffic Officers, Ian Broadhurst and Neil Roper, were shot by a man they were in the process of arresting for being in possession of a stolen car. A third officer had a lucky escape when a bullet was deflected by his personal radio. Tragically, PC Broadhurst died from his wounds.
- 10 A year that started with the deaths in Birmingham of two innocent girls and ended with the killing of an unarmed police officer on the streets of Leeds provided a sombre reminder of the nature of the threats confronting society at the present time.
- 11 Unambiguously, the problems being experienced as a result of the criminal use of firearms present a major challenge to society, to the government and to the police. Whilst there are differences in emphasis, the overall nature of the problem is recognised as is the need to take positive steps to provide solutions.
- 12 As a contribution to that process, the recommendations in this report are deliberately limited in number and focused in intent. The aim is to identify specific steps that can be taken by police and partners in the next six months to address the problem in a meaningful way.

The Thematic Inspection – Methodology

- 13 The purpose of a Thematic Inspection is to examine an issue of significance to the police service nationally and clearly to identify necessary steps to bring about an improved police response.
- 14 To undertake the work, in July 2003 a small team of officers was drawn together. It involved specialist HMIC staff officers for crime, for race and diversity and for the police use of firearms, together with operational officers on loan from Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, West Mercia and the West Midlands (Appendix A).

15 In approaching the Inspection, it was recognised that there were three distinct aspects to policing the criminal use of firearms that would need to be considered and drawn together – the *nature and extent of the problem*, the role of the *community* and, finally, the *police response*. The three are inextricably linked.

16 The team wanted to avoid the risk of concentrating solely on the situation in the larger city forces. At the same time it was recognised that, at present, the bulk of the experience of policing the problem was to be found in such forces and they needed to be examined in depth. To this end, when choosing the areas to visit during the Inspection, a variety of forces were considered. The aim was to ensure that the final report had relevance across the service and not simply in large cities.

17 Consequently, formal visits were made to the following forces:

Greater Manchester	West Mercia	North Wales
Leicestershire	Metropolitan Police (Operation Trident)	Nottinghamshire
West Midlands	Avon and Somerset	



18 The week long visits by the Inspection team, two weeks in the case of Operation Trident in the Metropolitan Police area, were intense and broad ranging. Formal interviews were undertaken across the organisation from chief officer and police authority representatives to Basic Command Unit (BCU) commanders, staff associations, firearms trainers and, of course, operational officers. Recognising the importance of the role of the community, both in addressing issues within and in working jointly with the police, focus groups were also organised with local representatives including young people who witness events on the streets at first hand.

19 The police service is not the only law enforcement agency tackling issues in relation to the criminal use of firearms. Interviews were, therefore, also arranged with a range of other agencies including:

- **Her Majesty's Customs and Excise (HMCE)**
- **Forensic Science Service (FSS)**
- **Her Majesty's Immigration Service (HMIS)**
- **National Crime Squad (NCS)**
- **National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS)**
- **The Security Service**

Introduction

- 20 To an unusual degree, the Inspection process was itself affected by other high-profile shootings. In September 2003, Toni-Ann Byfield and Bertram Byfield were murdered in London, Marian Bates was murdered during a robbery in Nottingham and Amratlal Kanabar was murdered during a car chase between Nottingham and Leicester. Understandably, there was enormous public and political concern at these and other shootings.
- 21 The Home Office initiated an urgent review of the work that was already being undertaken on behalf of the police service by ACPO, NCIS and FSS to address the problems being experienced to see what more could be done.
- 22 With the field work drawing to a close, HMIC were well positioned to feed the emerging inspection findings into that review. Significantly, these were findings based on evidence and an established inspection methodology which proved valuable in testing and challenging some of the assumptions being made about the scale and nature of the problem. In a number of instances, the findings were strongly supportive of steps already being proposed by ACPO to identify and address the shortcomings of existing arrangements.
- 23 A timely Thematic Inspection and the close involvement of HMIC in the joint work with ACPO and the Home Office, has meant that a number of the key recommendations for action that would normally have been published within the formal Inspection report, have already been made available to the service and, in some cases, implemented. These are clearly identified within the report.

CHAPTER 1

NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 Any attempt to undertake an informed analysis of the nature and extent of the criminal use of firearms in England and Wales is immediately confronted by two particular challenges – the definitional confusion and the absence of accurate and timely data upon which to base the analysis.

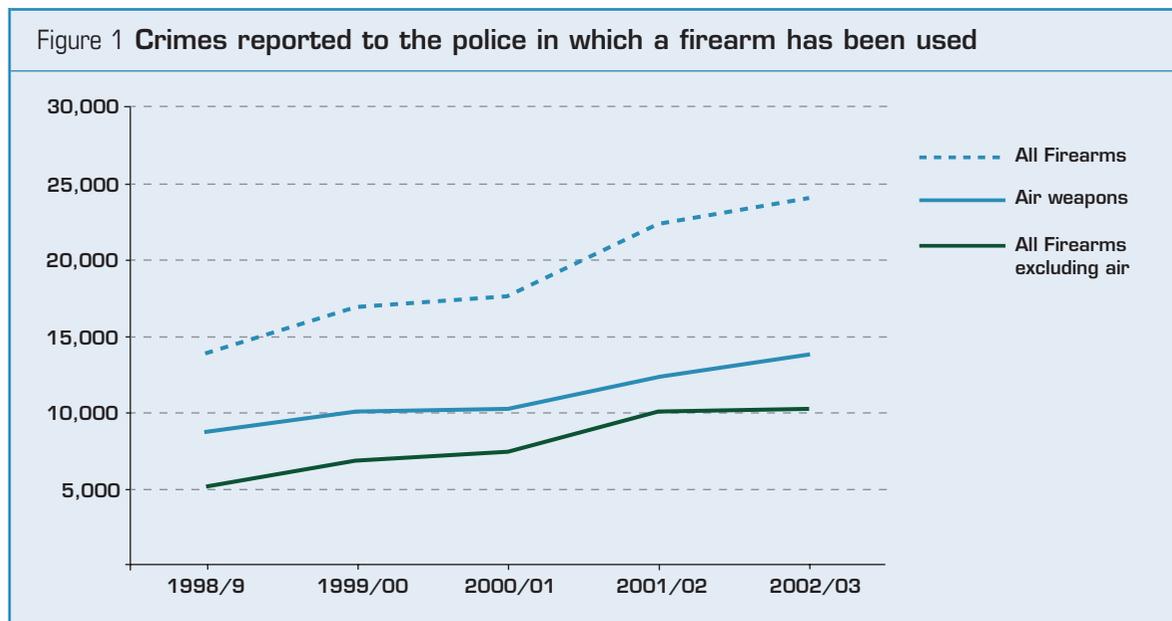
The problem of definitions

- 1.2 Whilst the term *gun crime* is in common use and makes for an eye catching headline, it actually conceals more than it reveals.
- 1.3 Gun crime does not exist as a category of crime in its own right; rather it is used to refer generically to a wide range of criminal activity where a firearm is used to facilitate the crime. People choose to carry and use guns for a variety of reasons and in many cases the possession of a firearm is a means to an end rather than an end in itself.
- 1.4 Consequently, where statistics on gun crime are aggregated, particularly at national level, there is a risk that the picture can become clouded. For example, a cumulative total for gun crime might include offences ranging from youths damaging windows with airguns at one extreme and violent gangland killings at the other. Similarly, in devising strategies to deal with the problems identified, it is important to recognise they cannot be tackled as a single phenomenon.
- 1.5 That having been said, it is acknowledged that gun crime is a commonly used generalisation adopted by the public, the media and, indeed, law enforcement agencies. So whilst it has no specific definition, what the term does accurately reflect is the growing concern about the carriage and use of guns for serious criminal purposes within communities and in public places.



The emerging picture

Given the definition currently used by the Home Office to monitor the scale of gun crime, the picture that emerges is as follows:



Source: Home Office Bulletin 01/04 "Crime in England and Wales 2002/03 Supplementary Vol 1: Homicide and Gun Crime".

NB – It should be noted that in overall terms the percentage of gun crime as a proportion of total recorded crime is extremely low – less than half of one percent and that figure reduces by about half as much again if offences involving air weapons are extracted.

Figure 2 Crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales in which firearms (including air weapons) were reported to have been used, by offence group

Year	All Offences ⁽¹⁾	All offences excluding Criminal damage	Violence against the person			Robbery	Burglary	Other offences excluding Criminal Damage	Criminal damage
			Homicide	Attempted murder and other acts (including wounding) Endangering life	Other				
1998/99 ⁽¹⁾	13,874	7,408	49	724	2,910	2,973	319	433	6,466
1999/00	16,946	9,481	62	759	3,881	3,922	329	528	7,465
2000/01	17,697	9,774	73	831	3,869	4,127	390	484	7,923
2001/02 ⁽²⁾	22,400	12,424	97	1,110	4,636	5,487	483	611	9,976
2002/03 ⁽³⁾	24,070	13,114	81	1,285	5,767	4,776	494	711	10,956

1. There was a change in the counting rules for recorded crime on 1.4.98.
 2. Figures for some crime categories may have been inflated by some police forces implementing the principles of the National Crime Recording Standard before 1.4.02.
 3. The National Crime Recording Standard was introduced on 1.4.02. Figures for some crime categories may have been inflated by this.

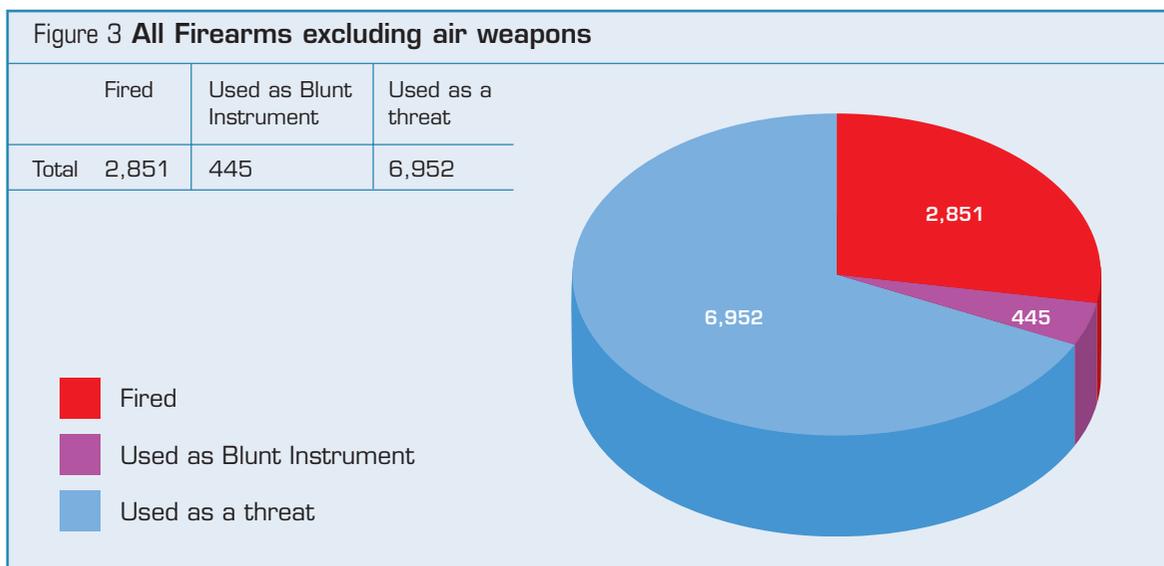
Source: Home Office Bulletin 01/04 "Crime in England and Wales 2002/03 Supplementary Vol 1: Homicide and Gun Crime".

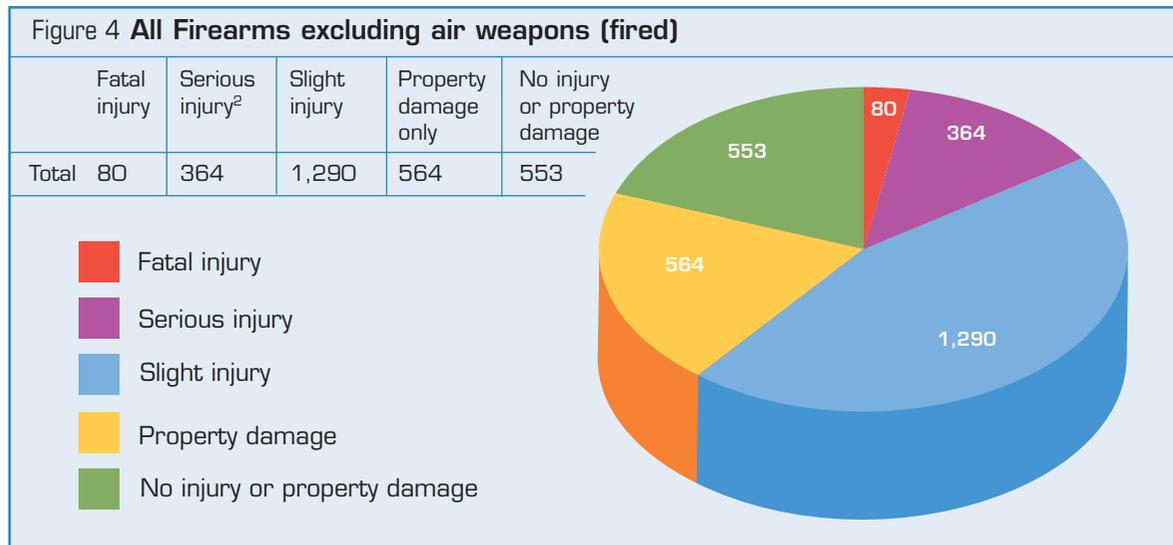
As can be seen a high proportion of recorded crimes involve air weapons and criminal damage the most common offence.

- 1.6 Statistics, of course, only tell part of the story and national statistics tend to hide the extent to which, in particular areas, the percentage of crimes committed involving firearms is significantly higher. In publishing the data for 2002-03, the Home Office noted that some two thirds of firearms offences (excluding air weapons) occurred in just three metropolitan forces – the Metropolitan Police, Greater Manchester and West Midlands. More generally, in forces dealing with significant numbers of incidents there are *hot spots* in respect of gun crime and for people living in those communities their concerns and fear of crime are considerably greater than elsewhere. It is also acknowledged that the fact that gun crime represents a very small percentage of crime overall is of no comfort to families that have lost loved ones.
- 1.7 Another fact which needs emphasis is that whilst the overall number of firearms incidents may be relatively small when set against the totality of crime, one of the defining characteristics of gun crime is its tendency disproportionately to capture the public attention. Such incidents significantly undermine public confidence in the ability of communities, police and the government, effectively to address the problems of increasingly violent criminality, both locally and within society more generally.
- 1.8 That having been said, it is important to keep the problem in context. Home Office data in relation to the injuries inflicted by gun crime are instructive. In about two thirds of firearms offences, the weapon is used as a threat. In only 17% of cases were shots fired which resulted in injury. Of these, the vast majority of injuries were slight (75%) and fewer than 5% fatal.

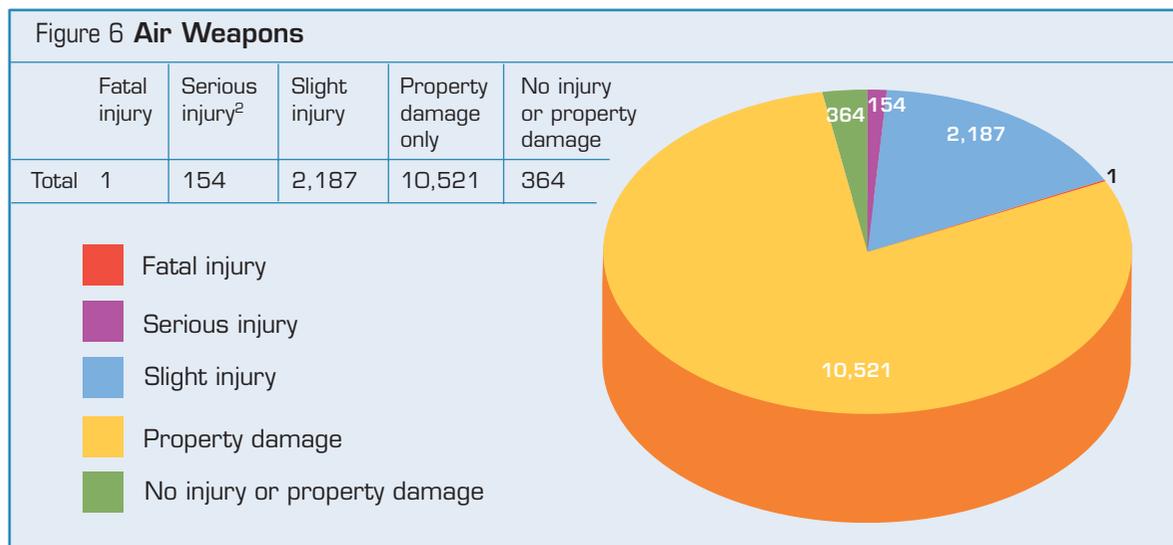
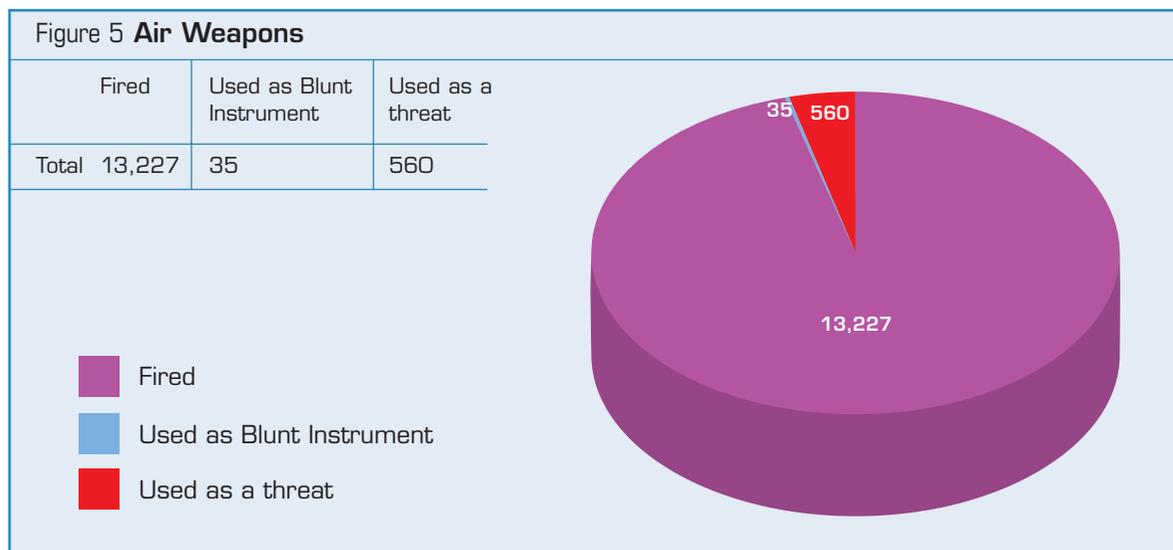


Year 02/03





² Footnotes...



² Footnotes...

Source: Home Office

- 1.9 During the fieldwork in forces and discussions with agencies at national level, HMIC looked carefully at the information and data currently available to inform the response to gun crime. Whilst information relating to serious categories of crime are more accurate, HMIC has concerns over the accuracy of statistics for less serious crimes involving guns. Evidence was found of varying interpretation of definitions, differences in recording practices and, as a consequence, disparities across forces. Taken together these all contribute to an uncertain overall picture.
- 1.10 This was compounded by current inconsistencies in the recording of data relating to *incidents* involving guns. At the time of the inspection, it was clear that a better co-ordinated, more integrated system for collating information about the criminal use of firearms was needed.
- 1.11 That having been said, there is in fact a good deal that is already known about many aspects of the problem and the steps required to enhance our comprehension are not beyond reach. Initiatives recently announced will significantly improve our overall knowledge and understanding of the problem.
- 1.12 At the end of 2003 ACPO, with support from NCIS and drawing heavily on information supplied by forces, initiated a comprehensive strategic assessment of gun crime. The results of this work have been considered by the *Strategic Tasking and Co-ordinating Group* recently established by ACPO (Criminal use of Firearms).
- 1.13 Similarly, in close consultation with ACPO and police forces, the Home Office (Research Development and Statistics Department) has introduced changes to the nature and frequency with which data on firearms related criminality is collated and published. The intention is to produce more timely and frequent information in order to inform decision making at all levels.



Law enforcement intelligence

- 1.14 By April 2004, all forces in England and Wales were committed to compliance with the minimum standards laid out in the ACPO approved National Intelligence Model. This consolidates the central role of professional intelligence management within the police service. By providing a commonality of language and a flexible but standardised framework for policing, the introduction of NIM has undoubtedly improved the tactical and strategic tasking and co-ordinating of police resources.

- 1.15 In the same way that HMIC found weaknesses in data collection generally, gaps were identified within the current law enforcement intelligence systems as they relate to firearms. When it came to identifying and monitoring the criminal use of firearms within their force area, the performance of individual forces was patchy. Likewise, opportunities nationally to exploit the intelligence to be obtained from forensic submissions were not consistently being taken.
- 1.16 Steps to address these shortcomings would, normally, have been a specific recommendation within this report. However, as a result of joint work carried out during the period of this inspection by ACPO, the Home Office and HMIC a number of significant steps have already been taken to improve the intelligence position.
- 1.17 Additionally, during 2003 the National Firearms Forensic Intelligence Database (NFFID) was launched and this was a welcome addition to the intelligence gathering capability in England and Wales. NFFID was set up by the FSS in partnership with ACPO and will provide details of case files that were previously maintained manually as well as an automated system capable of comparing fired ammunition from outstanding crimes with recovered weapons.
- 1.18 These steps are welcomed by HMIC and the results that flow from this work, under the leadership of ACPO, will be monitored with interest.
- 1.19 The inadequacy of current data and intelligence on gun crime did not disguise the fact that there has been a noticeable and significant growth in the number of criminal firearms incidents in recent years, particularly in some of our more fragile communities.
- 1.20 Whilst public concern is well founded, it must also be emphasised that the numbers of people killed or seriously injured by guns remains relatively low both on the basis of international comparisons and overall within England and Wales.

Figure 7 International comparisons
 The percentage of homicides which are committed using firearms

		% firearm homicides
Albania	1998	90%
USA	1998	66%
Italy	1997	64%
Northern Ireland	1999	63%
Croatia	1999	54%
Thailand	1994	52%
Portugal	1999	52%
Greece	1998	51%
Israel	1997	50%
Former Yug. Rep Macedonia	1997	43%
Kuwait	1999	41%
France	1998	39%
Netherlands	1999	37%
Canada	1997	37%
Belgium	1995	35%
Slovakia	1999	33%
Czech Republic	1999	30%
Slovenia	1999	30%
Denmark	1996	25%
Austria	1999	25%
Norway	1997	24%
Spain	1998	24%
Germany	1999	22%
Bulgaria	1999	21%
Australia	1998	19%
Finland	1998	18%
Estonia	1999	14%
Latvia	1999	11%
Republic of Moldova	1999	11%
Hungary	1999	11%
United Kingdom	1999	10%
Sweden	1996	10%
England and Wales	1999	8%
New Zealand	1998	7%
Lithuania	1999	6%
Scotland	1999	6%
China / Hong Kong SAR	1996	5%
Ireland	1997	3%
Japan	1997	3%
Romania	1999	2%
Republic of Korea	1997	2%
Singapore	1998	0%



Source – World Report on Violence and Health (WHO, October 2002)

Where are the guns coming from?

1.21 Self evidently, firearms obtained for criminal purposes have either been imported from outside UK or acquired in this country. Perhaps a measure of the effectiveness of current legislation and the responsible actions of legitimate holders of firearms is that relatively few are actually stolen, so that criminals intent on obtaining guns have to seek alternative avenues of supply.

Figure 8 FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION HANDED IN DURING THE FIREARMS AMNESTY 2003

Police Force	Total Number of							Prohibited Firearms		Non-Prohibited Guns		Other Weapons
	Guns	Rounds of ammunition	Fully Automatic	Handguns	Rifles	Section 5 Shotguns	Other sec 5 firearms	Total	Total			
Total England & Wales	40,507	895,274	66	5,472	152	336	223	6,249	34,258	6,409		
Total Scotland	3,393	143,916	3	262	3	8	3	279	3,114	684		
Total Other	8	168	0	0	0	0	1	1	7	0		
Total Great Britain	43,908	1,039,358	69	5,734	155	344	227	6,529	37,379	7,093		

Source – Home Office

1.22 Whilst there is little expectation that active criminals will surrender weapons, HMIC is of the opinion that Firearms Amnesties represent a useful and positive step to reduce the overall availability of guns and ammunition. Whenever they are undertaken, a significant number of prohibited weapons are surrendered which might otherwise have fallen into criminal hands. Additionally, publicity in relation to the amnesty raises public awareness of the need continually to reduce the number of guns in circulation.

Firearms dealers

1.23 Compared to many countries, the licensed firearms trade in the UK is heavily regulated, particularly since the legislation introduced following the Dunblane shootings in 1996. The police have an important statutory role in the supervision of firearms dealers, which is undertaken by specialist officers.

1.24 From enquiries made during the inspection, both within the police service and with representatives of the firearms trade, it is clear that the vast majority of such dealers take their responsibilities very seriously and take appropriate steps to ensure that firearms are properly accounted for. Like any business, however, there are exceptions to this rule and evidence was presented of 'leakage' from a small number of firearms traders into the unlawful supply of firearms to criminals.

- 1.25 Where evidence of malpractice became available, robust and appropriate steps were taken to deal with the individuals concerned and successful prosecutions had been achieved. Nevertheless, continued vigilance is required to ensure that all possible measures are directed towards minimising the risk. It should be stressed, however, that evidence indicates that instances of unlawful activity by licensed firearms are rare.

Home made weapons

- 1.26 The technology required to make a firearm is not sophisticated and there will always be the potential for people to manufacture guns illegally. In the overall scale of things, however, this is a very small part of the equation as limited evidence was found of this practice.
- 1.27 Home-made weapons are often unreliable and inherently dangerous, particularly if used with powerful factory made ammunition and this is the primary reason that they appear to be distrusted on the streets and are not a weapon of choice.



Home made ammunition

- 1.28 A firearm, whilst threatening in itself, can only deliver its full and fatal potential if loaded with the appropriate ammunition and thus the supply of ammunition is an integral part of the problem.
- 1.29 For a number of years, police have been frustrated by the fact that whilst it may be illegal to possess ammunition it is not necessarily illegal to possess its constituent parts. There are a modest but significant number of people who have a lawful interest in making ammunition. Many historical re-enactment societies, for example, depend heavily upon such supplies.
- 1.30 There is, however, evidence to suggest that criminals are employing similar equipment to produce ammunition for less benign reasons and steps to make this more difficult must be included in any overall strategy to reduce the risks posed by firearms. HMIC are aware of the fact that the Home Office is already examining this issue in order to identify practical ways forward. This is welcomed.



The Internet and importation through the post

- 1.31 Naturally the sheer volume of mail coming into this country from abroad presents opportunities for criminals to exploit transportation routes but collaboration between private companies and agencies including Royal Mail, HMCE and the police ensures that technical surveillance techniques are targeted towards reducing the likelihood of such attempts being successful.
- 1.32 Recent publicity highlighted the potential to use the internet to locate and purchase component parts to firearms and then to have them forwarded to an address in the UK. This illustrates the extent to which modern communications technology can continually add new dimensions to existing problems and whilst at present this may not be large scale, it is important to monitor the situation.
- 1.33 ACPO have already taken positive steps to address the more obvious sources of such purchases and have received a supportive response from Internet Service Providers. This is a route worth pursuing and one which ACPO is well placed to follow on behalf of the service.

The Northern Ireland connection

- 1.34 During the period of the inspection there was some speculation as to the extent to which former terrorist weapons from Northern Ireland were being supplied to criminals elsewhere in the UK.
- 1.35 Given the ongoing, albeit fragile, peace process and the publicity surrounding the decommissioning of weapons, this story has a natural plausibility. Whilst law enforcement agencies in Ireland and the UK maintained an open mind, and recognised that the criminals on both sides might be inclined to such activity if they stood to profit by it, there is neither evidence nor intelligence suggesting that this is a significant source of weapons. There were, however, indications that small numbers of firearms were flowing in both directions.
- 1.36 The situation is being closely monitored and HMIC was impressed by the obvious close co-operation that existed between the Police Service of Northern Ireland and colleagues in the Garda Siochana.

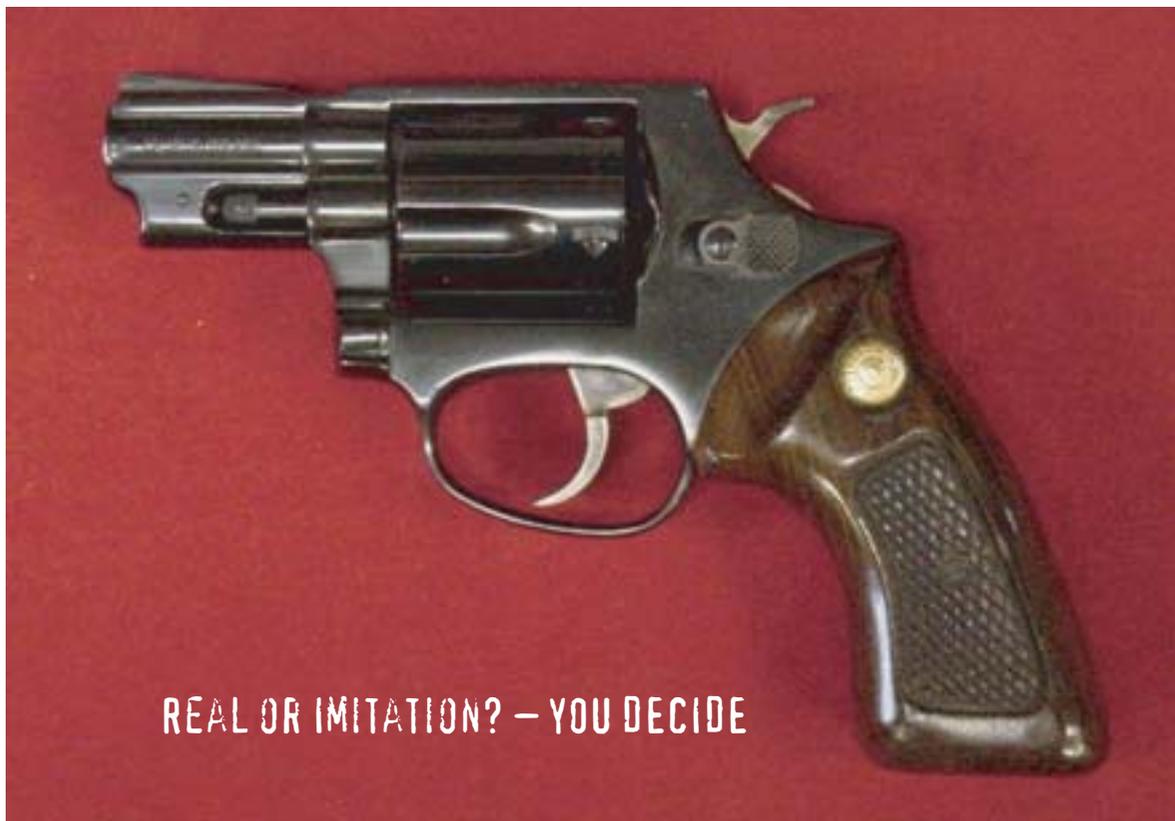
THE POLICE SERVICE OF NORTHERN IRELAND (PSNI) MAINTAINS A BALLISTICS INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM AT THEIR WEAPONS AND EXPLOSIVES RESEARCH CENTRE THAT CONTAINS EXTENSIVE INFORMATION ABOUT THE CRIMINAL USE OF FIREARMS STRETCHING BACK THIRTY YEARS. THE USE MADE OF THIS INFORMATION TO PROVIDE BOTH INTELLIGENCE AND EVIDENCE TO OPERATIONAL ENQUIRIES HIGHLIGHTS THE BENEFITS OF MAINTAINING A COMPREHENSIVE DATABASE OF THIS NATURE.



Specialist weapons

- 1.37 Of potentially greater concern, by nature of the weapon rather than by number, is the smuggling into the UK of specialist weapons. There will always be those willing to pay for weapons with a superior potential and there is evidence of criminals actively seeking to procure less common and specialist weapons from abroad.
- 1.38 The classic example would be the Uzi sub-machine pistol. By reputation this is a weapon to guarantee 'respect' and there will always be people willing to pay the price to own one. Automatic weapons such as these are particularly dangerous in that what they lack in accuracy in the hands of the untrained, they compensate for in sheer firepower. This being the case, it significantly increases the risk and likelihood of someone in the vicinity being injured if and when it is used.
- 1.39 There was also some evidence to suggest that high velocity weapons and even sniper rifles had been obtained in limited numbers.
- 1.40 This presents additional concerns for the law enforcement agencies, in that such specialist weapons may exceed the protection offered by ballistic protective vests. This is a problem already being wrestled with by some American police forces where officers have found themselves confronting armed criminals in possession of more powerful weapons than those routinely

available to officers on general patrol. The evidence provided suggests that this is currently a problem of limited proportions but one which is rightly being closely monitored by law enforcement agencies.



War trophies

- 1.41 There is a long history of the British military bringing back trophies of war from overseas conflicts, both officially and unofficially. As a visit to any military museum will confirm, this can range from pieces of uniform at one end of the scale to field artillery and ground attack aircraft at the other.
- 1.42 For many years, the police service has periodically had items such as grandfather's old service revolver surrendered across the front counter, albeit these have reduced in number as the two World Wars and national service become more distant in time.
- 1.43 There is, however, no reason to suppose that the tradition has died out and the military authorities are well aware of the problem and take steps to reduce the risk of firearms and other munitions being brought back by individuals. Again, it is important to keep the situation in perspective and the inspection did not find evidence to suggest that this was a significant source of weapons on the street, albeit representing a continuing risk that should be managed responsibly by the appropriate authorities.

Illegal importation from the Continent

- 1.44 For some time there has been speculation that the country is 'awash' with firearms imported from former Soviet Block countries. Similar views were occasionally expressed during the inspection and attempts were made to validate these claims.
- 1.45 There are conflicting opinions as to the numbers of these guns that are actually in circulation. Evidence was presented that HM Customs and Excise officers periodically intercept firearms in transit, although not in large consignments. Over 80% of such seizures were assessed as being from people who were ignorant of UK firearms legislation. Nonetheless, checks following seizures by police and other law enforcement agencies confirm that weapons from the Continent are being found in the possession of criminals.
- 1.46 The picture that emerged was of relatively small numbers of weapons being illegally imported, seizures involving five or ten handguns were recounted and these were frequently in connection with the movement of other illegal commodities, particularly drugs.
- 1.47 The current NCIS UK Threat Assessment and intelligence held by other law enforcement agencies supports this picture and highlights the need for continued, co-ordinated vigilance by all. It was acknowledged that, given the free flow of goods and people within the EU, the ability of law enforcement agencies routinely to monitor such movements was limited. All relied heavily upon intelligence to target their operations.
- 1.48 Similarly, evidence was provided of individuals importing small numbers of firearms into the UK in private vehicles, having purchased them either legally or illegally on the Continent.
- 1.49 Overall, therefore, whilst the full scale of the problem is not clear, the evidence from intelligence and seizures does not indicate that bulk illegal importation from abroad is a substantial source of firearms at the present time.



The Eastern European influence

- 1.50 There was anecdotal evidence suggesting that there were particular problems with regard to some East European nationals from countries not currently within the EU. The traditions regarding and attitudes towards firearms in some of these communities are significantly different to those that exist within this country. There, the simple possession of a firearm is regarded as normal and for it to be used to settle disputes, particularly amongst criminals, was much more common place.

- 1.51 With the ever-increasing movement of people within Europe, including the UK, consequent upon social and economic unrest significant numbers of people have settled within the EU. Because of the strength of their links to their homeland a ready network exists for the movement of goods or people. These strong family ties are a source of great strength and pride within such communities but they are also capable of being exploited by criminal elements many of whom then use these networks to move illegal goods including firearms.
- 1.52 Whilst still an infrequent event, instances have occurred where firearms have been used openly on the streets by such criminal organisations in order to settle disputes with opponents. This trend continues to be monitored.

IN JULY 2002 METROPOLITAN POLICE OFFICERS WERE CALLED TO THE WOOD GREEN AREA OF LONDON TO DEAL WITH THE AFTERMATH OF A SHOOT-OUT IN THE STREET. FROM SUBSEQUENT ENQUIRY, THE INCIDENT APPARENTLY INVOLVED RIVAL ALBANIAN AND TURKISH GANGS FEUDING OVER CRIMINAL MARKETS. DURING THE EXCHANGE OF FIRE, SOME 15 SHOTS WERE DISCHARGED CAUSING PASSERS BY TO DIVE FOR COVER.

Converted and re-activated weapons

- 1.53 Given that the effectiveness with which weapons are officially de-activated has increased significantly since regulatory changes in 1995, numerically the largest source of illegal weapons at the present time is the conversion of blank firing weapons.
- 1.54 A number of forces provided evidence of successful operations undertaken to break-up and disrupt *gun factories* specialising in such conversions. Given modern precision machine tools and a modest degree of engineering skills it is not difficult to convert some blank firing or de-activated weapons.
- 1.55 In some cases, the gun factories were capable of converting scores of weapons per week and then distributing them across the country. There was evidence of quite sophisticated criminal networks involved in the marketing of such weapons.

DERBYSHIRE CONSTABULARY CONDUCTED AN OPERATION INTO A LOCAL COMPANY WHEREBY THREE MEMBERS OF THE SAME FAMILY WERE RECENTLY CONVICTED AT CROWN COURT OF CONSPIRACY TO CONVERT DEACTIVATED FIREARMS INTO ACTIVE FIREARMS. THIS OPERATION HIGHLIGHTED THE EASE WITH WHICH PRE-1995 DEACTIVATED WEAPONS COULD BE RESTORED TO OPERATIONAL USE. IN ALL, DERBYSHIRE OFFICERS RECOVERED 772 DEACTIVATED WEAPONS (PRE 1995 STANDARD) AND SUBSEQUENT INVESTIGATIONS LED TO 44 FURTHER ARRESTS, IDENTIFYING LINKS TO 96 CRIMINAL CASES INVOLVING 700 FIREARMS.



WEST MIDLANDS POLICE, SUPPORTED BY FSS, UNDERTOOK AN OPERATION IN RELATION TO THE CONVERSION OF BRUNI BLANK FIRING PISTOLS. OFFICERS RECOVERED 10 CONVERTED WEAPONS TOGETHER WITH CONVERSION EQUIPMENT AND LARGE QUANTITIES OF CLASS A DRUGS. TWO MEN APPEARED BEFORE BIRMINGHAM CROWN COURT IN AUGUST 2003 AND WERE SENTENCED TO 7 AND 11 YEARS IMPRISONMENT RESPECTIVELY FOR FIREARMS AND DRUGS OFFENCES.

Imported imitation firearms

- 1.56 There is a significant body of evidence at both force and national level to indicate that a substantial proportion of the firearms used by criminals in this country are imitation firearms, blank firers and other weapons (like gas cartridge guns) which have been converted to fire live ammunition. Many of these are legally imported by companies trading in such items.
- 1.57 One issue, consequently highlighted by the inspection, was the lack of a standard approach to the question of the manufacture of imitation firearms or blank firers within the European Union (EU). Given the varying legislation in the countries involved and the widely differing attitudes towards the possession of firearms, this is perhaps inevitable but with the increasingly free movement of people and goods within the EU and its imminent expansion, it does present law enforcement agencies with increasing difficulties.
- 1.58 A considerable amount of good work has already been undertaken by ACPO and the commercial companies who import such goods, this deserves both acknowledgement and encouragement.
- 1.59 Readily converted weapons such as the Brocock have now been brought under control and will require a firearm certificate in order to be lawfully possessed. Also, there is now a scheme whereby commercial importers and distributors will be encouraged to submit samples of all future imports of blank firing and other weapons having the potential to be readily converted. A technical assessment will then take place to decide whether or not it poses a threat to public safety through its convertibility to a firearm. Thereafter, distributors will ensure continued adherence to the standards of the scheme through a system of certification on manufacture and subsequent batch testing.

Who carry the guns and why?

- 1.60 The people that carry and use guns are almost as ethnically diverse as the communities in which they live and whilst HMIC found some similarities in the forces visited, there were also stark differences between towns and cities that are geographically proximate. It is clear, however, that those who do carry guns are predominantly young men aged between sixteen and twenty-four. They may be white, mixed background, Asian, Black or Chinese and there was evidence of collaboration across ethnicity in pursuit of common criminal interests, particularly in relation to drugs.



- 1.61 The complexities surrounding the use of guns in society are emphasised throughout this report. It must be clearly and unequivocally stated that gun crime is not just found within black communities, nor is it simply a *black on black* issue although in recent years it has disproportionately affected the black community.
- 1.62 In 2000/2001, for example, police in some parts of the country were particularly concerned over the impact of a relatively small number of individuals (often here illegally) from the Caribbean that were linked to trafficking Class A drugs in general and crack cocaine in particular. They displayed a readiness to resort to the use of firearms which was exceptional. HMIC would highlight the ACPO strategic assessment of 2002 as an informative and helpful guide, particularly to those forces that may be experiencing early signs of attempts by criminal groups to expand their crack cocaine markets.
- 1.63 Whilst many of the criminals using firearms are British nationals, there are also concerns over the influence and activities of foreign nationals including Turks, Albanians and Jamaicans involved in crime, a number of whom are in the country illegally. Some of these young men arrive from countries where the propensity to use firearms is far more prevalent than exists within the UK.

- 1.64 Whatever their backgrounds, where young men have low expectations for their own future outside criminal activity and little aspiration to longevity it is not surprising that with such scant regard for their own lives they have little regard for the lives of others. The gun is the consequential currency when life is so cheap.
- 1.65 The common themes to emerge from the inspection as to why guns were being used were:
- **enhancement of image or status in order to gain or maintain 'respect' or deal with 'disrespect'**
 - **protection of self in a criminal environment or simply in an environment perceived to be dangerous**
 - **protection of assets, including drugs, money, personal belongings or other commodities**
 - **criminal business interests including trafficking of people or drugs (particularly Class A such as heroin and crack cocaine) and prostitution**
 - **enforcement or intimidation against potential victims and witnesses**
 - **enabling the commission of criminal offences such as robbery, kidnap, extortion or violence against other persons**
- 1.66 These findings echo the results of The Metropolitan Police Authority *Gun Crime Scrutiny Consultation* in 2003 and respondents considered *'that desire for a certain image/status and involvement in illegal drugs supply were the main reasons why young people get involved in gun culture. Self protection, desire to intimidate, guns being seen as an effective aid to committing crime and association with organised crime were also often mentioned'*.

The influence of gang culture

- 1.67 In a number of force areas HMIC was made aware of the concerns amongst both police officers and local communities concerning the existence, activities and impact of gangs. There is a wealth of empirical research from UK and in particular the United States about the history, formation, make-up and activities of gangs.
- 1.68 What is very clear from both the research and experience is that young men of an impressionable age can easily fall under the influence of a local gang, particularly if it provides them with a sense of identity and purpose which is otherwise missing from their lives. Youths who have an unsettled domestic background, who lack male role models and who are regular truants or are

excluded from school appear to be at particular risk. They are often on the fringes of criminality and can be drawn into gang membership as a result of this combination of circumstances.

- 1.69 Historically, gangs were tight-knit and bonded through family, locality and criminal enterprise. Evidence today suggests that they are less distinct. A number of areas have also witnessed the growth of gangs based on ethnicity, location and perceived necessity as a means of self-preservation or obtaining a sense of identity. Even these groups are far from discrete as individuals are inclined to form loose associations with other groups in pursuit of a common criminal purpose.
- 1.70 Whatever the make-up of these groups, what is worrying is the propensity for members more readily to utilise firearms when resorting to intimidation and violence in order to fulfil their criminal objectives, be this against rival gangs or members of the public. This is evidenced by the number of threats and revenge shootings between rival gangs over commodities, turf, or even 'disrespect' issues. Of significant concern is the growing tendency for young men in some areas regularly to carry guns in order to ensure their status and their propensity to use them in connection with relatively trivial disputes.



THE MANCHESTER MULTI AGENCY GANG STRATEGY (MMAGS) WAS CREATED TO REDUCE THE INCIDENCE OF DEATH AND INJURY TO YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED IN GANGS IN SOUTH MANCHESTER. DEDICATED STAFF FROM MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL, GREATER MANCHESTER POLICE (GMP) AND GREATER MANCHESTER PROBATION AREA WORK TOGETHER TO ENFORCE THE LAW, DETER YOUNG PEOPLE FROM ENTERING INTO GANG CULTURE, PROVIDE SUPPORT, REDUCE IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES AND CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT FOR COMMERCIAL INVESTMENT. MMAGS ALSO MAINTAINS AN INFORMATIVE AND HELPFUL WEBSITE - WWW.MANCHESTER.GOV.UK/MMAGS/GREAT.HTM

Where is this happening and what guns are being used?

- 1.71 All of the areas visited were experiencing problems in connection with gun crime, although some had in fact experienced a reduction from O1/O2 to O2/O3, including Avon and Somerset, GMP and West Mercia. West Midlands Police saw the greatest reduction over the same period –14.6 %, representing 188 fewer offences.
- 1.72 Despite the difficulties being experienced around the collation of data, there was an overall consensus amongst the forces visited that the number of incidents was increasing and that incidents were spreading to more urban and rural areas of the country. There were also some stark contrasts between cities of similar size and demographic make-up, where for example Nottingham was experiencing particularly high levels of indiscriminate shootings, whilst its two near neighbours, Derby and Leicester, were not.
- 1.73 Similarly, there were disparities across the country in terms of the types of guns being recovered. HMIC research indicated a number of forces reported seizing higher proportions of converted blank firers or re-activated weapons, whereas one force in particular reported a higher proportion of real guns.



- 1.74 The types of guns preferred by the criminals depend largely on their intended use. If a gun is carried in order to enhance image or gain respect, then an imitation or replica firearm may suffice. If, however, there is an intent to use the firearm for self protection, to protect the drugs being carried or to cause someone harm then clearly a real weapon is required.
- 1.75 Money is an obvious factor as, generally, a real firearm is more expensive to obtain than an imitation or, indeed, a converted or re-activated weapon. It was, however, difficult to draw any firm conclusions about the availability of guns amongst the criminal fraternity. As has been mentioned earlier, some people took the view that firearms were readily available whilst others interpreted the preference for converted weapons as an indication that real weapons were not as easy to come by as was sometimes suggested.
- 1.76 Evidence was also provided from a current operation of weapons being used for criminal purposes by more than one person over a period of time, thus indicating the existence of a criminal market in firearms. For example, it appears that individual weapons have been securely stored and made available as and when required on a 'loan or rental basis', with the costs increasing if the weapon is actually fired. In support of this intelligence is clear evidence that individual guns have been used in separate shootings in different parts of the country.
- 1.77 A wide variety of firearms continue to be seized across the country and supporting intelligence indicates that there are similar types in general circulation. As has already been suggested, detailed information regarding the origin of such firearms is still incomplete but it is believed that the recent initiatives taken by ACPO and all police forces will start to provide a more accurate picture of the criminal marketing of firearms.



Summary

- 1.78 The inspection confirmed that despite comparatively low levels of death or injury as a result of shootings, there has been an overall increase in the criminal use of firearms across England and Wales during the last five years. More serious injuries or fatalities may have resulted had it not been for the poor quality of ammunition used, the relative inexperience of the criminal in firing the weapon and the good standard of medical care provided at the scene by paramedics. Of particular concern, however, is the growing number of young men who appear willing both to carry and use guns to resolve even minor disputes.

- 1.79 Increasingly guns are being used not simply as a tool of the trade for robbery and other criminality but also for self-protection and to establish 'respect'. Additionally it is apparent that firearms criminality is not exclusive to a particular ethnic group but is marked by a diversity of users. It is more prevalent in some of the metropolitan areas of the country but is undoubtedly spreading to smaller towns and cities.
- 1.80 Whilst there is quite a lot of information, statistical data and intelligence available to inform an analysis of the nature and extent of the problem, overall the picture is patchy and poorly co-ordinated. As a consequence, there is lack of a comprehensive understanding of the problem to enable more focused strategies to be developed to tackle these issues.
- 1.81 HMIC therefore welcomes and endorses the initiatives undertaken by the Home Office, ACPO and NCIS, to draw together existing systems and procedures for information collection and collation. No doubt this will better inform the police service and partners as to the true nature and extent of gun crime across England and Wales.



Chapter 2

COMMUNITY IMPACT

- 2.1 The positioning of this chapter centrally in the report is deliberate. The impact of gun crime upon communities is inextricably linked both to the nature and extent of the problem and to the associated police response and is thus pivotal to this thematic inspection.
- 2.2 Whilst relatively low in number, serious crimes of violence have always had a disproportionate impact upon communities. They are widely reported and even those not directly involved sense the impact of a firearms crime in their neighbourhood. They walk the same streets to shop, to go to work and to take their children to school. There is increasing evidence to show that the cumulative impact of such incidents over time can be enormously debilitating to the entire community.
- 2.3 It is necessary to observe that no single definition of a community could appropriately capture their richly varied characteristics. In this chapter reference to communities refers to geographically defined groups of people who have a shared experience socially and economically and as a consequence, of crime. It does not refer simply to minority ethnic communities.
- 2.4 During the inspection, HMIC found evidence that the scale and nature of violence that occurs within some communities is not generally understood. There is widespread under reporting of crime within the area and beyond and a lack of comprehensive knowledge about what is actually going on. At the same time, there is something in the nature of gun crime which tends towards escalation, a ratcheting effect that can rapidly draw in others. The fact that gun related violence is increasingly involving blameless victims has led to significant media coverage and heightened public and political concern.
- 2.5 Whilst there may be a correlation between deprivation and crime, it is not the only factor at work. In understanding the impact of gun crime on the community it is essential, therefore, that we develop a better understanding of reality as experienced by the people who live in those communities. This is particularly important as the demographics of cities change with new communities becoming established and expanding over time.
- 2.6 In addition to police addressing specific issues in relation to armed criminality, the complexity of this challenge also makes it essential that all statutory agencies acquire a better understanding of the problems being experienced



locally and develop more effective methods of working jointly with the local community to tackle them.

Causes and not just symptoms

- 2.7 Meeting with community representatives and drawing upon their experiences, two facts became increasingly apparent. Firstly, whilst gun crime is a problem itself it is also a symptom of other deep-seated problems within the wider society. Secondly that, given the complexity of communities and differences in context of superficially similar events, a deep understanding of the local problem is essential if long term solutions are to be achieved.
- 2.8 Whilst guns have historically been used to commit crime, there is strong evidence to indicate that the scale of the problems now being experienced within some communities is of a wholly different order than has previously been experienced. Evidence from both this inspection and within the APPG report indicates that two particular aspects are under-pinning this growth:
- **guns, imitation and real, are being carried with increasing frequency by young men in order to acquire power and status amongst peers on the streets**
 - **amongst street level drug dealers, guns are being carried in order to protect both individual dealers and/or the turf that constitutes their market place from rival dealers**
- 2.9 As is seen in the United States, there is often a gang-related aspect to drugs dealing. Though the situation in UK has not reached such proportions, there are indications that in some cities it is an increasingly significant problem.
- 2.10 To a significant degree, therefore, the criminal use of firearms is the most visible and the most violent manifestation of a wide range of issues at work within communities affected by social and economic deprivation and crime.
- 2.11 In order to achieve a long lasting solution to the criminality currently being experienced the full range of underlying problems must be both understood and addressed. Herein lies the dilemma for this in turn requires a strong working relationship between statutory agencies and the local community and yet that relationship is frequently weak or, in some cases, all but absent.
- 2.12 This presents a particular challenge, therefore, to the police and other agencies. The experience for many people living in the most badly affected communities is one of decline and neglect. Whilst evidence was offered of individuals within agencies providing good and attentive service and of a

number of re-generation initiatives taking place within such communities, the general feeling is one of marginalisation and disempowerment. There was a powerful perception that the wider community did not pay much heed to what went on provided that the problems did not spill over into other more affluent areas.

2.13 As is so often the case, it is personal tragedy that has acted as a catalyst for change. The deaths of innocent people unconnected to gun and other crime at the hands of gunmen has galvanised people into action, both locally and nationally, and has challenged much of what has gone before. New opportunities have opened up but these have been bought at enormous personal expense to the families directly affected by those deaths.

2.14 The clear and powerful message from these families is that they desperately want to prevent similar tragedies occurring in the future. They recognise that their loved ones can never be brought back but feel driven to act in order to change things for the better so that their deaths should not be in vain. Responding positively and in new ways to this situation is the challenge.



Reassurance – Supporting victims and witnesses

2.15 If obtaining the confidence and support of the community are important pre-conditions to tackling gun crime effectively, then at the heart of those are victims, witnesses and their families. In recent years, this fact has been recognised and a good deal of effort is being put into improving the situation albeit the inspection revealed that much remains to be done.



2.16 In July 2003 the Home Office published *A new deal for victims and witnesses – National strategy to deliver improved services*. Its overarching aim was 'to improve services to victims and witnesses and to increase their satisfaction with those services, within the wider context of improving public confidence in the criminal justice system (CJS) and increasing the number of offences brought to justice.'

2.17 Underpinning this aim are three key priorities:

- to reduce the adverse effects of crime on victims and witnesses and prevent secondary victimisation
- to encourage more victims and witnesses to come forward
- to offer more options to victims and witnesses, including alternatives to attendance at court

- 2.18 The focus provided by such initiatives is welcomed because it is clear that in many communities there remains a strong perception that the CJS treats victims and witnesses poorly. Inevitably this has implications both for confidence in that system and the extent to which people are willing to put themselves forward, both to report crimes and to provide information and evidence in respect of criminal activity.
- 2.19 As the first point of contact, the police have a crucial role to play in providing support and advice in the early stages. Such support has specific benefits to police, of course, in that opportunities for gathering evidence and information about criminality can be fully utilised.
- 2.20 The scale of the task should not be underestimated. When dealing with serious crime, particularly those involving firearms, police and other agencies need fully to understand the real fears and concerns of members of the public in deciding whether or not to come forward.
- 2.21 In meeting with community representatives, it was suggested that a lack of confidence in the police could be exploited by criminals exercising a disproportionate power and influence over local residents. This power is maintained by intimidation – a background threat of violence and retribution which undermines the will of people to stand up to those who are responsible for the bulk of crime in the area. To live with the reality of intimidation, damage to property and violence to oneself or ones family can provide a powerfully persuasive incentive to remain silent.
- 2.22 At the present time, and in spite of the various initiatives, the knowledge generally amongst the police, other criminal justice agencies and the community as to what is available and what works in respect of countering this threat is not particularly good. There is a continuing need both to improve the support that is currently available and to make information regarding the various schemes more widely known and put into practice.
- 2.23 During community based focus groups, anecdotal evidence was provided of another risk for the police in dealing with witnesses. If confidentiality is compromised and it becomes generally known that people are assisting them then confidence in the police can be actively undermined and, in the worst cases, the individuals concerned become vulnerable to victimisation.
- 2.24 This is particularly important in connection with gun crime and the investigation of shooting incidents. It is, after all, enormously frustrating for officers to be confronted by a wall of silence when investigating serious crime but this can be symptomatic of a fundamental lack of trust in the police.

Witness Protection

- 2.25 Time and again during meetings with community representatives, the issue of witness protection was raised. Community expectations were influenced significantly by perceptions of what this entailed.
- 2.26 The highest level of protection was offered by removing vulnerable key witnesses from their home and providing a new identity and a new life elsewhere. It was recognised that this is enormously disruptive for the individual concerned, very expensive for the agencies and happens only in very exceptional circumstances. The relocation of any witness can be problematic and may be compounded by those with extended families or for black and ethnic minority witnesses where their anonymity may be less easy to secure. Community representatives emphasised that relocation should be the option of last resort.
- 2.27 The vast majority of the community would not want to leave behind their families and friends as a result of offering to provide evidence of a serious crime. What they do expect is that positive steps be taken to prevent the offender or their associates from contacting and intimidating them prior to and during trial. On this particular issue confidence is low and this fact continues to undermine the likelihood of members of the public making a stand against local criminals.
- 2.28 The most frequent criticism was in relation to the apparent inability of the criminal justice agencies to secure the offender's detention after charge. The reappearance in the neighbourhood of a suspect who has been released on bail has the ability disproportionately to undermine the confidence of witnesses in the power, indeed the desire, of the authorities to tackle the problems they are experiencing. This is exacerbated when offences of violence are concerned.
- 2.29 It is suspected that this frustration lies behind stories circulating that suspects are sometimes bailed by the police because they are police informers and that the police tolerate their criminal activity in order to maintain that relationship. Not unnaturally, this serves further to undermine confidence in the police.
- 2.30 A number of forces have dedicated witness protection units that specialise in dealing with the more serious cases and, in exceptional cases, manage the practical issues of relocation. The Metropolitan Police offer assistance and advice nationally on this issue.
- 2.31 In discussing this issue with police officers, it became apparent that many saw this high level protection as the only option available. Given that the majority of people have no desire to be moved from their homes, advice along these lines is rarely a source of reassurance.



- 2.32 During the inspection a variety of examples were provided of locally developed good practice in respect of providing better protection for witnesses. These ranged from improved physical protection of homes and personal alarms to cocoon watch schemes where neighbours came together to support witnesses. It was apparent that there would be significant benefits derived from drawing together this experience and making it available more widely especially in those areas that were lacking in previous experience in this type of activity. Given that the majority of witnesses are seeking protection at this level, there is the potential to make a significant impact on the problem.
- 2.33 GMP are leading a project on behalf of the police service to examine the full range of issues relating to witness protection as a result of concerns raised by many forces across the country. The results of their work should enable a more consistent and comprehensive approach to be adopted thereby increasing trust and confidence in the system for victims and witnesses.

Police: support for victims and witnesses generally

- 2.34 Over a number of years, forces have developed and extended the support they provide to victims. Many have appointed victim support officers albeit they are relatively few in number. Criminal Justice units have put a good deal of thought and effort into providing support to victims, especially in terms of keeping them informed of the progress of their case. Additionally, a number of forces have put particular effort into addressing the needs of vulnerable victims and have committed significant resources to that end.
- 2.35 During meetings with community representatives, a point repeatedly made was that the manner in which police dealt with victims and witnesses reflected directly upon how they in turn were regarded by the public. Where contact with the police was positive and supportive there was an associated increase in public reassurance and confidence. Whilst HMIC was wholly supportive of the actions taken so far by forces much remains to be done.
- 2.36 In the case of homicide, the role of Family Liaison Officers (FLO) is of crucial importance both to the families and to the police. A failure in that area can have a disproportionate effect on the community. Experience shows that family members can either be strong supporters of the police or equally powerful critics both of which will have a direct impact upon community reassurance and confidence.
- 2.37 Effective family liaison comes at a cost to the officers involved and some forces are experiencing difficulty in recruiting and retaining FLOs. Based upon

developments in one area, it was suggested that in order to spread the load the service might explore the use of non-police FLOs in connection with less serious crimes.

2.38 In high profile cases, early consultation between the police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) provided opportunities for improved support to victims and witnesses throughout the case. The knowledge and expertise at this level proved essential as consideration was given to the range of options available to the CJS to support victims and witnesses. These options include:

- **ensuring vulnerable victims/witnesses are separated from defendants in court buildings**
- **utilising live TV links to court**
- **providing facilities to enable the presentation of video evidence**
- **seeking reporting restrictions**
- **in extreme cases applying for the witness to give evidence anonymously**

2.39 During focus groups with visible ethnic minority representatives, HMIC detected a reluctance on the part of some victims to take up the support that was offered. Whether this was specific to gun crime or of a general nature was not clear. This is an area which would benefit from fuller exploration if the full range of support services are to be made readily available to all victims.

2.40 Work is already underway to improve the way in which victims and witnesses are dealt with. Clearly there is still much to be done. HMIC sees significant merit in relevant agencies coming together on a more formalised basis further to explore available options and, equally importantly, to create mechanisms for sharing this understanding across the CJS.

Reassurance – rebuilding trust

2.41 Much has been said about the extent to which the British police service depends upon policing by consent and about the importance of maintaining trust and public confidence in the police. Whilst there were some examples highlighted of individual officers displaying leadership in this respect, HMIC detected considerable unease amongst community representatives over the experiences based on day to day interactions with the police. The creation of trust between police and community is an essential precondition to long term success and continued effort to this end is vital.



2.42 HMIC identified a number of examples of where success had been achieved. In London Operation Trident has substantially improved levels of trust within specific black communities especially those which were experiencing problems in respect of gun crime.

Success appears to be based upon:

- a dedicated unit adopting a well co-ordinated approach embracing proactive and reactive operations, good intelligence and improved community relations. Higher detection rates lead to even greater confidence
- experienced and well trained staff particularly attuned to the sensitivities of the communities with whom they engage
- senior officers who make a particular effort to attend public meetings and publicise operational success in order to reassure the community
- the ability to respond promptly to community intelligence. A delay in responding can lead to the perception that police do not care

2.43 It was interesting to note that, when going out on operations, officers on the unit wore coats that bore the distinctive Trident logo rather than the words 'Metropolitan Police'. As a result of intense time and effort, they appear to have created a brand image, to use a marketing term, more powerful in specific circumstances than that of the parent organisation.

2.44 It should be noted, however, that those involved with Trident, and similar initiatives in other areas, all emphasised that although such units were an effective initial response to specific problems the nature of gun crime was dynamic and their role and focus should be expected to develop over time.

Other examples of good practice identified included:

- effective communication by police and CPS through leaflet drops (Avon and Somerset)
- at times of significant concern, high profile patrols in hot spots by armed officers (Nottingham, Avon and Somerset)
- actively using black and other ethnic minority officers to build bridges within the community through briefings and proactive programmes of work. Potentially, the Black Police Association (BPA) has an important role to play in this regard.

THE METROPOLITAN POLICE *CULTURAL AND COMMUNITIES RESOURCE UNIT* (CCRU) HOLDS DETAILS OF OFFICERS WITH LIFE SKILLS OR KNOWLEDGE WHICH MIGHT ASSIST IN RESOLVING A CRITICAL INCIDENT OR SERIOUS CRIME. THE RESOURCE IS MADE READILY AVAILABLE TO ALL STAFF AND PARTICULARLY TO SENIOR INVESTIGATING OFFICERS.

2.45 By way of contrast, the inspection also identified factors that had the potential to undermine community confidence or to damage it where progress was being made:

- **Informants – care is required when police use informants.** In many communities, there was a common belief that some criminals were able to operate freely because they were police informants. It was also suggested that some criminals might actively promote this belief in order to increase their own status. Whilst police will always need to protect the identity of an informant, they need to manage this issue with considerable care and integrity.
- **Lack of continuity – instances were found where developing relationships had been set back by the movement of key officers – sometimes BCU commanders, sometimes community officers.** It takes time to rebuild trust and changes of individuals could undermine previous good work. Amongst the community, the suspicion was also voiced that, occasionally, senior officers used such high profile positions to improve their CV but then moved on.
- **Insufficient FLOs – in the forces visited, there were very few trained black and ethnic minority FLOs.** Given the importance of this role in building and maintaining the confidence of the family, and through them the community, this is seen a potential weakness.

2.46 Whilst these issues should not be overstated, they do serve as a reminder of how delicate relationships can be in the early stages and how easily community confidence can be undermined.



Community leaders

Who speaks for the community?

- 2.47 When seeking to improve relationships, police have traditionally made contact with community leaders but there are limitations in this approach. Whilst many hold formal positions of authority others are self-appointed and they rarely represent all sections of their community. HMIC became acutely aware of the under representation of both young people and of female members of the community in some areas. This was a fact previously highlighted in the HMIC reports on *Winning the Race*.
- 2.48 It was frequently stated that many of the current identifiable leaders are older males who, whilst undoubtedly representing people of their age and ethnicity, have significantly less understanding or comprehension of issues affecting large sections of their community particularly young people.
- 2.49 This highlights two concerns: firstly, that the needs and expectations of the whole community are not fully understood and consequently not properly discussed with the police and other agencies; secondly, that some community leaders are unable to exercise effective influence over the sections of their community that may be close to the problems being experienced.
- 2.50 The solution is clearly not to stop meeting with formal community leaders because they do have a distinct and important role to play and the police undoubtedly need to work with them. Rather, it is to acknowledge what they can and cannot do and then to identify other methods of engaging with the people who are concerned with or affected by the issues. It is also important to remember that diverse communities have different leadership compositions – no one size fits all.

A POLICE COMMANDER IN THE WEST MIDLANDS HAD TAKEN WHAT WAS SEEN AS THE UNUSUAL STEP OF ACTIVELY GOING OUT SEEKING TO MEET MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY ON THEIR OWN GROUND AND ON THEIR OWN TERMS. IMPORTANTLY, HE DID NOT RESTRICT HIMSELF TO WHAT WOULD BE REGARDED AS TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY LEADERS. HE WAS PREPARED TO TAKE THE RISK OF MEETING PEOPLE WHO HAD THEMSELVES BEEN INVOLVED IN LOCAL CRIMINALITY IN THE PAST BUT WHO POSSESSED PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE AND INSIGHTS INTO LIFE WITHIN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.



Consultation

- 2.51 Thirty years ago, the belief was that police as professionals knew the business of law and order thoroughly and had little need to consult with the public in any formal sense. In the intervening years, the situation has changed radically and today police invest considerable time and resources in consulting with the community and its representatives in a wide variety of ways. Additionally, Police Authorities have become more community focused not least through being given legal responsibility for undertaking local consultation.
- 2.52 As with so many aspects of life, the approach to consultation has developed over time to reflect local circumstances. Consequently, during the inspection a wide variety of methods of consultation were identified which was encouraging but it also became apparent that there was a lack of consensus as to what worked, what did not and why. Additionally, there was no clear understanding about the manner in which these various models related to one another and their relative strengths and weaknesses in addressing specific policing problems.

THE HMIC THEMATIC INSPECTION REPORT 'WINNING THE RACE - POLICING PLURAL COMMUNITIES' CONTAINED A RECOMMENDATION THAT 'THE COMMUNITY AND RACE RELATIONS IMPLICATIONS OF POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES INCLUDING THE PLANNING OF SPECIFIC OPERATIONS SHOULD BE ROUTINELY CONSIDERED ALONGSIDE OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS'.

2.53 It was also apparent that consultation was fragmentary. For example, in some areas Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP) were vibrant and actively involved in tackling issues in a co-ordinated fashion. This was, however, the exception rather than the rule. Some BCU commanders felt that CDRPs were not delivering the results that were aspired to and that some statutory agencies were poorly represented. Given the complex mixture of social and economic conditions that could exacerbate criminality and gun crime, this was regarded as a weakness.

Recommendation 1:

That by December 2004, the Home Office should consider the role Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP) can play in addressing the wider issues in connection with gun crime.

2.54 More recently, substantially new models for police and community engagement have evolved particularly as a result of critical incidents.

Independent Advisory Groups (IAG)

2.55 The establishment of IAGs was directly related to action taken by the Metropolitan Police following the publication of the McPherson Inquiry report (1999) into the death of Stephen Lawrence in 1993.

2.56 In the subsequent HMIC report *Policing London – Winning Consent* IAGs were identified as an effective consultation mechanism.

2.57 The terms of reference for IAGs includes the monitoring, observing or participation in a wide range of police activities which is founded very much upon the concept of the *critical friend*. The objectives include:

- **critically to appraise police procedures**
- **to make dispassionate assessments of what they experience**
- **to represent the interests and views of the communities policed**

2.58 Some forces have already moved to establishing full time IAGs that are heavily engaged in consultation over policing activity. Others have less formal arrangements and draw together selected individuals to provide advice and support, often when responding to critical incidents. In either case there are a number of identifiable benefits that flow from their establishment including:

- **early consultation and discussion may often identify factors that could appropriately inform the operational response, whilst reducing the possible negative impact on the community**
- **specialist knowledge and understanding can assist Senior Investigating Officers (SIO) in focussing their prioritised lines of enquiry**
- **identifiable IAG members can often help introduce enquiry teams into communities and achieve greater co-operation**
- **increased trust and confidence leads to enhanced information and intelligence flows that, in turn, increases the likelihood of success**
- **the overarching success can inform and improve organisational strategy**

2.59 To be successful, IAGs require clear criteria as to how they will be established and operate. They need to be independent and seen to be independent of the police. It was, however, acknowledged that a close working relationship with the police was essential, for example members would expect to be invited to attend briefings prior to proactive operations. HMIC recognises that for some forces this is a very significant step.

2.60 Concern was expressed during community focus groups, however, that sometimes police may be inclined to invite people upon whose support they know they can rely. Similarly, there was considered to be a risk that IAG members could become too close to police and thus lose the ability to stand back and to criticise them robustly. These concerns serve to emphasise the care and attention that is required in establishing IAGs.



Good practices that were identified included:

- clear objectives
- protocols for the handling of information and intelligence
- joint training in handling critical incidents
- engagement at all stages of an enquiry
- contribution to community impact assessments

2.61 IAGs have much to offer the service but they cannot be created overnight simply to meet an operational necessity. Time and effort needs to be invested in developing the good relationships, mutual understanding and respect that are the hallmarks of successful IAGs. Forces also need to develop the confidence to use them flexibly in order to meet local circumstances for example, in some areas Youth IAGs have been set up specifically to concentrate on issues in relation to young people.

Recommendation 2:

That by December 2004, ACPO (Race and Community Relations) should circulate good practice guidelines on Independent Advisory Groups.

Early intervention – diversion strategies for young people

2.62 In *Building safer and strong communities together* the government outline a number of policing themes for ongoing development. Community engagement is identified as one of those and a new principle – *policing with co-operation* is established. The notion of policing as an activity done *with* rather than *to* the community echoes the sentiments shared with HMIC during this inspection.

2.63 Forces recognise the need to have strategies in place in order to divert young people from becoming engaged in criminality. Many are actively supporting positive interventions early in the offending cycle in order to divert young people from crime and to reduce the risk of re-offending.

2.64 Whilst HMIC found a range of provision and diversionary strategies to curb offending behaviour in young people few were linked specifically to gun crime. Initiatives addressing school exclusions and low self esteem were seen as helpful in reducing the numbers of young people who might become involved in lower level crime thereby being vulnerable to becoming drawn into gun crime. Concern was expressed that gun crime may be establishing itself as a major

form of youth crime. Rap, hip-hop music and popular culture were also blamed by some as contributory factors.

2.65 There was emerging evidence to suggest that such initiatives are crucial to the long-term programme of work and need to be encouraged and sustained. Other initiatives considered during the inspection included:

- the Disarm Trust – an independent national charity set up after the murders of Letisha Shakespeare and Charlene Ellis to support partnership working addressing violent crime
- ex-gang members who had been rehabilitated and now mentoring in their community in both London and Birmingham
- poster and leaflet campaigns targeted at vulnerable groups
- a web-site with advice for young people
- in Leicestershire and Manchester, ARV (Armed Response Vehicle) teams go into schools to discuss issues concerning guns
- in the West Midlands they are in the process of setting up *Gang Line* a phone-in service which is being supported by BT. It will provide advice and guidance and suggest exit strategies for young people who fear for their personal and family's safety



IN BRENT, *NOT ANOTHER DROP* CAMPAIGN WAS LAUNCHED IN FEBRUARY 2001 AIMED AT REDUCING GUN CRIME IN HARLESDEN AND UTILISED A HARD-HITTING POSTER SHOWING A YOUNG BLACK MAN LYING IN A POOL OF BLOOD UNDER THE WORDS 'YOUNG, GIFTED AND DEAD'. THE JOINT INITIATIVE BETWEEN BRENT COUNCIL AND THE METROPOLITAN POLICE WITNESSED A 23% REDUCTION IN GUN CRIME IN THE AREA.

2.66 In addressing the needs of some of the hardest to reach groups, it was felt that conventional support services were not always sufficiently well trained and skilled to manage the conflicting challenges faced by young people, particularly in minority communities.

The question of funding

- 2.67 A recurring theme from community representatives throughout the inspection was the complaint that although funds were available, access to them was regarded as being bureaucratic and prohibitive. Funding streams were frequently ad hoc and for limited duration. This had a direct impact upon the effectiveness and sustainability of projects and the extent to which local agencies would commit to them. It became increasingly apparent that if the support and energy of local communities was to be effectively harnessed in the longer term then simplifying access to funding had to be a priority. Funding issues featured in the recommendations of the *Community Cohesion independent review team report in December 2001*.
- 2.68 HMIC found that funding for initiatives came from a wide range of sources. Central government provided funding for voluntary organisations with a national remit but at local level funding had been devolved to a range of agencies. Generally speaking, local and regional government have been responsible for funding community and voluntary initiatives.
- 2.69 The experience of community groups was that the criteria for funding may change from year to year to reflect changes to policy and priorities. The volume and changing nature of funding arrangements was found to be problematic for such groups. Varying criteria and short time-scales for application were further compounded by the inability to secure permanent staff. Mainstream and statutory funding was not associated with a number of the community projects that HMIC examined.
- 2.70 There is considerable energy and commitment to tap into and the challenge is how to do this more effectively at local level. Whilst recognising the need for financial accountability, it was apparent that access arrangements for funding needed to be more proportionate and better geared to the reality of local communities if their full potential was to be released.

The Role of the Black Police Associations (BPA)

- 2.71 One of the primary objectives of the National BPA and individual force associations has been to bridge the gap between the police and local communities. There are now forty such Associations and thus the potential to make a difference on a significant scale.
- 2.72 Evidence was found in some forces of a significant contribution being made by individual members of the BPA. Whilst its role as a staff association is well known, it became apparent during the inspection that the operational role of the BPA was less clearly understood or utilised albeit having considerable potential.

2.73 For example, in one area, members of the BPA had been brought in as a short-term response but when the immediate problem appeared to have been resolved they were promptly withdrawn. Community members with whom they were establishing a relationship were left unsupported and the officers themselves felt that the contribution they had to make in the longer term was not appreciated by the force.

2.74 HMIC see little value in seeking local BPA assistance to undertake crisis intervention when not intending to employ their expertise in developing the necessary basis for improved public confidence.

2.75 HMIC identified that BPAs were infrequently involved in discussions on how best to develop and use their contacts within the community to improve confidence and generally they did not feel that they were part of a well structured, sustained attempt to address the problem. In the exceptional cases where they had been involved, in connection both with operational policing and community reassurance, their contribution was valued.

2.76 One notable example of what might be achieved is the Metropolitan BPA *Leadership Programme* which targets year 10 students from black and minority ethnic groups from London schools and encourages them to go into their community and influence peers in a positive way.



THE Job FRIDAY FEBRUARY 4 2004 11

Young black people take a stand against crime

YOUNG black people dedicated to helping cut crime in the community launched a new group last month. The official birth of the Young Black Positive Advocates in Central London gave them the opportunity to highlight what they have been doing to address the issues affecting London's youth and to influence other young black people in the fight against crime.

It was also an opportunity to celebrate their recent success in winning the Anne Frank Moral Courage Of The Year Award, for some of their outstanding work in developing a drug awareness magazine *Drug Rap* and a Youth Peace Pledge.

The advocates are graduates of the Met's Black Police Association's Leadership Programme run over the last three years.

Chief Inspector Leroy Logan, Chair of the Met BPA, said: "They organised themselves into a structure with a secretary, chairman and treasurer. They empower themselves with our support and we simply assist them in what they are doing."

Over the last three years the BPA has made a firm commitment to help London's black youth develop forums and leadership programmes to tackle the problems of drugs and violence themselves and to think independently in a safe environment. General Secretary Revus Powell said: "Our philosophy is to 'educate to protect' as the best deterrent against peer pressure which can result in crime."

The advocates started in Westminster following a youth leadership programme run by the Met BPA. The scheme, from which 90 people have graduated, focused on leadership skills, confidence and building self-esteem, communication, developing knowledge of their own rights and creating a positive environment to put forward recommendations.

Issues

The graduates spent six days on a residential course at Hendon where they addressed issues of youth crime in their local community and carried out Stop and Search role-plays with police recruits.

"The whole idea is around peer-to-peer mentoring where young people mentor each other. Also 'stop and search' activities gave them the opportunity to put across their points of view to police on how best to deal with young people, whether they are suspected of crime or not," said Ch Insp Logan.

Confidence: Revus Powell, Leadership graduate Haji Mynsi and Leroy Logan.

THE LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME IS A GROUNDBREAKING SCHEME HOSTED BY A LONDON UNIVERSITY AND WORKING WITH THE POLICE TRAINING SCHOOL AT HENDON. THE CENTRAL AIM OF THE PROGRAMME IS TO DEVELOP GREATER SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND LEADERSHIP CAPACITY WITHIN YOUNG PEOPLE. THEY ARE REFERRED TO AS *YOUNG LEADERS* AND ARE ASKED TO ANALYSE AND PROBLEM SOLVE ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THEIR OWN COMMUNITIES.

- 2.77 Students are shown the realities of gun and drug related crime and discuss the tragic impact that these crimes can have on society. Students are taught their rights as citizens and take part in interactive sessions on Stop and Search and PACE (Police and Criminal Evidence Act (1984) legislation). There is also a one-hour debate with recruits at Hendon Police Training School on issues of community policing and stop and search.
- 2.78 Successful graduates of the scheme have created their own youth group called *Young Black Positive Advocates* (YBPA). They have produced a drugs education magazine *Drug Rap* which has been sent to schools across the country. The group is now asked to comment on issues affecting young people in the CJS.

THE YOUTH PEACE PLEDGE ENCOURAGES YOUNG PEOPLE ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO SIGN-UP TO THE ASPIRATION OF A LIFE OF NON-VIOLENCE, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR ETHNICITY, GENDER OR RELIGION. THE PLEDGE DENOUNCES THE USE OF GUNS, KNIVES, VIOLENCE, HATEFUL LANGUAGE AND DRUG ABUSE. THE PLEDGE WILL BE SENT TO SCHOOLS AND YOUTH CLUBS AND WILL BE ACCOMPANIED BY A RANGE OF LESSON PLANS THAT CAN BE USED BY TEACHERS AND YOUTH WORKERS, PARTICULARLY SUPPORTING CITIZENSHIP LESSONS.



Faith groups

2.79 HMIC found several examples where faith groups had extended their work out from their places of worship and onto the streets. Faith activists have taken part in community initiatives which included anti-gun and violence campaigns.

2.80 For example, the *Haringey Peace Alliance* is working in partnership to deliver crime reduction initiatives. They work in secondary schools and build upon the significant part that parents, teachers and others must play. An encouraging indication of the effect such initiatives can have is the number of *peace pledges* signed up to by those who are serious about reducing problems at street level.

2.81 There was, of course, a recognition that prayer would need to be supplemented with other more practical contributions. Positive action is being taken such as the street vigil held in memory of seven year old Toni-Ann Byfield and by *street pastors* who actively patrol locally and act as mediators between the police and young people.

REVIVAL IS ANOTHER PROACTIVE FAITH INITIATIVE LED BY THE METROPOLITAN AND NOTTINGHAM POLICE BPA. WHILST NOT EXCLUSIVELY SO, RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND FAITH REMAIN SIGNIFICANT IN MANY MINORITY ETHNIC COMMUNITIES AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH PEOPLE OF FAITH CAN ACT AS STANDARD BEARERS WAS APPARENT.

The role of the media

- 2.82 In discussing this issue with focus groups a dilemma became apparent. On the one hand there was a feeling that, for too long, some communities had suffered in silence and media coverage was therefore welcomed because it drew wider attention to their situation.
- 2.83 On the other hand, there was the feeling that the media sometimes exaggerated the incidence and that, as a consequence, there was a danger of communities being stigmatised and stereotyped. Concern was expressed, for example, that some elements of the media had focused on crack cocaine and gun crime, frequently associated with *Yardies*. Whilst it was acknowledged that, in some instances, gun crime is a particular problem for black communities, there was also evidence of gun crime involving many other communities including Turkish and Albanian as well as the majority ethnic population. Gun crime is not a single group or community issue.
- 2.84 Further contradictions were identified when it was observed that the media could promote negative stereotypes whilst at the same time glamorising similar images to sell products of the music and movie industries.
- 2.85 Another area of concern was the tendency of some reports to label the victims of gun crime as being dealers and criminals themselves, thus seeming to diminish the seriousness of the incident. There were instances where 'bad on bad' shootings did occur but to take that as the norm did not help in understanding the complexity of the problem. Such generalisations also worked against developing effective and meaningful long-term solutions.

- 2.86 A number of police forces presented evidence which showed that they had a clearly defined media strategy in dealing with gun crime. This enabled appropriate contributions to be made to the reporting of incidents whilst striving to ensure that particular groups and communities were not stereotyped or further marginalised by the resulting coverage. This further contributed to the development of trust and confidence between police and the local community.
- 2.87 HMIC notes that the *Race Relations Amendment Act (2000)* places a statutory duty on the police service and other authorities to eliminate discrimination and promote good race relations. Well thought out media strategies on gun crime were seen as good examples of mainstreaming this responsibility into operational policing.
- 2.88 Greater Manchester and West Midlands police both have pro-active Public Relations departments with dedicated press liaison officers being identified at an early stage of each incident. The latter has also devised a control strategy with a force lead on gun crime to act as a figure head, ensuring consistency of approach and well informed subject knowledge in order to take the pressure away from investigating teams and provide long term ownership.



Summary

- 2.89 The passion and commitment of the local people met during the inspection was palpable. In many of the communities most seriously affected by gun crime, there is a growing reaction against those carrying guns and putting young people and themselves at such great risk. The challenge for all is to harness that energy effectively in order to forge new relationships and partnerships to improve local communities. The police response to gun crime is only part of the solution and cannot address the underlying factors in isolation, it needs the proactive support of communities and other partners.

Chapter 3

THE POLICE RESPONSE

Introduction

- 3.1 On the afternoon of Friday 26 December 2003, Boxing Day, West Yorkshire Traffic Officer Ian Broadhurst was shot and killed in Leeds by a man being questioned about his possession of a stolen car. The officer's companion, PC Neil Roper was also shot and injured whilst a third officer, PC James Banks, had a lucky escape when his personal radio deflected a bullet aimed at him.
- 3.2 Understandably there was an immediate and nation-wide reaction to the apparently pointless killing of an unarmed officer and a renewed debate about whether or not the British police should be routinely armed. Whilst fully appreciating the sentiment behind the impassioned debate, the inspection emphasised that armed officers on the street are only one aspect of the police response to armed criminality, albeit an important one.
- 3.3 On this point, HMIC maintains a view shared with the majority of police officers in that it does not support calls for the general arming of police. The police service has a responsibility to protect the public and a duty of care to staff, particularly those in front-line posts. HMIC is therefore a firm supporter of current proposals to improve the management of armed operations and the equipment and training provided to armed officers.
- 3.4 The findings of this inspection are unambiguous. To tackle the criminal use of firearms effectively and to make our communities safer in the long term requires that the police and other agencies adopt a wider, more comprehensive and better co-ordinated approach. It is the totality of the police response to the presence of guns on the street that is important and, as highlighted in chapter two, at the heart of that response lies the relationship between local police and the community.
- 3.5 Naturally, armed officers are an important element of this activity. Their precise number and deployment requires finely tuned professional judgement. The wider preventive and detection activity depends on the development of trust and public confidence but this will not be achieved without hard and sensitive work in building public confidence in the police and other statutory agencies.



- 3.6 HMIC therefore examined the police response across the whole spectrum of their activity in relation to gun crime with a view to identifying areas of good practice and to provide supporting advice for a more comprehensive police response to the criminal use of firearms. In doing so, it became increasingly apparent that the quality of the police response was founded upon a number of core areas of police activity.

Police Leadership – national level

- 3.7 Considerable experience, hard won by operational police officers, resides in two publications which are available at national level - the *ACPO Manual of Guidance on the Police use of Firearms* and the recently published *Home Office Code of Practice on Police use of Firearms and Less Lethal Weapons* (November 2003).
- 3.8 Both have taken into account the experience gained from well-publicised incidents during which police officers have shot and killed people. Such incidents generate considerable public unease about the deployment of armed officers as well as enormous anguish to the families and officers directly concerned.
- 3.9 One of the requirements that emerged during 2003, of which both ACPO and HMIC were particularly aware, was the need to provide greater clarity as to how the service was addressing issues in relation to firearms at national level.
- 3.10 In the event, the emerging findings of the Inspection were fed into deliberations undertaken jointly with ACPO and the Home Office in the autumn of 2003 which resulted in a ten-point action plan (Appendix C). One outcome was the creation of the *ACPO Strategic Tasking and Co-ordinating Group for the Criminal Use of Firearms*. Meeting for the first time in February 2004, this group is seeking to provide a more effective national strategy within which individual force approaches may be developed.
- 3.11 The UK Threat Assessment produced by NCIS provides an overview of this area of criminality and working in close collaboration with forces, a specific strategic assessment in respect of the criminal use of firearms has now been prepared. This will enable the group to produce a national control strategy and more effectively draw together the activity of law enforcement agencies at this level.
- 3.12 Invaluable support is being provided by the Police Standards Unit through funding additional posts in order to provide dedicated support and analytical capability for the group. These new posts will be housed within NCIS that has itself significantly increased the resources available to tackle the threat presented by the criminal use of firearms at national level.



- 3.13 Another recent and most welcome innovation was the introduction during 2003 of the National Firearms Forensic Intelligence Database (NFFID) by the FSS. This is an important element which will, over time, provide the police service with a much clearer and more comprehensive understanding of the problems confronting us as well as providing invaluable intelligence on the use of firearms in this country.
- 3.14 HMIC wholeheartedly welcomes and endorses these developments which are timely and obviate the need for a specific recommendation on this point.
- 3.15 The inspection identified the need for greater consistency of armed response throughout the country especially with regard to cross border operations. Individual forces and the National Crime Squad are often engaged in managing incidents where suspects cross force boundaries. Indeed NCS will increasingly be called upon for assistance as a result of international obligations such as those resulting from the Shengen Agreement.
- 3.16 The situation has been exacerbated by recent developments in relation to armed officers deployed on counter terrorist operations. These are often undertaken at short notice and can rapidly cross force boundaries. A similar issue arises in connection with introduction of *sky marshals*.
- 3.17 ACPO has sought legal advice as to the responsibility of individual chief officers in connection with such operations. This would appear to be an ideal opportunity to provide all forces with clarity as to how such operations might be better co-ordinated in the future.



Recommendation 3:

That within four months of receiving the legal advice, ACPO (Police use of Firearms) provide all forces with revised guidelines in connection with the full range of cross border operations.

Leadership – within forces

- 3.18 Whilst developments at national level are to be welcomed, on a day to day basis it is activity within individual forces which provides the immediate response to the threats presented by the criminal use of firearms.
- 3.19 The importance of clear, concise leadership at all levels was a consistent feature throughout this inspection. It was apparent that the most effective overall police response was achieved where the correct balance was reached between long term harm reduction strategies and a sound tactical response to incidents on the ground.
- 3.20 The former allowed police to be alerted to and pre-empt emerging problems. The benefits achieved included some excellent community intelligence, really effective partnership working with both the community and other agencies and a genuine reduction in the fear of crime.
- 3.21 The latter focused very much upon good quality command and control practices, well-informed decision making and confident, well trained and well equipped officers on the ground.
- 3.22 Neither can be achieved without clarity of leadership and good risk management at three specific levels:
- Strategic level** – by chief officers and BCU commanders
 - Operational level** – by control room staff and incident commanders
 - Tactical level** – by officers on the ground
- 3.23 As evidenced in recent surveys, the majority of operational officers do not advocate the general arming of the police and this is a view supported by HMIC. If, however, officers are going to be asked to continue patrolling the streets unarmed, they must have confidence that the leadership supporting them at all levels has an unambiguous grasp of the issues surrounding the criminal use of firearms and a clear appreciation of how the associated risks are to be managed.

3.24 The inspection identified notable good practice but also areas where more could be achieved.

Leadership – Strategic

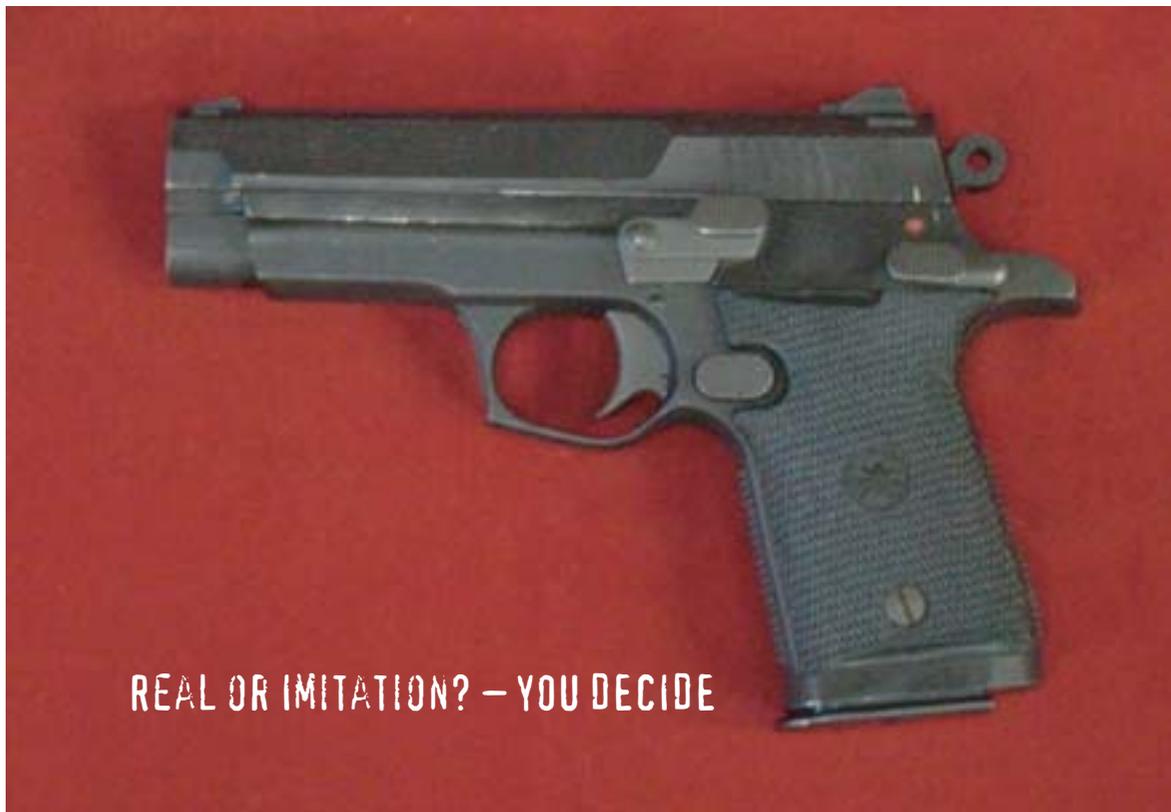
3.25 It is a basic requirement of the Code of Practice that each force has a nominated senior officer, of at least Assistant Chief Constable (ACC) rank, responsible for operational policy and practice in respect of weapons requiring special authorisation, which includes firearms and less lethal options.

3.26 In terms of practical leadership at strategic level, the ideal that emerged during the Inspection was one where a clear strategic framework was provided by:

- a force strategic assessment of the criminal use of firearms based upon accurate data regarding firearms incidents and an up-to-date and comprehensive analysis of criminal activity involving firearms
- a clearly articulated force control strategy subject to periodic but regular review and update
- a well thought-out strategy for harm reduction at community level supported by the effective use of IAGs
- well defined policies and procedures with an emphasis on providing support to operational officers responding to difficult and often volatile incidents

3.27 The success and effectiveness of this strategy depends to a large degree upon the vision and approach of the BCU commander. During the inspection it was clear that whilst the higher level strategy was important, to have real effect it needed to be aligned with and supported by good proactive policing at community level. Without this alignment, the effectiveness of both was equally diminished. The detail varied from place to place. Inevitably, in forces that were dealing with a significant gun crime problem the local harm reduction activity was very much focused on achieving meaningful harmony between strategic intention and effective community involvement.





- 3.28 The Metropolitan Police Operation Trident is a notable example of this approach. The increasing expertise and sophistication with which it conducts its investigations is achieving success not only in terms of arrests, prosecutions and preventing shootings but also in the high regard members of local communities have for this team. HMIC observed similar operations in other forces including Greater Manchester, Avon and Somerset, West Midlands and Nottingham.
- 3.29 Initiatives such as these and other police activities involving intelligence, prevention and enforcement were present in varying degrees across the service and provide opportunities to share ideas and good practice. Inevitably these may be more appropriate to some forces than others as no one solution will encompass the full range of local variables. What did appear absent to HMIC, however, was any standardised assessment framework to assist in measuring how both forces and BCUs are dealing with gun crime issues.

Recommendation 4:

That by December 2004, ACPO Strategic Tasking and Co-ordinating Group for the Criminal Use of Firearms develops a suitable performance assessment framework to measure achievements against gun crime at force and BCU level.

3.30 Whilst Derbyshire Constabulary does not experience the same levels of gun crime witnessed elsewhere, during a visit there HMIC was impressed by the establishment of a small unit with a remit closely to monitor intelligence particularly relating to Class A drug markets and other activities that may be pre-cursors to increased gun crime.

3.31 The inspection also identified the importance of developing a well informed and comprehensive understanding of the particular dynamics of the possession and use of firearms in the local community. This can only be achieved if championed by leaders at BCU level. Effective solutions were invariably founded upon local communities and the circumstances differ even within the same force area. There is no one solution that is applicable everywhere albeit the ingredients of the solution may be similar.



The more successful BCUs had a number of features in common:

- a genuine commitment to developing strong relationships with local communities. With vulnerable groups, this often involved engaging with members of the community who would not normally seek to be actively working in partnership with the police
- using the full range of skills and contacts available within the BCU to good effect, this included a strong local beat officer culture and the imaginative and sustained use of representatives from the Black Police Officers' Association
- strong relationships with other agencies, both statutory and voluntary, which frequently involved joint initiatives
- meaningful joint activity to engage young people at high risk of becoming involved in anti-social behaviour and low level crime in order to divert them from becoming ensnared in more serious criminal activity. Classically, it is these young people who are the recruiting grounds for local gangs and/or drug dealers. Faith groups were frequently playing an important role in this area
- Imaginative use of the media and other methods of communication in order to keep local communities informed of police activity

Leadership – Operational

Initial reporting:

3.32 The skill and expertise of initial call takers and dispatchers when responding to calls involving guns is critical. In order to make an informed decision as to how to respond to a call appropriately the receiver must obtain as much information as possible in order to:

- **make an informed decision as to whether they can deal with the matter or need to bring it to the attention of the identified initial silver firearms commander**
- **provide sufficient information for the initial silver commander to be able to make decisions in accordance with the guidance contained within the ACPO manual on the police use of firearms**
- **provide sufficient detail to be of practical assistance to those officers providing the initial attendance at the scene of a reported spontaneous incident**

WITHIN WEST MERCIA CONTROL ROOM, THE INSPECTION TEAM WERE IMPRESSED BY THE DROP DOWN MENU AVAILABLE TO CALL TAKERS. THIS GREATLY ASSISTS THEM IN GATHERING AS MUCH INFORMATION AS IS POSSIBLE WHICH WOULD BE OF VALUE TO THE ARV CREW, FIREARMS COMMANDER AND TACTICAL ADVISOR IN THE EARLY STAGES OF A SPONTANEOUS FIREARMS INCIDENT.

3.33 To be really effective in dealing with such incidents, call handlers need to have a sound appreciation of the operational processes that follow whether or not armed officers are to be deployed. In a number of forces, HMIC observed the good practice of firearms trainers providing briefings to control room staff.

3.34 Some concern was expressed by staff who felt under pressure to meet call handling targets. It was suggested that this might limit their ability to obtain detailed information in relation to incidents and chief constables need to be mindful of striking an appropriate balance when monitoring call handling performance.

- 3.35 Where spontaneous or pre-planned firearms incidents are being managed the knowledge, experience and training of individuals undertaking the roles of gold, silver and bronze command are critical in ensuring a competent, professional response.
- 3.36 The command of incidents which merit the deployment of armed officers and the actions taken by those in receipt of the initial information upon which critical decisions are made must be of the highest order. In many forces, the initial response to armed incidents is the responsibility of the duty inspector within the force control room.
- 3.37 Consequently, HMIC considers that it is essential for individuals called upon to perform such a role to be appropriately trained and fully conversant with the requirements of the ACPO firearms manual and the Home Office Code of Practice prior to undertaking the role operationally.

Incident commanders

- 3.38 Similarly, HMIC considers it essential for all officers who undertake the role of gold, silver and bronze firearms commander to have satisfactorily completed the modules relevant to this role in accordance with the national police firearms training curriculum.
- 3.39 More and more forces are adopting a *firearms cadre* approach whereby fewer senior officers are identified to perform these command roles thus ensuring that those responsible are up to date with their knowledge and experience and consistent in their approach. The size of cadre should be determined by an informed assessment of the number of operations undertaken annually by the force and the need for resilience.
- 3.40 The benefits of the cadre system include being able to provide more intensive training and to develop further expertise through command officers being used operationally on a more regular basis. This approach also allows cadre members to remain up to date with the range of tactical options and capabilities afforded by AFO's and to develop good working relationships with tactical advisors. Another potential benefit is that a cadre of silver commanders should reduce abstractions from other senior management functions.





WEST MERCIA CONSTABULARY HAS A *SILVER CAR* ON DUTY DURING PEAK TIMES OF PREDICTED DEMAND STAFFED BY A DEDICATED FIREARMS SILVER COMMANDER. THEIR ROLE IS SPECIFICALLY TO RESPOND TO AND TAKE COMMAND OF ANY INCIDENT WHICH MIGHT MERIT THE DEPLOYMENT OF ARMED OFFICERS.

Leadership – Tactical

- 3.41 The risk and threat assessments referred to earlier will inform the firearm strategy and policy within the force in respect of attendance at incidents and potential scenes of crime.
- 3.42 The initial call assessment and response were highlighted as critical factors in every force visited. Officers providing the initial response are expected to consider the safety of people in the area, preserve the scene and obtain as much information as possible from witnesses, some of whom will be reluctant ones.

- 3.43 Anecdotal evidence was presented where unarmed officers felt that they were inappropriately sent to incidents which merited armed response whilst armed officers were sent to a rendezvous point away from the scene. On occasions plain clothes officers in unmarked but identifiable CID (Criminal Investigation Department) vehicles were tasked to drive past the scene of the incident to conduct a risk assessment, a potentially dangerous role for unarmed and untrained officers to undertake.
- 3.44 During interviews with patrol officers, it became apparent the depth of knowledge in respect of armed incidents by unarmed officers varied greatly. Sound and relevant advice on personal safety is available in the ACPO guidance document *Staying Alive*. A significant majority of the general patrol officers were either unaware of this package or had forgotten its content. Clearly a renewed awareness of issues concerning personal safety together with an understanding of some of the requirements for armed officers attending incidents are essential for response personnel.
- 3.45 HMIC is of the opinion that there would be benefit in ensuring that the ACPO Guidance is made more readily available to all officers in order to ensure that forces meet their duty of care commitments. A request has been made to ACPO (Police use of Firearms) to that effect.
- 3.46 Given the initial uncertainties in relation to potential firearms incidents, however, there may well be occasions when a cautious reconnaissance by an ARV may be undertaken without undue risk. HMIC noted that a number of forces, including GMP and North Wales, had adopted the term *investigative assessment*.
- 3.47 On other occasions, authorisation has been given to allow covertly armed AFOs to undertake discreet operations in order to confirm a situation or identify potential suspects in a public place. Such action accords with guidance contained within the ACPO manual at Chapter 5 paragraphs 8.4 to 9.14
- 3.48 HMIC had not previously encountered the term *investigative assessment*, and it does not currently feature in the ACPO manual of guidance on the police use of firearms. Such inclusion may assist in ensuring a corporate approach and understanding by the service of what is meant by the term.



Recommendation 5:

That by December 2004, ACPO (Police use of Firearms) gives consideration to defining, adopting and including the term *Investigative Assessment* within the ACPO manual of Guidance on the police use of firearms

Authorised Firearms Officers – numbers

3.49 HMIC is aware of the concerns voiced by the Police Federation at the reduction in numbers of AFOs since 1993, a period during which the number of recorded armed deployments and armed crime have increased significantly. HMIC believes that there are two factors underpinning these changes:

- variations in recording practices relating to armed operations
- the increasing use of full time, specialised armed units

3.50 The figures contained in the following table and the graphs illustrate the very low number of incidents when officers are required to discharge their weapons by comparison to the number of incidents to which they are deployed.

Figure 9 STATISTICS ON POLICE USE OF FIREARMS IN ENGLAND AND WALES				
England and Wales	No of ops in which Firearms were authorised	No of authorised firearms officers	No of firearms incidents where officers discharged firearms at individuals	No of shots discharged by armed officers
1998/99	11,005	6,411	7	13
1999/00	10,915	6,262	7	10
2000/01	11,109	6,064	21	23
2001/02	13,991	5,776	11	18
2002/03	14,827	5,763	10	37

Figure 10 NUMBER OF OPERATIONS/NUMBER AFO

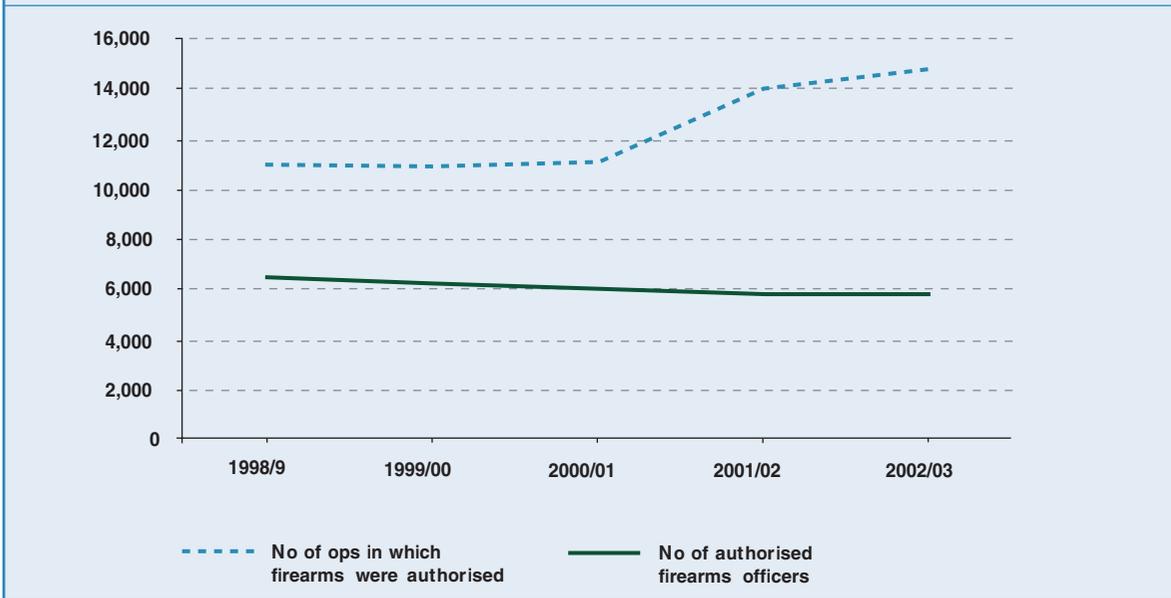
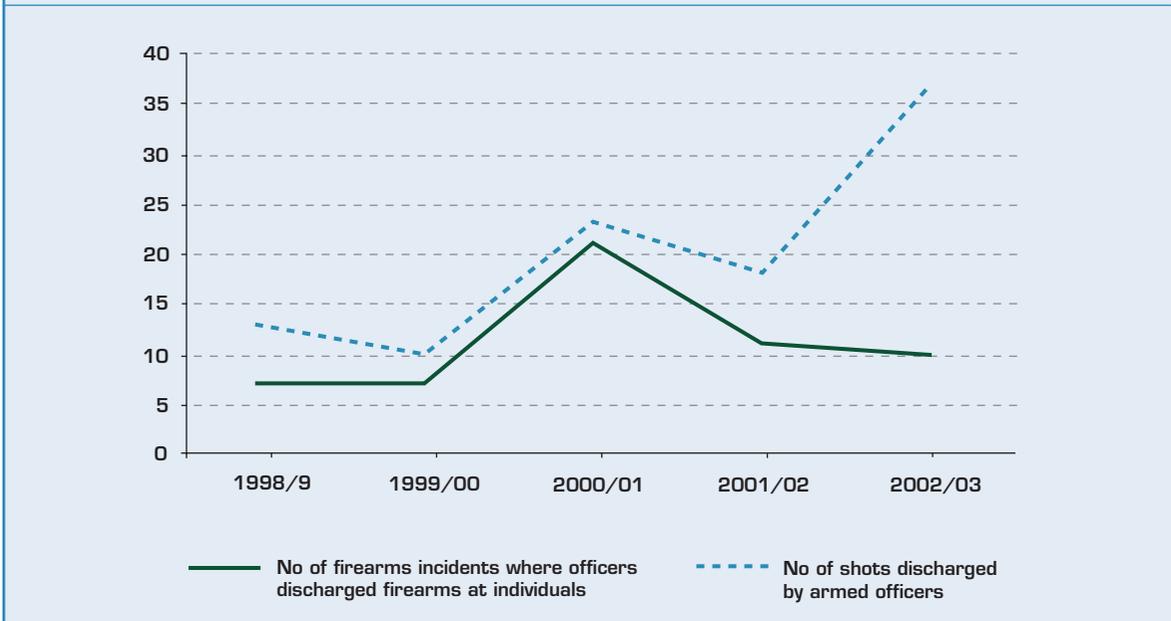


Figure 11 NUMBER OF INCIDENTS/SHOTS DISCHARGED



Source: Home Office



- 3.51 Insofar as the number of armed operations is concerned, evidence was found of widespread variations in recording practices between forces. For example, in some forces, every deployment of armed officers is counted as a separate incident. Where a number of officers are deployed in successive shifts over a period of time, this can significantly distort the overall statistical returns. If forces are uncertain as to how many incidents they have to manage, then it will be difficult to assess how many armed resources are needed to meet the demand and comparisons between forces will be problematic.
- 3.52 A more particular reason for the decline would appear to be the changes that have taken place within forces on how armed officers are managed. For many years, AFOs were retained as part of the routine operational strength across the force and drawn together for particular operations.
- 3.53 The trend since the early 1990s has been towards the deployment of Armed Response Vehicles for two reasons. Drawing officers away from their routine duties on BCU was increasingly disruptive both for the officers and for BCU managers. Of equal importance was the fact that having to call officers in from other duties frequently meant that delays were being experienced in mounting armed operations. Given the rising number of such operations and the need to exert tactical control from an early stage such delays were increasingly hard to justify.
- 3.54 Forces have moved towards forming full time units which provide officers both to crew ARVs and to provide full teams to respond to armed incidents as well as undertaking conventional policing duties. Resources can then be better and more predictably managed to meet the demand with fewer officers being firearms trained. HMIC supports any initiative which increases the professionalism and quality of training provided to armed officers. Whether the overall numbers of AFOs are correct is a slightly different issue which requires further consideration.
- 3.55 Co-incidental to this, there is growing evidence that some forces are experiencing difficulty in attracting sufficient numbers of good quality volunteers to undergo firearms training and to achieve a good gender and diversity mix of trained staff. The reasons given for this difficulty were varied.
- 3.56 There were suggestions that many officers, whilst content to undergo firearms training, did not want to become part of permanent firearms units. Others expressed the view that recent high-profile incidents involving armed officers, and the potential consequences that follow armed operations, meant that some officers no longer felt attracted to that area of specialisation.

- 3.57 Research undertaken by the Metropolitan Police Authority indicated that officers were liable to be removed from operational duties for periods of between eight months and four years while incidents were investigated. Whilst some investigations were complex many were not. It is clearly desirable that forces together with the newly established Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) should explore ways of expediting such investigations. There was also a concern expressed that some AFOs felt less well supported by their force than had hitherto been the case.
- 3.58 HMIC noted that Avon and Somerset Constabulary were undertaking research to identify the factors deterring officers from becoming AFO's.
- 3.59 HMIC considers it essential that officers have confidence in the arrangements put in place within forces to manage firearms incidents. The numbers of AFOs and ARVs in relation to the overall demand is an important element of this process and is currently subject to review by all forces.
- 3.60 The Code of Practice published in 2003 requires every force to undertake a threat and risk assessment in relation to the police use of firearms and to achieve compliance by November 2004. Chief officers are required to use these assessments to determine the numbers of officers that need training.
- 3.61 Taken together with information already available to HMIC regarding the numbers of armed officers across forces, this will provide a timely opportunity to review current arrangements in light of the developments described in this report.





REAL OR IMITATION?

Police officers may only have a split second to decide whether a person threatening to use a firearm has a real or imitation gun.

Recommendation 6:

That commencing in December 2004, ACPO (Police use of Firearms) and HMIC jointly undertake a review of the risk and threat assessments completed by forces, as set out in the Code of Practice. The review should include an analysis of whether the numbers of AFOs appear proportionate to the demands being made of them.

3.62 Over the years, the police service has built up a considerable body of tactical and command knowledge and experience to deal with armed incidents which is complemented by comprehensive policy and guidance nationally. Such incidents will always represent a challenge to front line officers and the low level of police shootings that occur in relation to the increasing number of incidents bears testimony to their professionalism and sound judgement.

3.63 In support of armed operations there are a number of other initiatives upon which to build.

Intelligence

3.64 As discussed in chapter one the adoption by forces of the NIM has undoubtedly provided a framework for intelligence management and a system for operational tasking and co-ordinating based on identified priorities.

3.65 NCIS provides a strategic overview of firearms as part of the annual UK Threat assessment, it also provides a firearms tracing service that HMIC was disappointed to learn was not well supported by forces. Some forces were apparently unaware of the service whilst others did not routinely subscribe to it. Whilst the new NFFID submission forms will enable the capture of greater intelligence, clearly some other recovered weapons not submitted for examination will remain outside of the overall intelligence picture.

3.66 The revised ACPO policy on submissions, together with the new Home Office Code of Practice, provide clear guidance as to what is expected of forces. In order fully to exploit the benefits of the system the active support of all forces is required.



Recommendation 7:

That by September 2004 all forces review the use they make of NCIS firearms tracing service in light of revised ACPO guidelines.

3.67 As the focal point for intelligence gathering on serious and organised crime particularly in targeting class A drug trafficking, organised immigration crime and firearms, NCIS has a key role to play in the co-ordination of such intelligence in order to support operational activity. The support to Level 2 policing by NCIS UK division should further exploit the potential for identifying and targeting relevant individuals and groups.

3.68 A number of other agencies including National Crime Squad, Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and the Immigration service hold intelligence relating to people involved in serious and organised crime. HMIC will watch with interest how these organisations and their intelligence systems are rationalised under the auspices of the recently announced Serious Organised Crime Agency. Intelligence will be a cornerstone of the effectiveness of the new agency.

- 3.69 Some forces had forged close working relationships with customs and immigration officers and could evidence a number of successful operations. As HMIC has witnessed in other thematic inspections, these arrangements were particularly effective when agency representatives were co-located.
- 3.70 HMIC was impressed by the work initiated by GMP whereby a number of forces from different parts of the country meet as a 'virtual region', to discuss linked armed criminality. Collectively, they strive to establish productive contacts, identify cross border trends, good practice and opportunities for collaborative working. This approach is designed to reduce the risk of offenders avoiding detection merely by moving from one force area to another.

Forensics

- 3.71 Consequent upon the increase in armed criminality, the FSS has experienced unprecedented growth in demand on services relating to the criminal use of firearms. During the preceding two years there having been a 30% increase year on year. In spite of the fact that ACPO had developed a good practice submissions policy, HMIC found that forces still appear to have disparate policies on submissions. There was evidence of a reluctance to submit weapons for forensic analysis if it was judged that they had no immediate evidential benefits, ignoring the fact that there was an intelligence potential and the possibility that the weapons may have evidential value to other forces.
- 3.72 Similarly, there were incidents recounted of discharged ammunition being recovered where no criminal allegation had been made and, as a consequence, no forensic tests had been undertaken. In some cases they were later found to relate to more serious or connected offences but were no longer suitable for forensic submission.
- 3.73 Uncertainty also existed as to whether it was worthwhile submitting spent cartridge cases for low copy DNA checks. Opinions as to the evidential value of DNA and the relative costs of the submission were mixed. It is clearly desirable that a clearer consensus of opinion be achieved across the service. This is an issue of which ACPO is aware.
- 3.74 On a positive note, most forces now have well established policies for the safe recovery of firearms and ammunition, often using a scenes of crime officer (SOCO) to accompany armed officers in pre-planned operations to recover samples. An AFO will make the weapon safe prior to forensic recovery by a SOCO.

3.75 Avon and Somerset Police provide crime scene management training to firearms supervisors in order to increase their appreciation of what is required.

Forensic – costs

3.76 In UK, the convention is that forces pay for any forensic analysis which is undertaken at their request. This is in contrast to practice in the USA where, in order to encourage full co-operation, forces are not charged for forensic submissions.

3.77 As the number of firearms incidents has increased over time, so a number of forces expressed concern at the steadily increasing cost of forensic submissions. In response to this, in 2003 the Home Office provided ACPO with additional funds to meet the costs of such submissions. This was a welcome relief for some forces albeit not addressing the longer term issues.

Forensic – timeliness

3.78 Timeliness of results from FSS was also raised as an issue as there were occasions when the results were received outside the time scales set by the criminal courts thus causing delays in the prosecution process. The FSS has already recognised the need to increase their capacity in this area and HMIC acknowledges that it takes time to develop additional expertise.

3.79 The FSS maintain open case files in order to make links between cases. Historically this has been done microscopically and manually but can now be done through electronic means, which significantly speeds up the process.

Forensic service providers

3.80 Whilst FSS continues to be the main service provider to forces, they are not the single supplier of forensic support. In seeking good value for money and improved timeliness forces are increasingly considering and sometimes using other providers such as Forensic Alliance and LGC. During this inspection, serious questions were raised as to the extent to which intelligence is lost as a result of data being held separately between different agencies.



3.81 The introduction of IBIS (Integrated Ballistics Intelligence System) has the potential to improve the situation, as will the electronic link between NCIS and NFFID. It is worthy of note that the Northern Ireland laboratory does not currently link to England and Wales and has a stand alone database.

Recommendation 8:

That by December 2004 ACPO (Criminal use of Firearms), jointly with FSS and other providers, explore ways in which forensic services can be organised so as to maximise intelligence opportunities.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE POLICE UTILISE THE SERVICES OF AN EXPERT WITNESS TO EXPEDITE THE IDENTIFICATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF GUNS USED IN NON-FATAL INCIDENTS. THIS EVIDENCE HAS BEEN ACCEPTED BY THE COURTS AND HAS DRAMATICALLY IMPROVED THE TIMELINESS OF ASSESSMENTS FOR USE BOTH AS EVIDENCE AND IN ASSISTING DECISION MAKING IN RELATION TO BAIL APPLICATIONS.

Proactive policing initiatives

3.82 Of necessity, considerable expertise has been developed by a number of forces in tackling gun crime. The inspection team were continually impressed by the skills and dedication brought to bear on the problem at operational level.

3.83 Forces had set up specific policing initiatives to address the problem and many of these have become well known over the last year as a result of meetings and conferences designed to identify and share their experience with others. HMIC welcomes these developments.

3.84 In Avon and Somerset HMIC found that as part of Operation Atrium in addition to police officers there were full time members of staff from Customs and Immigration. The team also had a police firearms tactical advisor. As a full time member of this unit he was aware of the lifestyle of the persons sought

in connection with armed criminality within that force. This assisted in the development of tactics when planning the arrest of suspects and in ensuring that the tactics were appropriate to local conditions.

3.85 GMP, in partnership with the British Security Industry Association (BSIA) have implemented *Operation Hawkeye*. Professionals employed by the BSIA conduct overt monitoring of cash in transit deliveries providing intelligence, which is then shared with the police. On occasions, high profile uniformed patrols are used in order to disrupt cash in transit robberies. This initiative has been very successful and well received by banks, building societies and BSIA. In GMP there has been a 59% reduction in cash in transit robberies. The force recognises that this initiative is, however, resource intensive and needs to be well-targeted using good intelligence.

THE METROPOLITAN POLICE ACHIEVED A 24% REDUCTION IN ARMED ROBBERY DURING THE YEAR ENDING MARCH 2004 WITH SOME NOTABLE SUCCESSES AGAINST ORGANISED GANGS. MPS HAS DEVELOPED A GUN CRIME STRATEGY THAT REFLECTS THE SUCCESS THAT IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO RESPONDING OPERATIONALLY TO THE COMPONENTS OF GUN, INCLUDING:

- SUPPLIERS, SMUGGLERS AND ARMOURERS
- TRANSPORTATION OF FIREARMS AND AMMUNITION
- STORAGE OF WEAPONS
- MEETING PLACES FOR GUN CRIMINALS - I.E. 'SAFE HAVENS'
- COMMUNICATION NETWORKS
- USER SITES - I.E. 'HOTSPOTS'
- ACCOMMODATION
- TACKLING THE MORALE OF FIREARM CRIMINALS AND 'UP AND COMING' ASSOCIATES



- 3.86 In London, each of the four Flying Squad offices deploys a *bank car* during trading hours. This is a vehicle staffed by a detective sergeant, a detective constable, a SOCO and a driver. Following the report of any commercial armed robbery it will deploy immediately to the scene and commence the investigation. The approach is based on the premise that attendance within the *golden hour* enhances the prospect of detection. The Flying Squad investigates all of these offences from attendance at the scene to court appearance and regards this as one of the reasons behind the results they are currently achieving.
- 3.87 A number of forces engage in proactive operations where ARVs are used in conjunction with Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) teams. This enables officers to deal safely and expeditiously with those vehicles showing firearms markers on the Police National Computer (PNC). The ARV crews are under the command of a firearm's silver commander who is located with the armed vehicles engaged in the operation. During these operations, one problem encountered was that of the accuracy and timeliness of PNC records. As highlighted by a number of staff working in force control rooms, a marker on the PNC indicating a vehicle user may have access to firearms has significant impact on decision making and the consequent health and safety for those providing a response.

Recommendation 9:

That by December 2004, ACPO (PNC Policy and Prioritisation Group) review arrangements by which firearms markers are managed.

- 3.88 HMIC was presented with evidence from different forces, but in particular GMP and Avon and Somerset Constabulary, that in response to community fears and following the arrests of armed offenders, high profile deployments with armed and unarmed officers in an area were undertaken. This was intended to demonstrate police concern and to provide reassurance to both the local residents and the unarmed officers. On one occasion, officers taking an arrested suspect from a house were greeted by applause from local people watching events.

Partnership working

- 3.89 Chapter Two considered in some detail issues in relation to the community and highlighted a number of developments that offered the potential for better joint working with the police service. A number of issues were also raised specifically



within the service which shed light upon how partnership working was regarded by police officers currently dealing with gun crime and how things might be improved.

- 3.90 Whilst strong and effective partnerships are widely regarded within the service as being essential to longer term problem solving, partnership working is clearly not an easy option. In some areas, police felt that they were disproportionately responsible for leading the drive to promote partnership work in support of local initiatives. In others, there was a degree of scepticism over the effectiveness of the multi-agency partnerships. This was particularly so when there was the perception that other partners had yet truly to embrace their responsibility, to engage with the process and to make firm commitments to tackle some of the problems within their remit.
- 3.91 Acknowledging that key issues for communities are trust and confidence and that these can only be developed by close working relationships with relevant partner organisations, many forces were putting a good deal of effort into developing such relationships but the results varied.
- 3.92 In the Metropolitan Police, each of the identified hot spot Boroughs has an IAG, members of which will often attend operational briefings. Police and community meetings are announced on local radio and in the press to ensure attendance at grass roots level and additionally leaflets are distributed in the community to explain police action.





3.93 Frustration was evident on all sides if partnership working was seen to consist largely of meetings and short term, poorly funded initiatives. Many people had seen initial good work simply peter out.

3.94 There were some exceptions, however, often where a community could identify with an individual champion who demonstrates leadership qualities by stepping out from behind the desk and meeting people in their own back yard and genuinely making a difference. HMIC acknowledges and applauds these individuals but suggests all forces examine their strategies relating to community consultation and seek to ensure the following criteria are met:

- **Identify – all of the diverse groups and individuals that make up our communities**
- **Engage – at all levels, not just self appointed leaders and in particular with young people and female members who are often significantly under-represented**
- **Sustain – through stability, consistency and long term investment**

3.95 It is only through strong leadership and commitment to community partnerships that the *golden thread* can be maintained which is that vital two-way link between what the community need and a balanced understanding of what the police and other agencies can realistically deliver.

GREATER MANCHESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE BOTH HAVE INITIATIVES WHEREBY OFFICERS FROM THE TACTICAL FIREARMS UNIT VISITED LOCAL SCHOOLS TO DEMONSTRATE THE DANGERS OF CARRYING IMITATION WEAPONS AND PROMOTE AWARENESS OF THE ISSUES AROUND FIREARMS.

3.96 Trident has developed a range of options in order to raise awareness, gain intelligence and publicise achievements being made by the police. A confidential telephone line has also been set up to obtain information. Similar facilities have been established in the West Midlands to offer help to gang members seeking assistance escaping the influence of the gang. Nottinghamshire Police make use of a crime and drugs hotline.



Criminal Justice System

- 3.97 All forces visited were very much aware of the need to improve the way in which the CJS addressed issues in relation to armed criminality. This was necessary both to improve detection rates and to provide better support to victims and witnesses.
- 3.98 West Midlands Police adopt a seamless approach to prosecutions. From the outset of the investigation close liaison takes place with CPS often with a single point of contact to maximise mutual understanding and co-ordination. After charge, this is enforced through dialogue with counsel and close monitoring of court and bail appearances through to the conclusion of the trial. This has proved to be most effective by encouraging ownership of a case and ensuring good witness and victim support throughout the process.
- 3.99 Several Forces have conducted personal briefings to magistrates and judges on the nature and extent of gun crime within their area and provide an updated assessment of the current local picture of gun crime for each trial. This has led to a more consistent and robust approach to bail applications and sentencing that reflects the level of criminality involved.
- 3.100 There was a growing body of opinion amongst officers that those persons acting as unlawful armourers, responsible for the maintenance, conversion or holding of weapons on behalf of those engaged in armed criminality, should be robustly targeted and prosecuted with maximum penalties being sought.
- 3.101 During the course of the thematic inspection, anecdotal evidence was given as to the difficulties experienced by the police as a consequence of Section 51 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, whereby committal files and disclosure are required to be submitted within the time guidelines following charging.
- 3.102 This potentially presents problems with respect to specialist evidence, forensic samples and material provided by the communications industry that, to date has experienced difficulties in meeting the time scales laid down by the court. The policy adopted by some organisations not to provide evidence until after charge can also result in a rush to obtain formal evidence at that stage.
- 3.103 The police experienced frustration at the sometimes ambiguous and vague submissions by the defence following primary disclosure. The view was that such submissions neither meet the spirit of the act nor assist in the fair and swift administration of justice as originally intended. There was a strong consensus that people should be held more strongly to account for such shortcomings.

3.104 There was also a concern at the practice in some forces of not charging suspects until every enquiry has been completed. Potentially, this could mean that individuals who may subsequently be charged with serious offences are at liberty on police bail and thus able to commit further serious offences.

Supportive legislation

3.105 The situation regarding the criminal use of firearms is dynamic and developing at a pace that makes it necessary to maintain an overview of the extent to which legislation provides a sound framework for law enforcement activity. A number of additions to the legislation have already taken place during the course of this inspection such as those contained within the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and the Anti Social Behaviour Act 2003. The additional powers contained within these Acts, together with the robust use of other legislation, provide the police with a range of options to deal with the criminal use of firearms.

3.106 One issue that often featured in interviews with community representatives and officers was the view that the sale and possession of 'anything that resembles a firearm' should be banned. There are obvious difficulties in legislating in this area, particularly given the proliferation and popularity of realistic children's toys and the fact that so many articles can have the appearance of a firearm. A degree of pragmatism is required and HMIC believes that the recent legislative changes will assist in addressing some of these practical issues.

3.107 Readily converted weapons such as Brocock's have now been outlawed and will require a firearm certificate in order to be lawfully possessed. There is also a scheme supported by ACPO, FSS and the Gun Trade Association whereby importers and distributors will be encouraged to submit samples of all future imports of readily convertible weapons. A technical assessment by the FSS will then take place to decide whether or not it poses a threat to public safety. Thereafter, distributors will ensure continued adherence to the standards of the scheme through a system of certification at manufacture with subsequent batch testing.



Summary

- 3.108 The essential role undertaken by police officers in tackling gun crime on the street is acknowledged but one of the key conclusions to emerge from this inspection is that armed officers are not the sole solution to the problem.
- 3.109 Owing to the significant risks presented both to the community and to front line officers by criminals who choose to carry firearms, the police armed response will remain a significant and important part of the equation. If, however, long term solutions are to be achieved then the response of the police service overall must be considered.
- 3.110 An important element of this will be relationships both with the affected community and with partner agencies who also provide services locally. Whilst the inspection revealed that much remains to be done, there was also evidence of some excellent initiatives on the ground and of solid achievement upon which to build. The key challenge remains the speed and extent to which good practice is identified and made more readily available across the service, to the community and to partners.

CONCLUSION

Although representing only a small proportion of recorded crime in England and Wales, there is no doubt that gun crime has been increasing steadily for a number of years. By international comparison, the UK is still a safe country in respect of homicide involving firearms. Nevertheless there are serious concerns amongst the public, police and government over the increasing tendency for some criminals more readily to carry and use guns. The last eighteen months have witnessed a number of fatal shootings including those of women, children and an unarmed police officer. Using guns to commit crimes such as robbery is not a new phenomenon. What is cause for concern is the more recent willingness of some young men to carry guns in order to enhance their image or status or to settle disputes.

Even though the level of gun crime is relatively and comparatively low it has a disproportionate impact on the lives of people affected and on society as a whole. Communities do not want guns on their streets and individuals are prepared to make a stand against current trends. In some areas, however, there remains a lack of trust and confidence in the ability of the CJS to tackle those responsible.

The police play an important role in confronting this challenge but cannot defeat this problem alone. It is crucial that all agencies take responsibility for the contribution they can make in addressing some of the deep seated problems underpinning gun crime. What is required is a more effective partnership approach by engaging with the community and developing strategies for action that are supported by better co-ordination of funding opportunities.

Unless the underlying issues are addressed then society will continue to confront individuals who are prepared to resort to the use of guns and the police and other agencies will have to deal with the consequences.

A testament to the professionalism of the British police service is the very low number of occasions where officers feel it imperative to fire their weapons when compared to the overall number of incidents with which they have to deal. Such incidents are increasing year by year. The deployment of armed police officers is, however, but one element of the service's response to armed criminality albeit an extremely important one.

Leadership at all levels is vital and in dealing with incidents involving guns, the decisions of people at all stages are critical in providing a professional and effective response. Forces that have experience in dealing with higher levels of armed



Conclusion

criminality have generally developed an integrated approach that embraces the investigative, intelligence and community engagement functions under a single co-ordinated command structure.

Significant work is already underway to improve the strategic response of the service to the criminal use of firearms and to make current good practice more widely available. An important element of this is enhancing overall community trust and confidence.

During the inspection, the challenge was best summed up by a mother whose son had been shot and killed when she said: "if by telling my story I can help to prevent someone else's son or daughter from being killed, then I can feel my son's life was not a total waste".

Appendix A

The Inspection Team

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Detective Superintendent Kim Hunter HMIC – Lead Staff Officer

Detective Superintendent John MacDonald HMIC

Inspector Robyn Williams HMIC

Detective Inspector Rich Agar

West Midlands Police

Detective Inspector Gary Currie

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Richard Avis

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Appendix B

Glossary of Terms

ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
AFO	Authorised Firearms Officer
AN GARDA	
SIOCHANA	Police Service of the Republic of Ireland
ANPR	Automatic Number Plate Recognition
APPG	All Party Parliamentary Group
ARV	Armed Response Vehicle
BCU	Basic Command Unit
BPA	Black Police Officers Association
BSIA	British Security Industry Association
CCRU	Cultural and Communities Resource Unit (Metropolitan Police)
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CJS	Criminal Justice System
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service

Definitions (used by NFFID):

Real Gun	A firearm that fires a projectile using a cartridge containing a propellant powder – includes conventional, factory-made guns, also converted and reactivated weapons.
Air Gun	Any firearm that discharges a projectile by means of compressed 'air' (including liquid CO ₂).
De-Activated	Originally a 'real gun' that has subsequently been modified to prevent it from firing.
Gas-gun	A firearm that in its original state is designed to discharge a cartridge that contains a lachrymatory agent (e.g. 'tear-gas').

Blank firer	A weapon that is designed to fire a blank cartridge only and that cannot, without modification, discharge a projectile.
Imitation non-firer	A 'weapon' that resembles a firearm but is incapable of discharging either a projectile with any significant force or a blank cartridge. This category would include toys that might for example discharge a pellet by spring action or fire 'caps'.
Other	Covers a range of weapons, including some firearms such as muzzle loaders, combination guns, nail guns etc.

DNA	Deoxyribonucleic Acid
DS	Detective Sergeant
EU	European Union
FLO	Family Liaison Officer
FSS	Forensic Science Service
HMCE	Her Majesty's Customs and Excise
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
HMIS	Her Majesty's Immigration Service
IAG	Independent Advisory Group
IBIS	Integrated Ballistics Identification System
IPCC	Independent Police Complaints Commission
GMP	Greater Manchester Police
LGC	Laboratory of the Government Chemist (historically)
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NCIS	National Criminal Intelligence Service
NCRS	National Crime Recording Standards



IMPACT OF CHANGES IN COUNTING RULES FOR RECORDED CRIME

Changes in the counting rules for recorded crime on 1 April 1998 affected both the methods of counting and the coverage for recorded crime and had the effect of inflating the number of crimes recorded. For some offence groups – homicide, violence against the person endangering life, robbery, and burglary – there was likely to be little effect on numbers of firearm crimes recorded. However, the changes had more effect on figures for more minor violence and criminal damage. This had a particular impact on the number of air weapon crimes recorded.

Similarly, the implementation of the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) by police forces on 1 April 2002 will have increased the number of crimes recorded. Again, it was not possible to assess accurately the effect of this change on recorded firearm crimes. This change inflated the overall number of violence against the person and criminal damage offences but had less effect on the number of robberies (see figure 3.7 in 'Crime in England and Wales 2002/2003', Home Office Statistical Bulletin 7/03). Many firearm offences are amongst the less serious categories, for example criminal damage involving an airgun, and these types of offences are amongst those most likely to have been affected by the NCRS. However, the more serious crimes were not expected to be as greatly affected by the latest recording changes. Some police forces adopted the principles of the NCRS in advance of its national implementation, and this may have affected figures for 2001/02.

NCS	National Crime Squad
NFFID	National Firearms Forensic Intelligence Database
NIM	National Intelligence Model
PNC	Police National Computer
PSNI	Police Service of Northern Ireland
SIO	Senior Investigating Officer
SLP	Self Loading Pistol
SOCO	Scenes of Crime Officer
VSS	Victim Support Scheme
YBPA	Young Black Positive Advocates

Appendix C

TACKLING THE ILLEGAL POSSESSION AND CRIMINAL USE OF FIREARMS

**ACTION PLAN PREPARED BY THE ASSOCIATION
OF CHIEF POLICE OFFICERS,
HM INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY
AND THE HOME OFFICE**



Introduction

1. Gun crime in England and Wales is continuing to rise and is a source of major public concern. While the figures for firearms offences in 2002/03 showed a much smaller increase (3%) than in 2001/02 (35%), recent events such as the horrific murder of Marian Bates in Nottingham have pointed to the need to examine every possible means of tackling both the supply and use of firearms, and the circumstances which lie behind the increasing propensity of some individuals to carry and use guns.
2. Our laws and controls over the use of firearms are already amongst the toughest anywhere in the world. They will be strengthened still further shortly when the new powers contained in the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 – including the introduction of a mandatory five year sentence for illegal possession of a prohibited firearm – are brought into effect. There have been other successes in the effort to tackle gun crime including the firearms amnesty earlier this year which led to 44,000 firearms being surrendered.
3. Nevertheless it is clear that there is more that can be done. The two previous roundtable meetings have recognised that reducing the level of gun crime is not just about successful police operations against the criminal use of firearms. The response must focus on both gun crime and gun culture, addressing issues to do with the supply and availability of illegal firearms, their movement within communities and amongst criminals and the factors that can influence the perceived desirability, willingness or propensity of some people to illegally own, carry or use a firearm.
4. In addition, the All Party Parliamentary Group on Gun Crime published its report on 5 November. The Government will respond formally to the report in due course but its content and recommendations have helped to inform this paper.
5. Taking account of that report, the broad range of activity being undertaken on gun crime by a number of different agencies and information emerging from the HM Inspectorate of Constabulary thematic inspection on the Criminal use of Firearms, the Association of Chief Police Officers, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and the Home Office have jointly drawn up this action plan as a focus for further activity. The planned actions are focused around the key themes of:
 - improved data collection;
 - intelligence gathering;
 - law enforcement;

- community involvement;
- legislation and powers.

6. Taken together the parties to the action plan believe that the actions set out in the plan will substantially further enhance the ability of all of the agencies concerned to tackle the illegal possession and criminal use of firearms.

Data collection

Action 1:

Improve the quality of data collected on offences involving firearms and the timeliness of its publication.

- 1.1 Accurate and up to date information on the incidence and nature of offences involving firearms is vital to ensuring a proper understanding of the problem, developing an appropriate response and keeping the public informed.
- 1.2 The Home Office and the police service are working together to improve the quality and timeliness of the data on the number and types of offences involving firearms, including the types of firearms used and how (for example whether they were fired or used as a threat), with a particular emphasis on reducing the time taken to collect and collate the data to allow for the earlier and more frequent publication of firearms statistics. Additionally, the data collected will be linked to the assessment process under the Policing Performance Assessment Framework.
- 1.3 The aim is to be able to introduce quarterly data on firearms offences with effect from early 2004.



Intelligence gathering

Action 2:

Undertake a new strategic threat assessment relating to the criminal use of firearms by the end of January 2004 with a complementary threat assessment relating to the supply of firearms by the end of February 2004.

- 2.1 Producing specific firearms threat assessments will help to ensure that the response of those agencies involved in tackling gun crime is more effectively targeted on the nature of the current and developing threat posed by firearms and ammunition. It will enable a more critical examination of the extent to

which the activities of those agencies involved in tackling gun crime are having an impact on the problem. The NCIS is therefore working with the police and all the other agencies who possess data or intelligence relating to the availability, supply, illegal possession and criminal use of firearms and ammunition in order to have assessments on both the use and supply of firearms available by early 2004.

- 2.2 These threat assessments will then be updated on a regular basis to ensure that they remain current. Gathering the intelligence for the threat assessments is likely in itself to result in the identification of further intelligence, leading to better targeting of law enforcement resources on those who supply and use guns.

Action 3:

Maximise the use and contribution of the National Firearms Forensic Intelligence Database and the National Firearms Tracing Service in tackling the criminal use of firearms.

- 3.1 The National Firearms Forensic Intelligence Database, which becomes fully operational on 25 November, allows for information on firearms used in crimes, including bullets, cartridge cases, weapons and weapons components, to be captured, collated and links established between different incidents in different areas. It will also provide an overview of the criminal use of firearms, intelligence on the origins of firearms, the volume and types of firearms in use, including the re-activation of de-activated weapons. It will assist in investigations and detections and in tackling organised crime.
- 3.2 In parallel, the Firearms Tracing Service run by NCIS already provides a central co-ordinating point for forces in the UK and assists with investigations with overseas police forces. The tracing service also helps in preventing the import of imitation firearms which are readily convertible into actual weapons and supports operations in the UK.
- 3.3 Ensuring that all police forces and law enforcement agencies make full use of these powerful databases will significantly enhance their ability to both prevent and detect gun crime and will help to promote public confidence in the ability of the police successfully to tackle this issue. ACPO will actively monitor the use of these databases by police forces and take immediate action where they believe that forces are not making full use of them.

Law enforcement

Action 4:

Establish a new **Strategic Criminal Use of Firearms Group**, bringing together the police and other law enforcement agencies.

- 4.1 While individual police forces and agencies have adopted individual strategies to control gun crime there has until now been no single forum which has brought together all the key agencies involved in order to share knowledge and coordinate operational planning. Accordingly, ACPO, working with the other relevant agencies and the Home Office, has decided to establish such a forum with immediate effect.
- 4.2 This new multi-agency group will ensure improved sharing and coordination of intelligence between police forces and between the police and other enforcement and intelligence agencies: the NCIS, the National Crime Squad, HM Customs and Excise, the Immigration Service and the Intelligence Agencies. It will support enforcement activities against those involved in the criminal use of firearms and ensure links to other work to tackle organised crime.
- 4.3 Building on the strategic threat assessment which will inform the work of the Group, it will make use of the National Intelligence Model framework to enable joint tasking across agency boundaries so as to achieve a more integrated response and to ensure that action against crime using firearms is properly linked to the fight against organised crime.



Action 5:

A new strategy developed by the **Strategic Criminal Use of Firearms Group** for implementation at the tactical level.

- 5.1 An immediate task for the new Group will be to develop, by March 2004, a new strategy for tackling gun crime at force level and below based on information from the strategic threat assessments, referred to in Action Point 2.
- 5.2 The strategy will address the three key strands of preventing the criminal use of firearms, using and sharing intelligence and effective enforcement activity. Each of these three areas will have an ACPO lead officer. The aim will be to ensure better and more targeted operations at both local and force level against those supplying and using firearms.

Community involvement

Action 6:

Further steps will be taken to encourage community involvement in tackling gun crime, with the spreading of good practice within the police service and other agencies.

- 6.1 Experience has shown that community involvement is crucial in reducing gun crime by helping to tackle the broader factors that lead some young people to regard possession or use of firearms as acceptable. The wider community must be involved, working closely with statutory and voluntary sector agencies, in a concerted effort to address gun culture wherever it exists. The Home Office, in partnership with other involved organisations, will be holding a major conference in January 2004 to help increase understanding of these issues, to identify what works in tackling gun culture and to share good practice. Invitations will be extended not only to a wide range of local and community organisations, but to a significant number of young people also to ensure that they have an opportunity to contribute.
- 6.2 In addition, Independent Advisory Groups, drawing on representation from the local community, have been set up in a number of police force areas to support police operations against gun crime. Where they work well, such Groups can have very significant benefits in creating reassurance within the local community and providing community support for police operations. Good practice will be issued to forces on establishing effective IAGs. This work will be led by ACPO.

Action 7:

Provide police forces with a good practice guide on witness protection issues based on the experience gained by some police forces.

- 7.1 Witness intimidation is a major issue to be addressed when investigating and prosecuting firearm offences as well as other serious crimes. A number of police forces which have had to deal with this problem now have considerable experience of how best to do so and how to get best value from the considerable resources which can be required for this purpose.
- 7.2 This knowledge has not, however, always been widely shared. Accordingly, ACPO have decided to produce a guide which will build on the experience of those forces that have current experience of witness support and protection particularly in connection with gun crime. It will be set within the context of the broader government programmes on tackling witness intimidation and encouraging community involvement in combating crime. The guide will be available by the end of January 2004.

Legislation and powers

Action 8:

Provide guidance for the police on their powers in relation to possession and use of firearms, replicas and readily convertible imitations, to ensure that these powers are used to best maximum effect.

- 8.1 There is already a wide range of powers in place which can be used to tackle gun crime, both in terms of the supply of guns and ammunition and their unlawful use. It is clear, however, that these powers are not always understood or used to their full extent at local level. ACPO will therefore be providing all police forces early in 2004 with an accessible, operational guide on their existing powers, focusing on the needs of officers facing these issues on the streets.
- 8.2 In addition, the Home Office is to carry out a review of existing firearms legislation both to identify areas where tougher controls may be needed and to seek to simplify what is currently a complex range of provision. This will lead to publication of a consultation paper in January 2004. Among other things, the review will cover the adequacy of controls on ammunition and on constituent parts of guns and the nature and availability of imitation or replica guns. Depending on the results of the consultation further legislation may be introduced.



Action 9:

Issue guidance and advice to police forces and others on the relevant changes to legislation arising from the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003.

- 9.1 The Criminal Justice Act 2003 and the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 will introduce major new controls on gun crime including the introduction of a minimum five year sentence for unlawful possession of a firearm and the banning of certain replica weapons which can be converted into actual guns. It is clearly essential that these new powers are widely understood by police forces and law enforcement agencies and fully deployed as part of the overall strategy for controlling gun crime.
- 9.2 The Home Office is working towards bringing these provisions into effect in January 2004 and, to support their introduction, it will, working with ACPO, provide guidance and advice on best practice for police forces on all of the relevant changes to legislation that will follow from the passage of the two Acts. This will help to ensure that forces are able to make full use of these

important new powers as and where appropriate. The Home Office will also ensure that Local Criminal Justice Boards are made fully aware of this new legislation.

Action 10:

Examine the need to strengthen the controls on the use of the internet and mail order to reduce the use of these methods as a means of illegally obtaining firearms or parts.

- 10.1 There is increasing concern that the internet is being used as a means of illegally importing or trading in firearms. Where, in other contexts, there is evidence of internet sites being used for illegal purposes, UK Internet Service Providers have shown themselves ready to cooperate in closing down these sites. This does not, however, necessarily provide an adequate safeguard against the use of the internet for such purposes. Accordingly, the Home Office will look specifically at whether there is a need for further legal controls in relation to the supply of firearms, parts or ammunition. If so, proposals for such controls will be brought forward early in 2004.
- 10.2 In addition, the Home Office, ACPO, HMIC and HM Customs and Excise will review with post and parcel delivery service providers, including the Post Office, the extent to which there is a need for further or strengthened controls to prevent the unlawful delivery by courier or through the post of firearms, parts or ammunition.

November 2003