HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
South of England Region

Follow-up Visit to Southampton OCU
Hampshire Constabulary

OCU Inspection Conducted – February 2007

Follow-up Visit Conducted – February 2008

1.   Introduction

The original inspection of Southampton OCU took place in February 2007 following poor comparative performance on priority crime. As part of the inspection process the OCU had undertaken a full self assessment and had themselves identified a number of systems and processes requiring improvement. The inspection report contained eight recommendations and highlighted the key areas for improvement. It also noted examples of good practice and strong leadership. The senior management team (SMT) have since been working hard to implement the action plans developed in response to the report. The revisit provided the opportunity for HMIC to assess progress to date and review performance issues.

2.   Methodology

The Inspection team held one to one interviews with members of the SMT, spoke informally to key members of staff and visited the intelligence, crime management and custody units. They undertook focus groups of inspectors, sergeants and constables and did an analysis of performance using IQuanta data. The inspection team received the full and very helpful support of the SMT and staff were friendly, open and frank. Comprehensive pre-read material was provided by the OCU.

3.   Summary

Staff at all levels have worked hard to implement the action plans, driven and overseen by an SMT determined to re-establish Southampton as a top performer. There has been a significant performance uplift with the OCU recording 1119 less crimes in the past year and detecting 1193 more crimes. Of particular note is performance on burglary detection. Whilst there has been an increase in recorded offences, Southampton has the lowest level of burglary dwelling in their MSBCU family and, at 31.88%, the highest detection rate. This improved performance is reflected in better customer satisfaction levels.

Contributing to this improved performance is a more robust performance culture, helped by the availability of data down to team and individual level, a training programme for supervisors which has helped clarify expectations and staff being held more to account through regular performance meetings.

At the time of the original inspection the Force was cautiously implementing neighbourhood policing. This programme has gained momentum and staff now have much more awareness of what neighbourhood policing aims to achieve.

The OCU continues to be hampered by a lack of cell capacity and has shift patterns which whilst popular, may not provide the best fit to demand in all areas of business.

There remain comparatively high levels of violent crime with accompanying average detection rates. The violent crime strategy needs to be reviewed, good practice from elsewhere explored and an action plan agreed.

4.   Performance
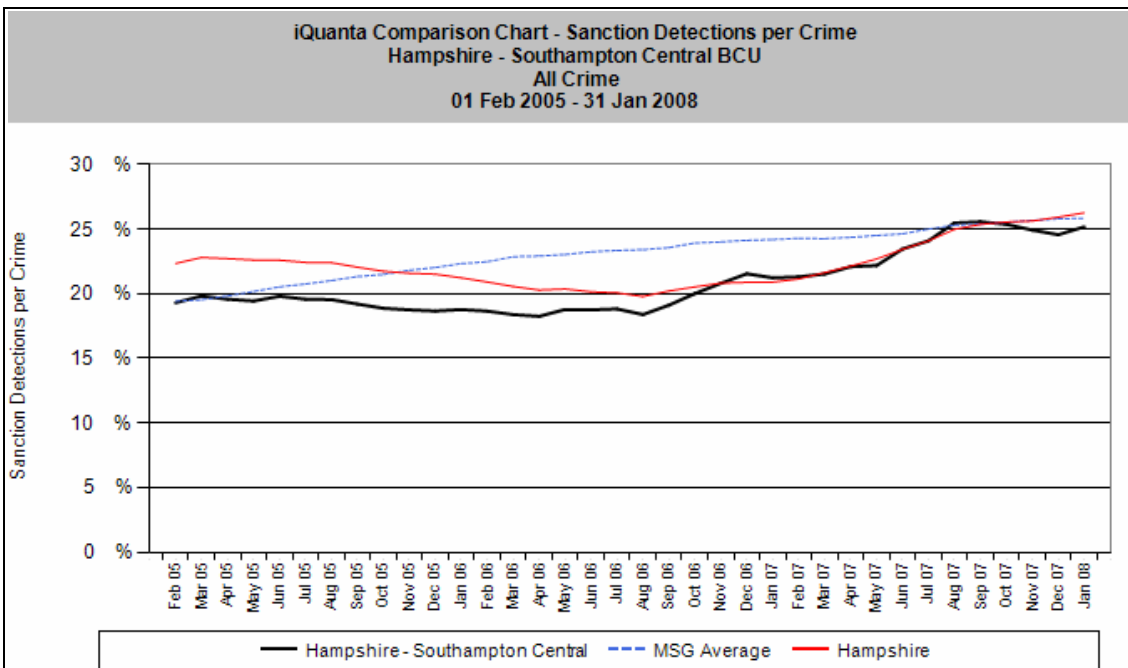
Southampton OCU
Crime and Sanction Detection Performance

Crime Levels and Sanc7tion Detections	Feb to January 2007	February 2007 to January 2008	% Change
Total recorded crime	37,363	36,244	**-2.99%**
Number of crimes with a sanction detection	7,929	9,122	**15.05%**
% Crimes with a sanction detection	21.22%	25.17%	**3.95 %Pts**
Total recorded crime per 1,000 population	163.42	158.52	**-2.99%**
Total residential burglary	883	988	**11.89%**
Number of residential burglaries with a sanction detection	134	315	**135.07%**
% Residential burglaries with a sanction detection	15.18%	31.88%	**16.71 %Pts**
Total residential burglaries per 1,000 households	9.41	10.53	**11.89%**
Total vehicle crime	4,673	4,086	**-12.56%**
Number of vehicle crimes with a sanction detection	235	263	**11.91%**
% Vehicle crimes with a sanction detection	5.03%	6.44%	**1.41 %Pts**
Total vehicle crime per 1,000 population	20.44	17.87	**-12.56%**
Total violent crime	9,512	9,641	**1.36%**
Number of violent crimes with a sanction detection	3,812	4,078	**6.98%**
% Violent crimes with a sanction detection	40.08%	42.30%	**2.22 %Pts**
Total violent crime per 1,000 population	41.60	42.17	**1.36%**
Total robbery	465	348	**-25.16%**
Number of robberies with a sanction detection	108	98	**-9.26%**
% Robberies with a sanction detection	23.23%	28.16%	**4.94 %Pts**
Total robbery per 1,000 population	2.03	1.52	**-25.16%**

Total Crime

For the year February 2007 to January 2008 Southampton has had a **2.99% decrease** in the number of recorded crimes when compared to the previous year. Southampton is currently **just above** the MSBCU average. Projections based on the last 3 and 12 months' data show the level of crime **decreasing slightly**; projection of 6 months' data shows crime **remaining at the current level**.
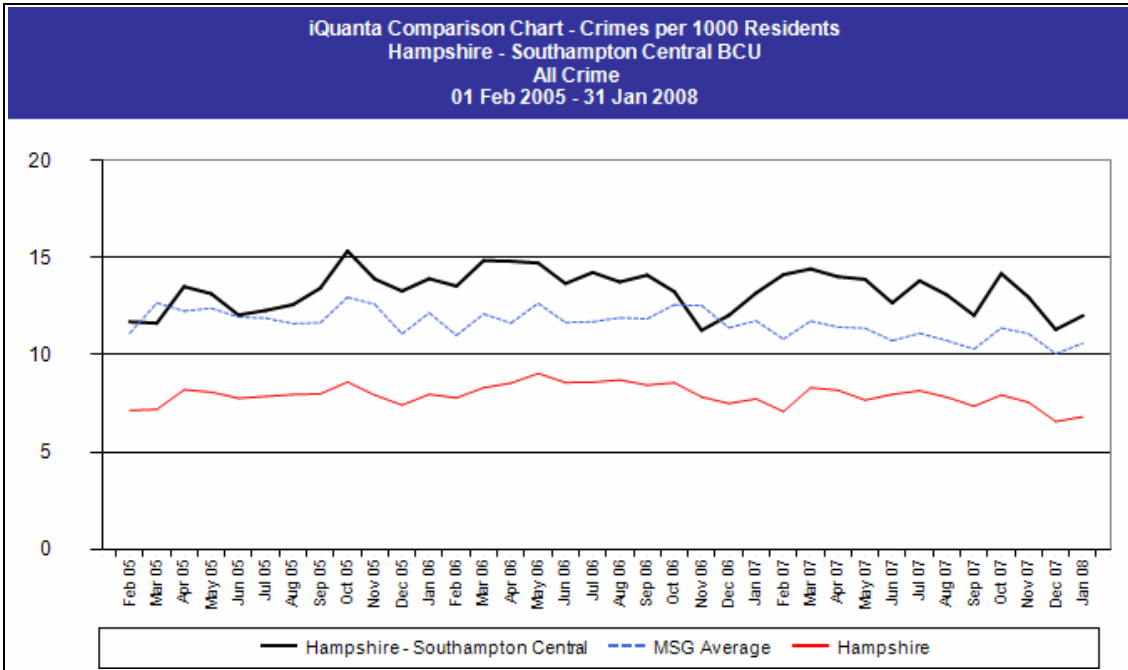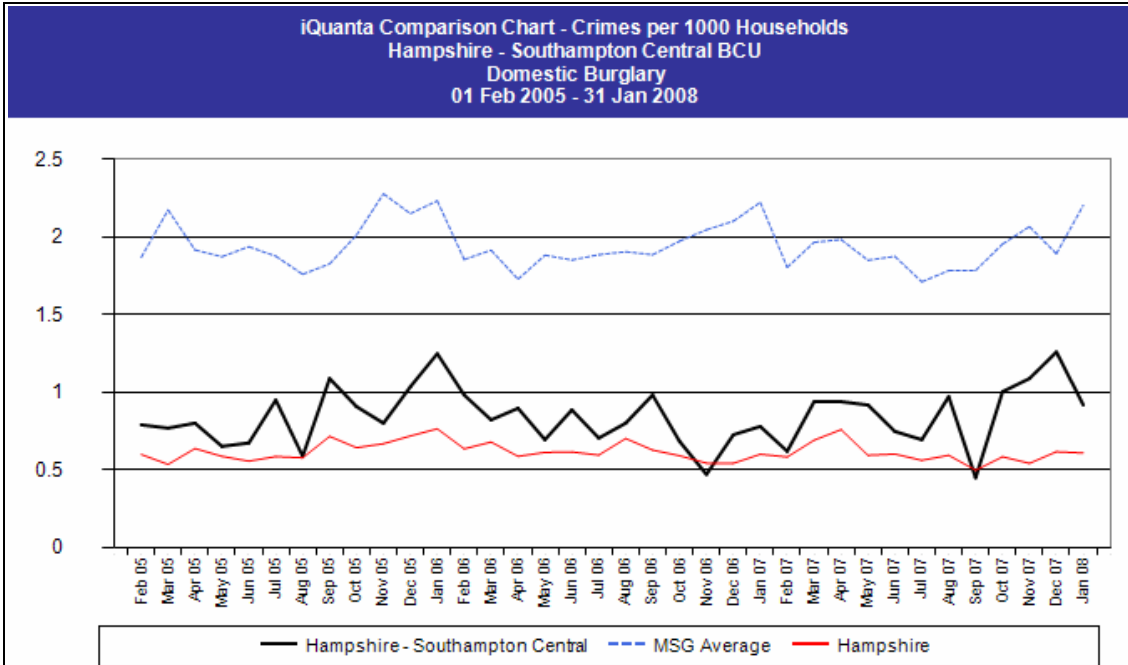

The sanction detection rate for the year February 2007 to January 2008 is **25.17%**, an **increase of 3.95%points** on the previous year. Currently Southampton is **in line with** the MSBCU average. Projections based on the last 3 and 6 months' data show the sanction detection rate **decreasing slightly**; 12 months' data show the sanction detection rate **increasing**.
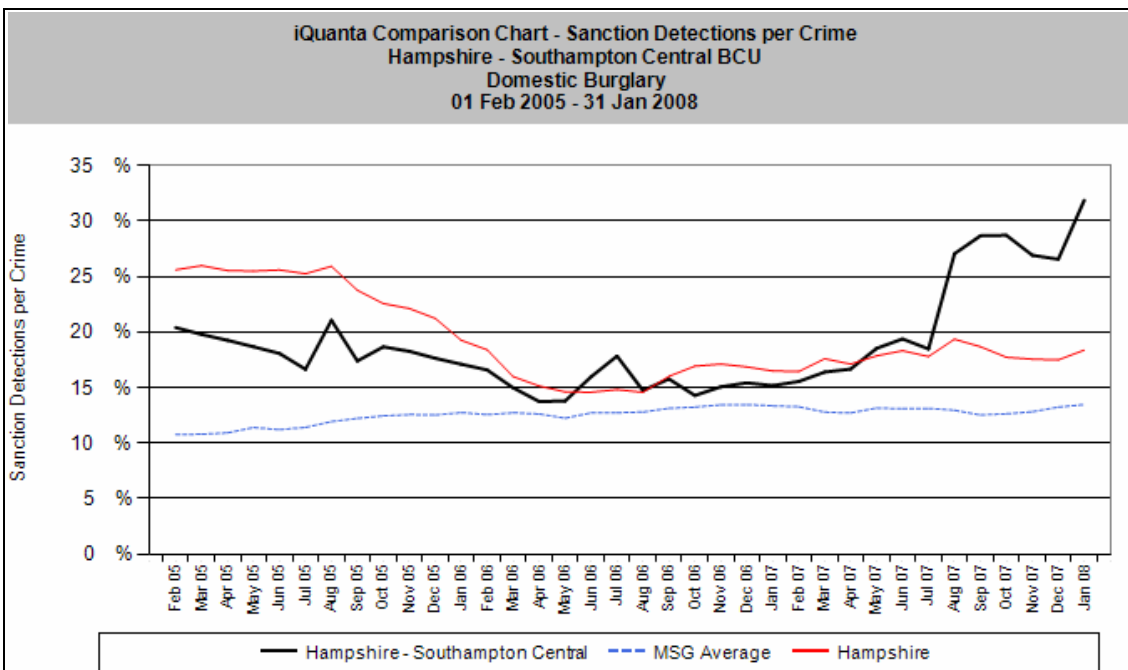
Domestic Burglary

For the year February 2007 to January 2008 Southampton has had an **11.89% increase** in the number of domestic burglaries recorded when compared to the previous year. However, Southampton is currently **below** the MSBCU average, and is the **best in its group**. All projections show the number of burglaries **increasing**.
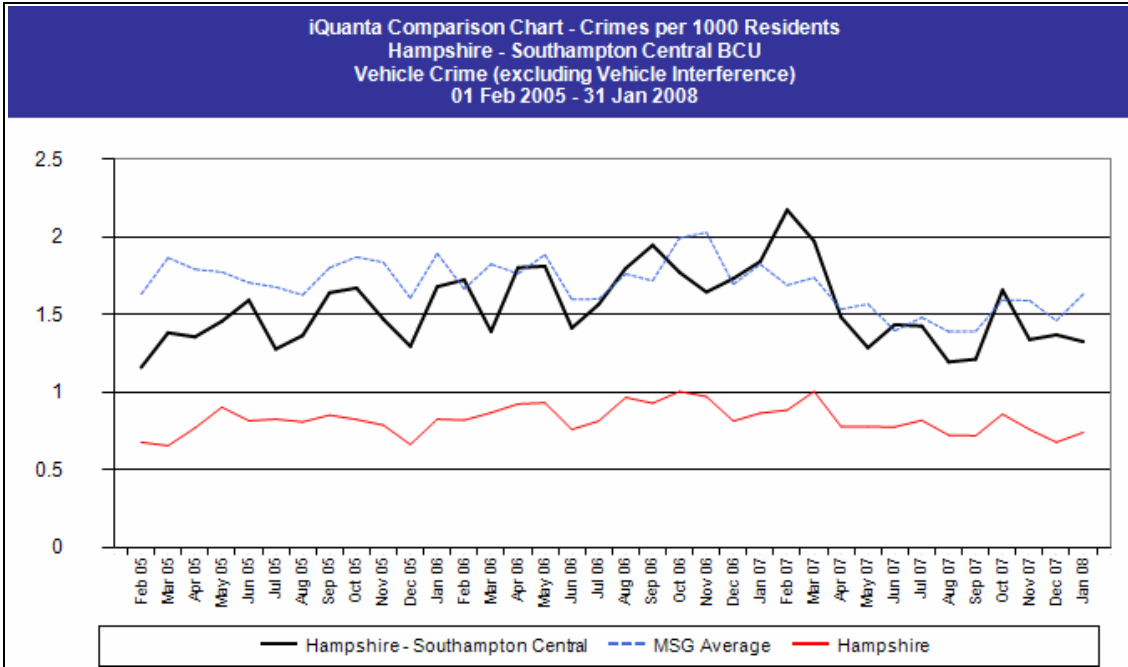

The sanction detection rate for the year February 2007 to January 2008 is **31.88%**, an **increase of 16.71%points** on the previous year. Currently Southampton is **above** the MSBCU average, and is by far the **best in its group**. All projections show the sanction detection rate **increasing sharply**.
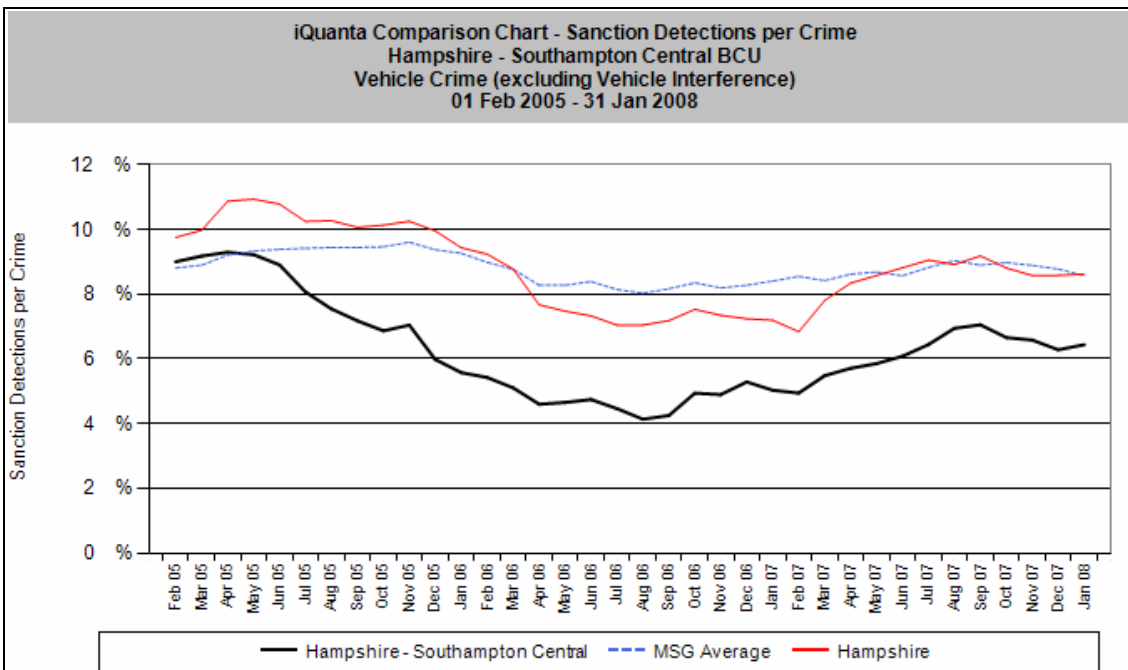
Vehicle Crime

For the year February 2007 to January 2008 Southampton has had a **12.56% decrease in** the number of vehicle crimes recorded when compared to the previous year. Southampton is currently **in line with** the MSBCU average. Projections based on the last 3, 6 and 12 months' data show the number of vehicle crimes **decreasing**.

The sanction detection rate for the year February 2007 to January 2008 is **6.44%**, an **increase of 1.41%points** on the previous year. Currently Southampton is **just below** the MSBCU average. Projections based on the last 3 and 6 months' data show the sanction detection rate **decreasing**, but projections based on the last 12 months' data show the sanction detection rate **increasing slightly**.
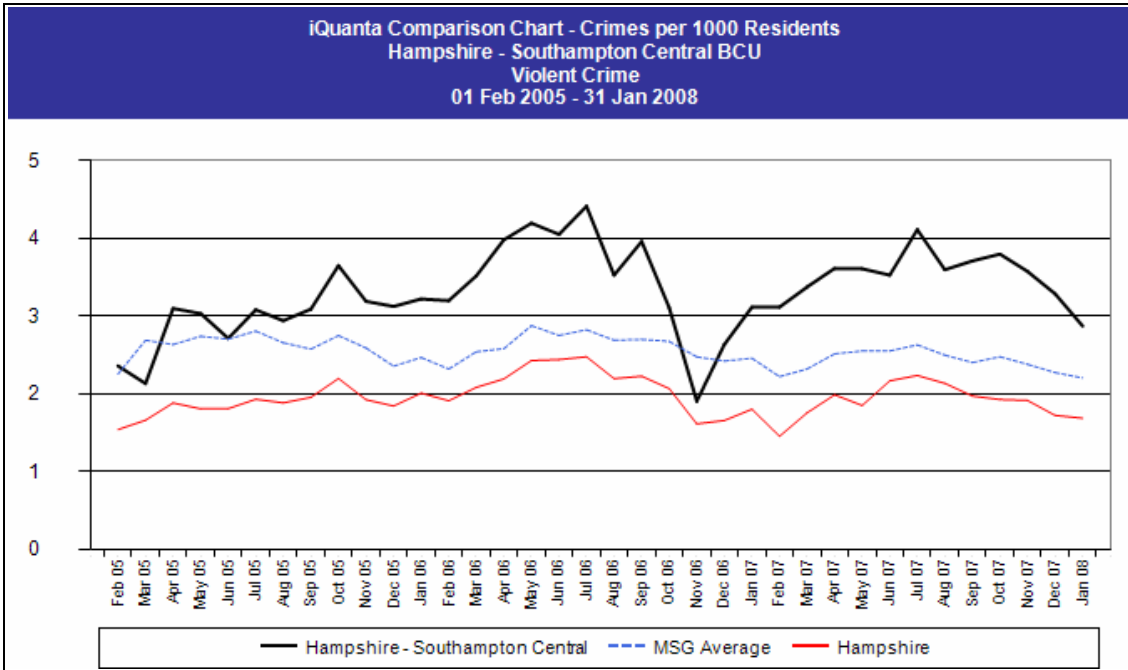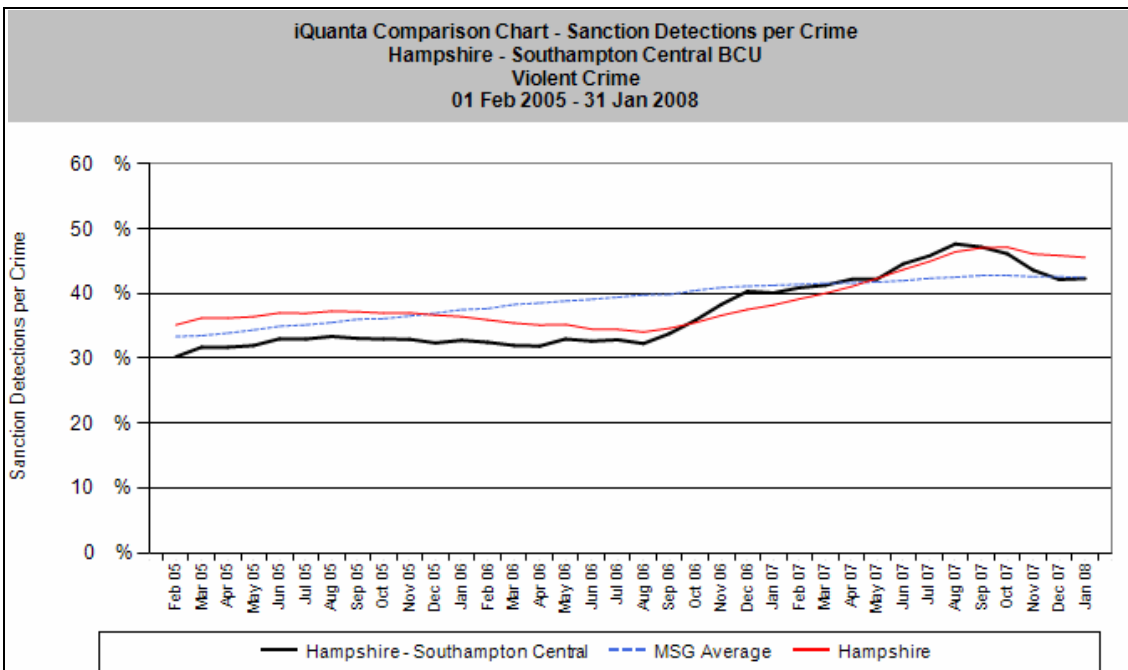
Violent Crime

For the year February 2007 to January 2008 Southampton has had a **1.36% increase** in the number of violent crimes recorded when compared to the previous year. Southampton is currently **above** the MSBCU average, and is the **worst in its group**. Projections based on the last 3 and 6 months' data show the number of violent crimes **increasing,** but projections based on the last 12 months' data show the number of violent crimes **remaining near the current level**.

The sanction detection rate for the year February 2007 to January 2008 is **42.3%**, an **increase of 2.22%points** on the previous year. Currently Southampton is **in line with** the MSBCU average. Projections based on the last 3 and 6 months' data show the sanction detection rate **decreasing**; projection of 12 months' data shows the rate **increasing**.

Robbery

For the year February 2007 to January 2008 Southampton has had a **25.16% decrease** in the number of robberies recorded when compared to the previous year. Southampton is currently **just below** the MSBCU average. Projections based on the last 3, 6 and 12 months' data all show robberies **decreasing**.
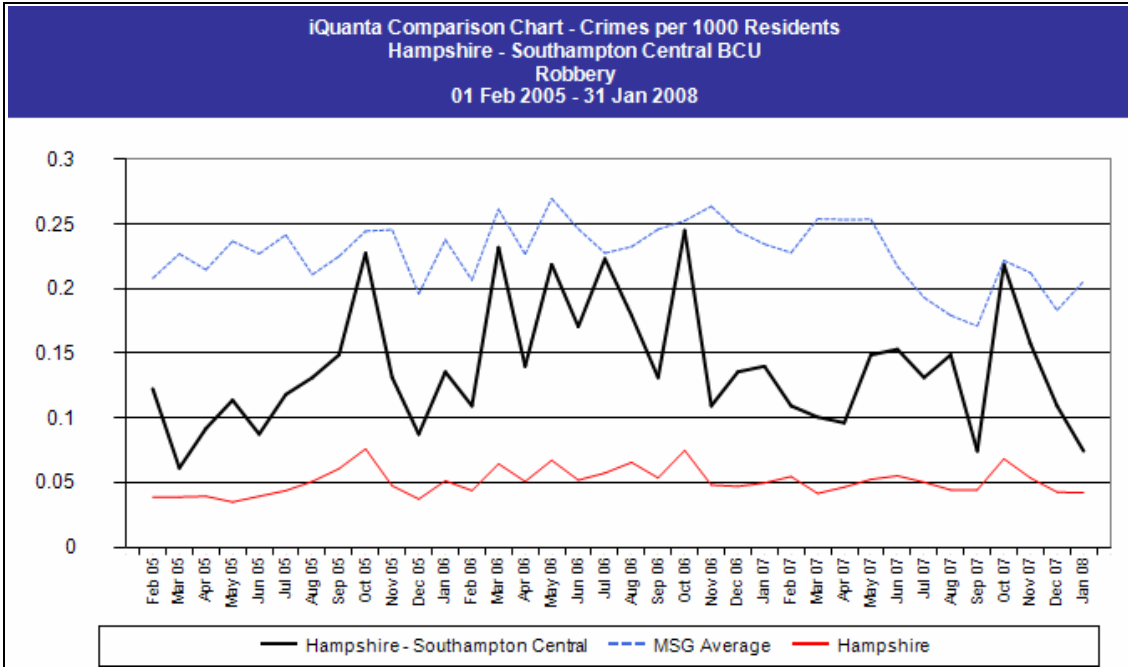

The sanction detection rate for the year February 2007 to January 2008 is **28.16%**, an **increase of 4.94%points** on the previous year. Currently Southampton is **above** the MSBCU average. Projections based on the last 3, 6 and 12 months' data show the sanction detection rate **decreasing**.
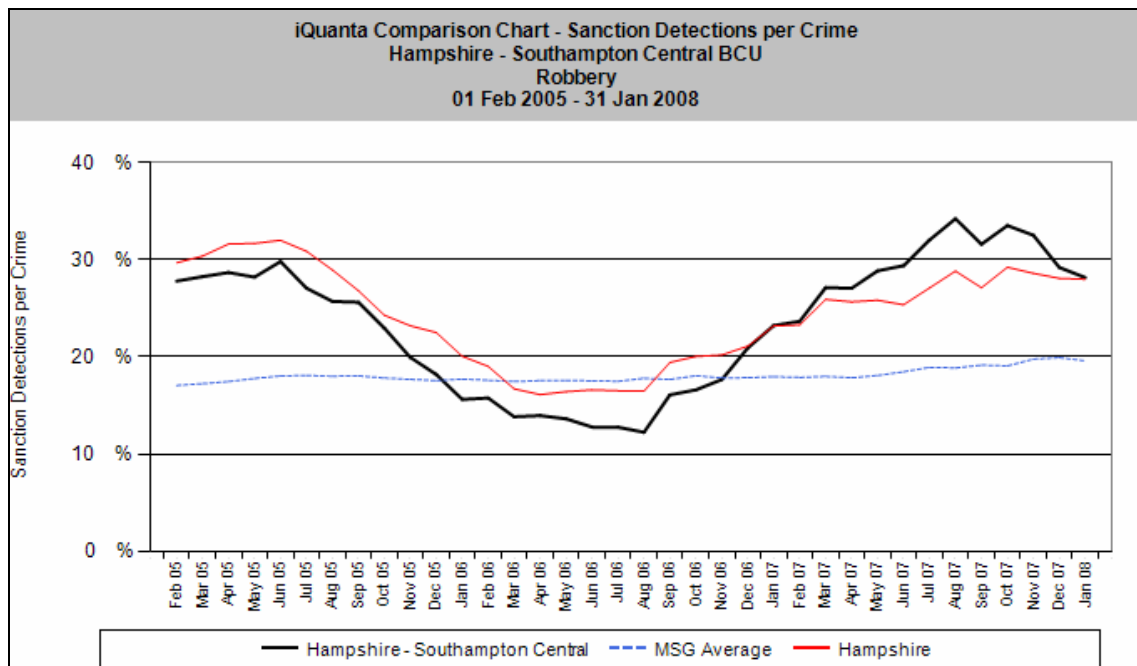
5. Significant Developments since the Original Inspection

There have been a number of changes to the SMT. A new OCU commander was appointed at the end of 2007 who acknowledges that he has taken over a good **performing** division. A detective chief inspector was appointed as the new crime manager in the Autumn and there have been some portfolio changes for chief inspectors.

6. Recommendations and Outcomes

Recommendation 1

Performance management within teams and sectors needs to be reviewed to reflect the good practice elsewhere on the OCU. Meaningful personal performance objectives or a 'balanced scorecard' should be developed, directly linked to PDRs, and contain qualitative rather than just quantitative measures, such as sanction detections. Sectors should have a matrix of performance indicators that routinely include outstanding DNA/forensic hits, named suspects and overtime usage, amongst others.

Much work has been undertaken to develop and embed a performance culture. Performance data to team and individual level is now available through the introduction of 'business objects'. Use is being made of 'scorecards' which cover a wide range of activity and performance bulletin boards highlight good individual and team performance. This is helping the development of a healthy competitive spirit. The next development is to introduce a financial and personnel element so that resource usage can be more closely linked to outcomes achieved.

There has been a move away from hard targets on sanction detections towards a more qualitative approach and generic objectives are to be introduced into PDRs for both response teams (TPTs) and neighbourhood policing teams (NPTs), linked to OCU priorities. As a result of this staff are more aware of performance issues and increased engagement from sergeants and inspectors is apparent.

The need to link objectives in PDRs with performance is recognised. The PDR process, however, is not universally viewed as a mechanism for driving performance or developing staff and once objectives are set they may not be revisited until the following year. The system needs to be much more dynamic, with key staff set objectives which relate specifically to their role in driving performance. There are corporate moves to simplify the PDR process and this should help supervisors, some of whom view it as just another task rather than a useful management tool to motivate and manage their staff (see also Recommendation 7).

Recommendation 2

There is a need for more intrusive supervision with clear direction on what is expected from staff. It may be helpful to link this to the new performance regime.

Local training has been held for supervisors. Lead by a detective inspector and a sergeant and opened by the superintendent, this focussed on crime management and the need for more 'hands on' supervision. Sergeants are now clearer about what is expected of them. A number of those spoken to had also completed the three day PIP programme which was described as a 'useful refresher on crime investigation'.

The message, however, needs to be constantly re-enforced and a continuing programme may be necessary to capture newly promoted supervisors and transferees.

Inspectors and sergeants are becoming more familiar with the RMS system. They are using it more successfully to manage crime allocated to their staff and it is providing an excellent data base. Some were of the view, however, that it is not very user friendly.

Recommendation 3

The briefing process should be reviewed; incorporating training and guidance for supervisors; visual aids; briefing product; and importantly ensuring that officers are directly tasked, together with reporting and follow-up systems.

The briefing process has been reviewed and the inspection team were able to view the new electronic interactive briefing model. Recently introduced, the emphasis is on tasking officers, not simply disseminating information or intelligence, and the system can be easily audited by managers. Of particular note is the red interactive button which allows staff tasked with actions to electronically provide feedback. Already subject of good reviews, it has the potential to improve briefing and tasking whilst also increasing accountability. As with any new system, however, the benefits will need to be marketed.

Recommendation 4

The SMT needs to ensure adherence with the recently agreed force crime allocation policy. This will be essential with the development of neighbourhood policing.

The OCU has invested significantly in crime management. A clear allocation policy has been developed for both response and neighbourhood teams and crime screening and allocation procedures have been well publicised. There is clarity as to which crimes are dealt with by NPTs and which by TPTs and crimes allocated are now more relevant to the officers. Coupled with an improvement in crime screening (some 43% of crime being screened out) workloads for TPT and NPT officers are now much more manageable with most officers carrying workloads in single figures.

In addition the VCRU has been expanded and two detective sergeants now undertake investigation review. NCRS compliance is improving but there is a need to improve quality assurance and a further bid for staffing has been submitted.

There remains concern however, with the allocation of more serious crime. The force major crime unit is not always able to service all requirements and some very serious crime falls to the local CID. The OCU has raised this through the performance review group and the Chief Constable's command forum. Numbers of staff within the CID office are below establishment and some detectives lack experience. This has a knock on effect and examples were quoted of grievous bodily harm allegations being allocated to response teams. With a key issue for the OCU being levels of violent crime this situation needs to be resolved and resolved quickly.

Recommendation 5

The Force should undertake a review of the current shift pattern, and make adjustments as appropriate to ensure the best match between demand and resources.

This recommendation was directed at the Force and a review of shift patterns was launched in Autumn 2007 under the ACC responsible for operations and personnel. Pending the results from this review, the OCU has some discretion to alter existing shifts and is exploring how best to use this to help ensure resources available have a good match with demand. This is particularly important within custody where capacity issues remain (see below).

Recommendation 6

The OCU should, together with the force Custody Team, undertake a thorough review of custody processes, benchmarking against similar BCUs, and continue to develop innovative ideas on joint working with other OCUs.

A project to explore how best to increase cell capacity has taken place with options being presented to the ACC in September 2007. Financial constraints and the planned move to new premises in 2010 (which will provide over 40 cells) make an immediate solution unlikely.

Following a review, the OCU is making refinements to custody procedures and from February 2008 a new reception process is being introduced into the custody suite. With just 19 cells and a throughput of 14000 detainees a year, there are times when the custody suite is full and has to be closed. This requires detainees, accompanied by officers, to be transported elsewhere. This lack of cell capacity was again raised by staff and officers actions on the street may be influenced when custody space is at such a premium.

A related issue is bail management. The number of outstanding persons on bail has been reduced but, at over 500, remains too high. It is not helped by the pressure on custody sergeants to bail detainees quickly to free up cell space at busy times. There needs to be daily scrutiny of bail management and greater liaison with the CPS to ensure those returning on bail are dealt with without recourse to further re-bailing.

Opening a custody suite at Bitterne, for bail returns and at weekends, has been hugely beneficial and HMIC would encourage extending this facility if resources permit.

Recommendation 7

The HR department needs to develop further its PDR processes to ensure they assist in driving performance and are not merely an administrative function.

At the time of the original inspection the focus was on achieving force targets for PDR submission. More recently, the emphasis has moved to improving quality. To assist, chief inspectors now dip sample PDRs (previously a role done by HR administrative staff). This change has been beneficial. Managers will now return unsatisfactory PDRs, give feedback where necessary and identify where first and second line supervisors have development needs. The training and development board are proposing a programme of local workshops which would include management development with the topic of professional development and review, together with attendance management, being high priority.

As outlined in the response to recommendation 1 there is more work to be done to ensure the PDR process is used to its full potential for managing and developing staff and really driving performance. This recommendation remains 'work in progress'.

Recommendation 8

The OCU needs to develop and implement a diversity strategy.

It was acknowledged in the original inspection that the urgency around improving performance and introducing neighbourhood policing had meant diversity issues had slid down the agenda. The inspection team were pleased to note that the diversity action group has been revitalised, meeting recently to agree a programme of action.

Terms of reference and an action plan will be circulated, work is underway in preparation for the Network of Women (NoW) launch in early Summer and the group aims to increase awareness through improvements to the intranet site. All six strands of diversity are represented on the action group, full support is being given by the new OCU commander and there is regular liaison with the force diversity manager.

The OCU has few grievances, good staff retention and offers flexible working. There were no major diversity issues raised in focus groups and the re-invigorated diversity group provides a forum through which any issues which do arise can be raised and actioned.

7.   Areas for Improvement

The OCU has high comparative levels of violent crime, much of it related to alcohol and/or the night time economy. Staff are conversant with the violent crime reduction strategy (VCRS) and the new generic objectives for TPTs and NPTs include those aimed at reducing violent crime levels. The licensing team receive good press, the process for putting in place S.30 dispersal orders has been speeded up and there was

good evidence of local engagement and problem solving in line with the violent crime strategy action plan. Yet the OCU is positioned 15 of 15 in their MSBCU group.

Tackling violent crime is currently the major challenge for the OCU and strategic and tactical approaches were discussed with members of the SMT who acknowledge not having all the answers. HMIC agreed to assist with seeking out good practice and suggests consideration be given to the following:

- A review of the existing violent crime reduction strategy with a view to agreeing action plans incorporating both reduction and detection, overseen and driven by the crime manager;
- Exploring ways to get more staff deployed during busy periods, for example having regular times when office based officers contribute to increasing the uniform presence;
- Greater ethical use of FPNs (these currently contribute to just 8% of detections) and street bail;
- Enhancing influence on partners, especially in respect of licensing issues (a number of councillors were recently invited on patrol and found the experience very informative);
- Ensuring numbers and skills levels within CID are sufficient and
- Continuing to look for innovative ways to increase custody capacity.

## 8.	Monitoring assessment and follow up action

All recommendations have been actioned and staff have responded very positively, displaying enthusiasm and commitment to providing better customer service. Performance in the majority of areas has improved. The challenges facing Southampton remain considerable, however, and the SMT acknowledge there remains much to be done, not least in galvanising partners in efforts to reduce violent crime.

Most recommendations have long-term aspects and there remains much 'work in progress'. On those recommendations where the OCU can take unilateral action (recommendations 1,2,3,4,7 and 8), HMIC is satisfied they are being dealt with satisfactorily with actions leading to demonstrable improvements. These may be signed off. On the two recommendations which have a corporate dimension (recommendations 5 and 6) the HMI will continue to monitor developments in conjunction with force inspection activity.