



Inspection of Nottinghamshire Police

Executive Report

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Executive Report

Background – the recent history of inspections in Nottinghamshire

1. Nottinghamshire Police has been subject to intense scrutiny from Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) for some five years, and the recipient of targeted support from the Home Office's Police Standards Unit (now the Police and Crime Standards Directorate, PCSD) for more than three years. Initially, an inspection in early 2001 by HMI David Blakey as part of HMIC's risk-assessed cycle of inspections highlighted structural problems, notably a lack of co-terminosity with local authority boundaries which impeded partnership work, and significant performance problems. Nottinghamshire had long been noted for its relatively high levels of crime but more robust and sophisticated performance assessment techniques were beginning to throw into sharp relief just how far adrift Nottinghamshire's performance was from its peers and from national averages.

2. HMI Blakey inspected Nottinghamshire again in March 2003 and noted that the force reorganisation of 2002 had made many of the structural changes needed to deliver improvements in performance. However, while some improvements in the force's ability to prevent and detect crime were evident, these 'green shoots' were fragile and he decided – unusually – to re-inspect in October 2003 to monitor implementation of recommendations in both the force as a whole and the City BCU, which accounts for around half of the crime in the county. On his return, HMI Blakey found that performance had continued to improve in key crime areas such as the total amount of crime recorded, violent crime, car crime and robbery, although performance still lagged behind that of similar forces. These improvements were made in both the force overall and the city of Nottingham, and he declared the force to be effective and efficient. To ensure that progress was sustained, Nottinghamshire Police, the Police Authority, the PCSD and HMIC signed a statement of intent, which set out joint working arrangements and an action plan with agreed targets and milestones across a range of performance areas for 2004/05.

3. HMI Denis O'Connor inspected the force in November 2004 to assess whether the progress reported in October 2003 had been sustained and check that the action plan had been implemented. He found significant improvement in some areas, notably in crime reduction where he credited the force and Authority with "real and sustained progress", although detections were below an acceptable level. There were emerging signs that the public had noticed the improvements in police performance - this was confirmed by MPs and other partners consulted during the inspection. But there remained a number of areas where further improvement was needed if those achievements were to be sustained, particularly in respect of performance accountability at local area command and individual level, and in intelligence-led policing. Above all, the force and Nottinghamshire Police Authority needed to present their ambition of what success they wanted to deliver to Nottinghamshire's communities over the next three years, together with a strategy for achievement.

Emerging problems in serious crime

4. At this stage the focus was on volume crime – burglary, vehicle crime and robbery – where the force was making progress in bringing crime levels down. But policing is complex and multi-faceted, and while the force was striving to raise its game in these areas, organised criminality was gaining a grip in parts of the city, despite efforts to counter it by proactive operations. After several months of discussion on the force’s need for support, Chief Constable Stephen Green submitted a formal bid to the Home Office in March 2005 for funding to help tackle an unforeseen rise in major incidents in the county. Later that month the Sunday Telegraph ran a story that highlighted the chief’s particular concern in relation to gun-related violent crime; he admitted that the force was struggling to cope with major crime and that this represented a crisis for the organisation.

5. The Home Secretary immediately asked HMI O’Connor to review Nottinghamshire Police’s capacity and capability in tackling murder and other serious crimes. Following an early assessment, DCC Chris Sims from West Midlands Police was seconded as ‘strategic advisor’ to the Chief Constable for a period of three months, from April 2005. In July 2005 HMI O’Connor reported back to the Home Secretary, concluding that real progress had been made in developing Nottinghamshire Police’s capability to handle its murder and organised crime challenges, helped by the National Crime Squad, other police bodies and various central and local governmental agencies. He also noted, however, that to sustain the momentum of improvement and provide better quality services to the citizens of Nottinghamshire need, the force would need to make continuous progress on a number of fronts over the coming year. HMI O’Connor identified seven critical aspects of development for revisiting in early 2006 and advised that substantial practical advancement on all of those issues was required for the force to be considered efficient and effective. (The Authority conducted a beneficial stock-take in October 2005 so that it could monitor evidence of progress.)

6. The inspection in January/February 2006 was led by HMI Kate Flannery; on-site work was followed by assessment of the evidence gathered and some 80 files of documentation supplied by the force. Detailed evidence was collated and presented to the force in April for factual accuracy checks. It follows a programme schematic designed to evaluate achievement of each element and sub-element of the seven assessment criteria and is necessarily a rather technical format; it is available as an Annexe¹ to the Executive Report. This Report summarises these findings of the inspection and sets out the HMI’s interpretation and judgements. The assessment criteria identified by HMI O’Connor are considered, with a view on the extent to which they have been met in the context of recent changes at force and national level.

Assessment of Nottinghamshire Police’s performance against the criteria set down in July 2005

7. The crucial aspects against which the force has been inspected reflect the need for the force to raise its game in tackling both major crime and volume crimes such as burglary, while embedding the neighbourhood policing approach that will help to deliver higher levels of reassurance. To achieve these goals the force needs committed, high quality leadership and improvements in underpinning systems and

¹ The Annexe is available on the HMIC website:<http://www.inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/>

processes, notably: performance management, risk assessment, demand management, communications/media management, partnership working and effective use of financial and human resources. HMIC's assessment of progress in these areas, and identification of where further improvement or changes in approach are needed, are set out below.

Tackling major crime

8. The Home Secretary's request for a review of Nottinghamshire's capacity and capability to respond effectively to a growth in serious and gun-related crime reflected existing concerns in this area. The force had recognised some time previously that it needed to rebalance its crime work to avoid an undue focus on volume crime, even though it was this latter category that was attracting critical Home Office attention, and had established proactive/covert operations such as Operation Stealth. The Chief Constable sought funding from PCSD for an external review of the force's organisational response to serious and organised crime. This was published in September 2004 and made 21 recommendations which the force agreed to implement, including bringing all crime work together under a single Assistant Chief Constable (ACC), the creation of a serious and organised crime unit and improved technical support for proactive work. When examined in July 2005, progress in implementing the main strands of this major crime plan was seen to be variable, and expediting its full implementation became a key indicator of success for this 2006 inspection. So what progress can now be reported?

9. With support from the ACPO Homicide Working Group and driven robustly and effectively by the ACC (Crime), the force has made significant progress in this area. Since the July 2005 report there have been developments which may affect this area of activity. Nottinghamshire is one of five East Midlands forces which the Home Secretary proposes (subject to appropriate consultation and decisions in Parliament) to amalgamate to form a regional strategic force. A principal benefit would be, over time, the attainment of a higher degree of performance and protection of communities in tackling serious and organised criminality and murder. Nottinghamshire would be a beneficiary of such enhanced arrangements.

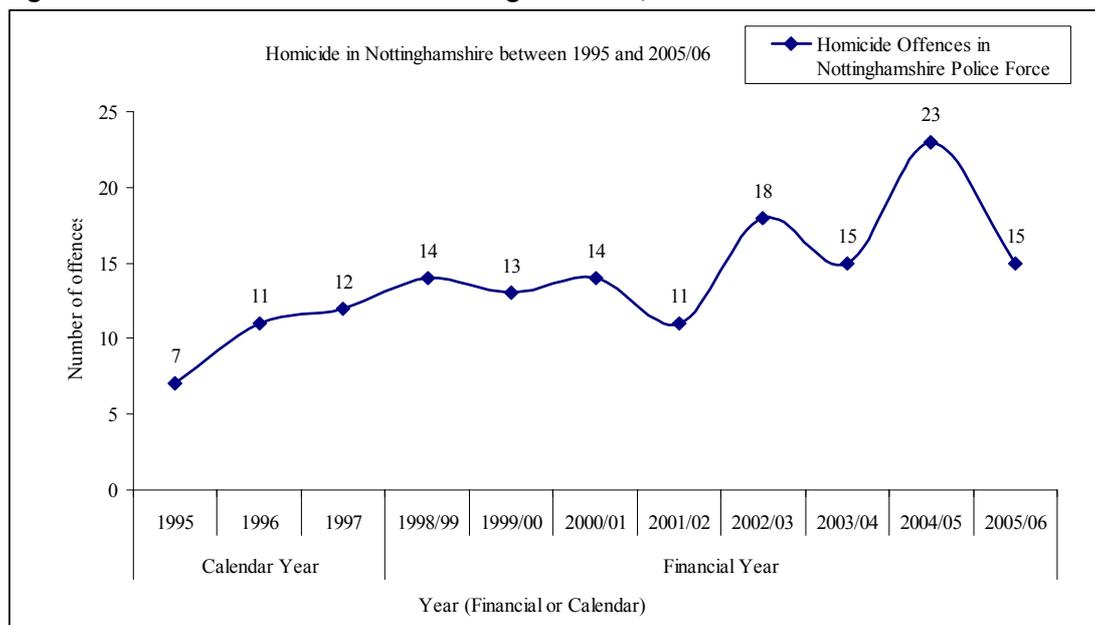
(i) *The Serious and Organised Crime Unit* is now fully operational, bringing together existing teams tackling fraud and 'high tech' crime and providing a substantial proactive capacity in areas such as surveillance. At the time of the inspection the team was almost at full strength and working well, tasked by the force-level Tasking & Co-ordinating process, and each team has appropriate terms of reference. One missing piece of the jigsaw was a performance framework with appropriate targets, to assure senior managers that the Unit is delivering against priorities and using its resources effectively; this is now in place but it is too soon to tell if it will have the desired effect.

(ii) *A dedicated source handling unit* (a 'source' being a confidential contributor of intelligence, usually paid for their contribution) is now in place and supporting relevant operations, predominantly city-based. The current strength is a sergeant and four constables with an aim of increasing to two sergeants and six constables during 2006/07, subject to budgetary considerations. HMIC commends the force for getting

the unit up and running and asks the force to consider issues around the location of the unit, standard operating procedures and vetting of staff. The Unit should also be drawn into a performance accountability framework that captures the outputs of individual team members and provides a solid foundation for a budget-based review of the potential to expand the Unit.

(iii) *Staffing and training of a Homicide Unit* was a key recommendation in 2005, and the HMIC assessment is that progress has been made but stops short of an optimal position. The Homicide Unit was formed in July 2005 with an agreed establishment of 80 posts, consolidating existing investigative teams and expanding their number by making permanent some posts filled by officers ‘on loan’ from divisions. Its purpose is to ensure that Nottinghamshire provides the most effective, skilled response to murder/homicide - including work to prevent such crimes and not just react after the event - and to do so without drawing too heavily upon officers from local divisions. (Abstracting officers in this way means that expertise is diluted and resources are pulled away from neighbourhood policing and the response to volume crime.) Four teams of 20 officers were planned but in response to both a welcome fall in homicide (Figure 1) and budgetary pressures, the force has decided to staff the teams with 15 officers. Five of the posts from the proposed expanded resource have been diverted to other specialist crime work but 15 posts will be left unfilled.

Figure 1 – Homicide incidence in Nottinghamshire, 1995 to 2005



Source: Home Office crime statistics

Note: Homicide is a broad category of offences, including manslaughter and some infrequently recorded crimes. In 2004/05 Nottinghamshire experienced an unusually high number of Category A murders, requiring the establishment of incident rooms and protracted investigation.

(iv) The force argues that, if murders start to rise again the trend can be identified quickly and officers would then be drawn from divisions to supplement the dedicated Homicide Unit staffing. However, this means disrupting divisional work and drafting inexperienced or untrained staff to learn on the job. Although a number of plausible

reasons have been advanced to explain the drop in murders², there is neither a persuasive results analysis nor a comprehensive murder profile to confirm these theories. Budget pressures are, of course, a complicating factor and hard choices have to be made; chief officers have made a considered decision which is supported by the Police authority but HMIC's view is that the decision not to staff the Homicide Unit up to its agreed full strength, based on recent crime trends, is premature. It misses an opportunity to consolidate recent gains and move further upstream to prevent problems emerging before they threaten to overwhelm the organisation.

(v) When recommending that a Homicide Unit be created, HMIC also identified a need for a *training needs analysis* so that all key staff are able to fulfil their responsibilities to the appropriate level of expertise. PCSD agreed in September 2005 to fund this analysis but as at March 2006 it had not been finalised. Once finalised, the force will have to spend an estimated £60,000 to deliver the actual training.

(vi) *Completion of work to provide three major incident rooms (MIRs)* was identified as a priority when the review team found, in April 2005, that some murder investigations were being conducted in accommodation that was not fit for purpose, although a plan existed to provide upgraded facilities. This position has now significantly improved: three dedicated MIRs have been completed, one with research and analytical support on site, while a fourth is part of a larger project scheduled for completion in April 2007. The MIRs are strategically placed in the force area to ensure appropriate coverage and efficient operation.

(vii) *Appointment of a Director of Intelligence*, together with mechanisms for delivering key products, were two important aspects of the major crime plan – the first is in place and the prospects for the second are promising. A detective chief superintendent, appointed as Director of Intelligence, is overseeing the delivery of a well-formulated plan to improve the provision and use of intelligence under the National Intelligence Model (NIM). The plan has prioritised objectives and a lead officer for each associated action; overall delivery is timed for July 2007 but the force is already seeing the benefits of better co-ordinated and led intelligence work. It has requested that the National Centre for Policing Excellence (the 'guardians' of the NIM) undertakes a review of intelligence structures and products. Templates for NIM products are being standardised across the force. On the evidence from inspection, the intelligence products are improving but are not all fit for purpose. Problem profiles should analyse data not only to find out what is happening, where and to whom but also to identify a range of suitable prevention and enforcement options, which are then tasked to teams to progress. Some Nottinghamshire profiles are predominantly descriptive analysis and do not point to action. Nonetheless, the force is to be commended for its strategy to bring all of its profiles up to scratch – indeed, its work on a murder/homicide profile could be of great benefit to many other forces.

(viii) *A programme of proactive operations to tackle serious/cross-border crime* was the final main plank of the major crime plan. For some years the force has benefited from the support of external law enforcement agencies such as NCS and NCIS – now merged with others to form the Serious and Organised Crime Agency, or

² These include the impact of proactive operations such as Operation Stealth, the community response to the murder of Danielle Beccan, new minimum jail sentences for the use of firearms and more effective partnership work in this area.

SOCA. Four significant organised crime groups have been disrupted and there has also been regular assistance from the East Midlands Special Operations Unit. The force is on track to meet its asset recovery target and is increasing its financial investigation capacity; it performs well on drug trafficking enforcement; and has more than quadrupled its forensic computer examinations in the last four years (with support from PCSD). One area of concern is the technical support capacity for this level of operation. Each division has some technical equipment (eg, for covert work, surveillance and interception) and staff trained in deployment, but the capacity of the HQ-based team is very limited. A decision to increase capacity was deferred pending regional developments but these may take some time to bear fruit and there is thus a real risk that, unless it pursues its own solution, vital equipment to support Nottinghamshire's proactive operations will not be available when required. (Following completion of the main inspection work and feedback of these concerns the force has introduced a programme of work which seeks to address this problem and HMIC will monitor its impact in coming months.)

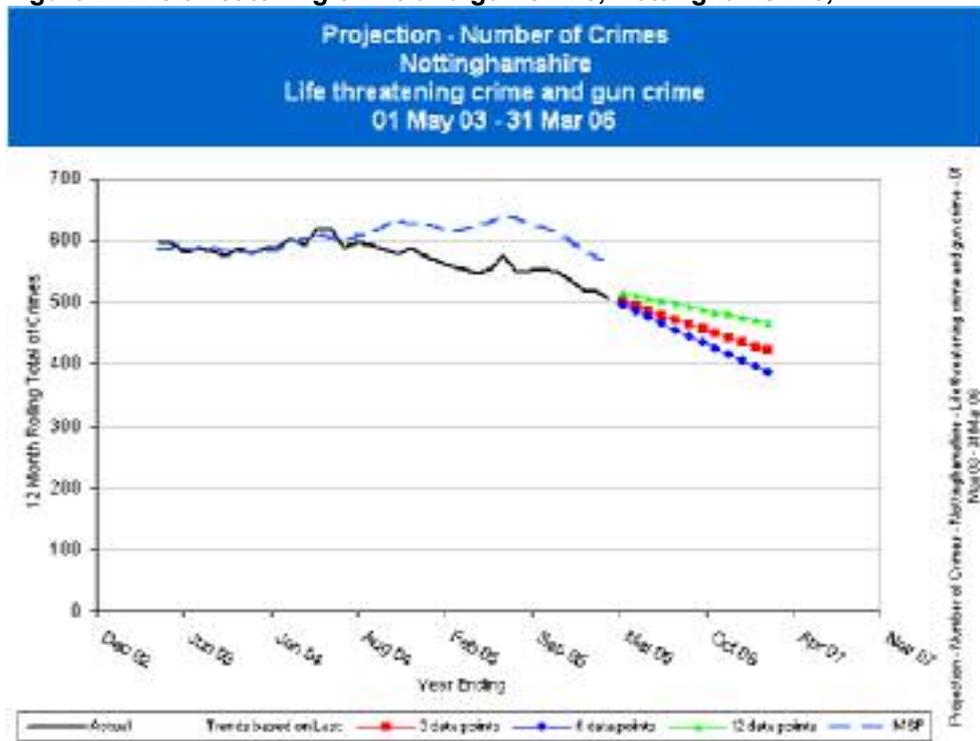
Balancing the effort to improve major crime, volume crime and citizen focus/neighbourhood policing

10. In July 2005 the strategic advisor, DCC Sims, identified that the force faced a challenge in maintaining the momentum that has been achieved since the force became engaged with the PSU whilst simultaneously broadening the performance agenda. There had been a tendency for the force to focus energy and resources in some pressing areas to the extent that performance elsewhere slipped. While it is obviously difficult to keep all of the proverbial plates spinning when under pressure, the force needed to demonstrate its capacity to do just this if it was to deliver national and local priorities. The force's approach was to create an overarching improvement programme termed 'Better to Best'. This recognises the need to balance performance in tackling acquisitive crime with continued success against serious and organised criminality, while delivering the citizen focus agenda. Better to Best is an effective programme management approach, led energetically by the DCC and supported by a policy officer seconded from the Authority's secretariat, and HMIC commends what has so far been delivered.

11. The strategic advisor also noted that the force had agreed to provide the Authority with regular structured updates on homicide investigation and serious crime operations. The ACC (Crime) now briefs the Authority and city council leader at regular intervals and these briefings are very well received. However, the inclusion of performance information about serious crime into force-level performance meetings and the Authority's performance scrutiny process is more recent, and needs to expand to include both qualitative and quantitative information. Nottinghamshire has made a commendable start on an issue with which many other forces struggle, using an innovative template developed jointly by the Authority and HMIC, but given the scale and nature of the challenges facing Nottinghamshire in respect of serious crime, it needs to speed up progress. The performance framework for monitoring and evaluating major crime work exists in an embryonic form and needs continued development; as noted above, performance accountability mechanisms should continue to be strengthened

12. The only national performance measure in this area is ‘life threatening crime and gun crime’; in 2005/06 the force recorded a lower incidence of such crimes than its peers (Figure 2) and its reduction efforts place it in the top quartile nationally. The Gun and Violent Crime Reduction Strategy is a joint initiative with the city council – there is strong evidence of partnership engagement, with pivotal roles being played by the city BCU commander and the city council leader. The force’s recent track record on volume crime is considered in detail below. The third front which the force is striving to progress is the citizen focus agenda, encompassing public reassurance, satisfaction with the services provided and embedding the Neighbourhood Policing model. One high profile demonstration of responding to the public need for reassurance is Operation Kingdom, a resource-intensive project to wrest back control of the inner city Bestwood estate from criminals who sought to intimidate local people. During the recent inspection, partners spoke highly of the commitment of key individuals in delivering Operation Kingdom; this is clearly a valuable initiative to which the force remains committed, but eventually crucial decisions will need to be made about scaling down the investment of resources in Bestwood.

Figure 2: Life-threatening crime and gun crime, Nottinghamshire,



Source: iQuanta

13. The force has two ‘pathfinder’ sites for neighbourhood management, both in the City division, where local area groups work with officers to decide upon policing priorities. There is evidence of joint tasking and problem-solving, especially in tackling anti-social behaviour and the impact of problem families. Police officers and police community support officers (PCSOs) are working well alongside council wardens and other authority staff to address community concerns. The force has yet to involve Special Constables in the safer neighbourhood teams and there are opportunities for daily briefing of partners, but overall, neighbourhood policing is a success story in Nottinghamshire (attracting positive assessments from the national

project team). The force can build upon this success by ensuring a smooth roll-out of safer neighbourhood teams across all divisions, with a target date of April 2008.

14. Neighbourhood policing is a vital plank of the citizen focus agenda but there are other strands that the force needs to develop, especially community engagement, improvement in user satisfaction and delivering the national quality of service commitment. The force's results to date on those aspects which are measured nationally are slightly below its peers' averages (Table 1). The Police Authority is particularly keen that better results are obtained in keeping members of the public, victims and witnesses informed of progress – the 'Getting Back to You' initiative. Encouragingly, the results trend is one of improvement across the board.

Table 1: Nottinghamshire Police's performance on confidence and satisfaction SPIs Satisfaction with the whole experience

<i>Satisfaction of service users January to December, 2005</i>	<i>% Satisfied</i>	<i>MSF average</i>	<i>% Very/completely satisfied</i>
Burglary	84.9%	86.7%	66.2%
Violent crime	68.4%	71.1%	48.0%
Vehicle crime	60.9%*	65.9%	37.9%
Road traffic collisions	81.9%	81.1%	67.1%
All Users (excl. racist incidents)	74.0%*	76.2%	54.8%
Racist incidents	65.3%*	72.6%	41.0%

* Significantly lower than MSF average at the 95% confidence level

Source: iQuanta, Home Office

Improving volume crime performance, especially in the City BCU

15. In assessing Nottinghamshire's results, HMIC considers three dimensions:

- change over time – has the force improved on last year's results?
- comparison with the average performance of peer forces; and
- achievement of the targets set by the Police Authority.

The particular challenge facing Nottinghamshire is not simply to reduce crimes such as burglary and vehicle crime, which it is largely succeeding in doing, but to close the gap with the performance of its Most Similar Force (MSF) peers - namely Leicestershire, South Yorkshire, Avon and Somerset and Bedfordshire (Table 2). Total crime fell in Nottinghamshire while peer forces showed on average a small increase, which is commendable, but the likelihood of being a victim remains higher. Three years ago the gap with MSF forces was enormous and it will take another year of sustained reduction to get close to the average, providing that the other forces retain their current level of reduction – a good year for Nottinghamshire will not close the gap if its peer forces also do well. This gap is the reason why Nottinghamshire remains on the Home Office's radar.

Table 2: Nottinghamshire's volume crime reduction performance, 2005/06

	Offences per 1,000 population, 2005/06	% change 2005/06 from 2004/05	MSF average offences per 1000 population	MSF average % change	Achieved Police Authority target for 2005/06?
Total crime	133.42	-3.53	113.27	+1.24	No (-7%)
Burglary	24.12	-14.48	16.61	-11.77	Yes (-13%)

Robbery	2.03	+4.94	1.49	+2.96	No (-5%)
Vehicle crime	21.76	-1.03	16.61	-2.0	No (-12%)
Violent crime	23.91	+7.96	23.57	+6.66	No (-1%)

Source: *iQuanta*

16. As Table 2 illustrates, the force has shown increases in robbery and violent crime³ and has failed to meet the reduction targets set for it by the Police Authority (described by the Authority as challenging but attainable) except for burglary reduction. But although it has improved its performance against last year's figures for all crime, burglary and vehicle crime it remains far adrift of the average performance of its peer forces in all of these crime types except violent crime. The performance on securing detections is a more positive one with improved year-on-year results in all categories except robbery (Table 3). However, the force failed to meet the targets set by the Police Authority other than for violent crime, and its average detection rate by crime type lags behind its peers in all categories except violent crime. Detection rates for burglary and vehicle crime in particular are significantly below MSF averages. Until performance improves to bring it closer to these MSF averages, Nottinghamshire is likely to remain an 'engaged' force in Home Office terms, subject to close scrutiny.

Table 3: Nottinghamshire's sanction detection (SD) performance, 2005/06

	% SD per crime in 2005/06	% point change in 2005/06	Achieved PA target 2005/06?	MSF average, 2005/06	MSF % point change in 2005/06
Total crime	21.23	+4.45	No	23.43	+3.67
Burglary	10.17	+2.21	No	16.31	+3.26
Robbery	18.26	-1.20	No	20.32	+0.89
Vehicle crime	5.17	+0.91	No	10.21	+1.07
Violent crime	45.74	+9.53	Yes	41.03	+7.28

Source: *iQuanta*

The performance of the City BCU

17. One reason why the force is in this position is the high level of crime experienced in the city division of Nottingham, which has repercussions beyond the force's reputation. The importance of policing, and perceptions of policing, to the city's economy cannot be overstated. The bad publicity attaching to gun-related violence and general high levels of crime has had a damaging effect on confidence in the city, even causing some major local employers to review their continued location in the area. Nottinghamshire Police and the City Council - and especially the Chief Constable and council leader - have worked hard to rebuild that confidence, supported effectively by local MPs, but it remains fragile while the BCU performance continues to attract critical scrutiny. The City's performance in respect of target achievement and comparison with its Most Similar BCUs (Table 4) is worse than the force's in some respects, and because it accounts for around half of the total crime for the force area this has a dragging effect on the overall performance picture. Total crime and burglaries fell last year but this creditable result is offset by increased incidence of

³ In a number of forces, rises in violent crime are attributed at least in part to more effective intervention strategies, especially in tackling alcohol-related crimes in town centres.

robbery, vehicle and violent crime. But the difference in the risk of victimisation for Nottingham residents, especially for burglary – where incidence is almost double that for comparator BCUs - and vehicle crime, is unacceptable. Performance on sanction detections is showing an upward trend, with good performance on violent crime, but is generally below MSBCU averages (Table 5).

Table 4: Nottingham City BCU volume crime reduction performance, 2005/06

	Offences per 1,000 population in 2005/06	% change from 2004/05	MSBCU average offences, 2005/06	MSBCU average change
Total crime	228.60	-4.87	159.99	+0.01
Burglary	49.77	-10.00	25.42	-5.70
Robbery	5.68	+3.10	3.46	+1.70
Vehicle crime	36.34	+0.44	24.72	+2.10
Violent crime	42.60	+4.64	34.07	+2.80

Source: *iQuanta*

Table 5: Nottingham City BCU sanction detections, 2005/06

	% SD per crime in 2005/06	% point change over previous year	MSBCU average, 2005/06	MSBCU % point change in 2005/06
Total crime	20.74	+5.56	22.61	+3.26
Burglary	9.16	+3.54	11.67	+1.18
Robbery	15.88	-0.43	16.27	-1.03
Vehicle crime	4.53	+1.39	7.91	+0.67
Violent crime	40.15	+10.49	37.31	+5.19

Source: *iQuanta*

18. The City BCU has been the focus of attention from HMIC and PCSD over the last two or three years and significant funding and other assistance have been offered to help the BCU improve its performance. There has been discontinuity of command, with three BCU leaders in the last four years and, until recently, multi-agency crime and disorder partnership arrangements were highly problematic. This was undoubtedly a contributory factor in the inability to bring crime levels down at the rates achieved elsewhere. There is anecdotal evidence that some officers have become used to high levels of crime - ‘this is how things are in Nottingham’ – which, if true, needs to be tackled by drive and leadership from the top, intrusive supervision by sergeants and inspectors and a much more robust performance accountability framework. Again supported by PCSD funds, enhancements have been made to core processes such as forensic management but there remain fundamental problems in the quality of the investigative work conducted by the first responders, and in some basic ‘housekeeping’ processes such as proper recording of investigative outcomes.

19. There are prospects for improvement, based around:

- recent good practice initiatives bearing fruit;
- implementation of initiatives, initially funded by PCSD, such as assistant crime managers to improve ‘housekeeping’;
- better partnership working, which is starting to pay dividends;

- the arrival of an experienced former chief police officer as chief executive of the Nottingham Crime and Disorder Partnership, who will bring dynamism, rigour, ideas and a strong performance focus to Partnership activities; and
- assistance from a policy officer from the Authority to support the Partnership on performance issues.

Nonetheless, volume crime performance remains a serious concern and continues to tarnish the force's reputation, despite commendable improvements in tackling major crime. The targets set for the City BCU for 2006/07 need to reflect the importance of a sustained upward trajectory, and improvement in the City's results must be an absolute priority for the force and Authority, even if this means a diversion of resources.

Improved performance management

20. In the last five years the development of PPAF as a robust and relatively sophisticated performance assessment framework for police forces has been matched by a growing understanding of the role that effective performance management regimes can play in delivering better results. The absence of such a regime, characterised by a weak culture of accountability for outcomes, was startlingly evident in Nottinghamshire during HMIC's inspection in 2001. Indeed, it has been a common feature of forces whose performance problems have brought them onto the Home Office's radar in recent years. Improving this situation is thus a critical component of any strategy for disengagement and forces are urged to incorporate the key features of successful performance management arrangements - some of them borrowed from the American 'compstat' model. These include a high level of chief officer engagement and drive; rigorous analysis of trends, projections and the use of timely data; high expectations that BCU commanders come to the meetings very well briefed and with answers to problems; and the offer of support for BCUs and departments which are in difficulty.

21. The performance review process is, at first glance, very similar across most forces – monthly meetings, chaired by a chief constable or deputy, with a 'three line whip' on attendance for BCU commanders and heads of department, and underpinned by comprehensive but targeted analysis of trends and problem issues/areas. What makes some more effective than others is not easy to describe in concrete terms but relates to the extent to which performance improvement is seen as core business by the whole organisation, and the degree of grip or intrusion by senior officers. The process has to be taken seriously but creating a fear factor is invariably counter-productive in the longer term. This is a difficult balance to strike, and Nottinghamshire has not yet got it right. The impact of its process, known as Focus, has ebbed and flowed, perhaps not helped by the presence of Home Office/HMIC observers which, in the words of one officer, turned performance management into a spectator sport. After initially hitting the mark, the intensity of Focus meetings lessened; BCU commanders felt it acceptable to send substitutes and too many meetings were marked by a lack of urgency and attentiveness. The Focus approach could be made to work but needs re-invention to heighten its impact and complement the Authority's Performance Scrutiny Board.

22. Although the Focus meetings do tend to concentrate on volume crime issues, they have more recently begun to incorporate information on Level 2 or serious crime issues, as noted above, and citizen focus data. The latter is held primarily at force level and consists of user satisfaction and British Crime Survey fear of crime and public confidence data. It is intended that, as part of the neighbourhood policing initiative, the force will measure baseline satisfaction levels of residents in an identified local area against which to measure progress. The Focus meeting is now looking, on a rolling basis, at performance in the six PPAF domains. This is welcomed and the force could use this scrutiny as a springboard to improve its current poor position on some PPAF grades, providing it probes all of the statutory performance indicators (SPIs) rather than a selection. In particular, the Focus meeting should prioritise SPIs which were rated *Poor* in last year's Home Office/HMIC joint assessment.

23. A successful initiative has been the introduction of a silver/bronze structure for the dissemination of good practice in tackling crime across the force. Originally, silver commanders were force policy leads who identified good practice and managed inter-dependencies between their areas of work. A monthly meeting chaired by the ACC (Crime) shares information and ensure a consistent cross-divisional approach. A more sophisticated approach is now in place with a silver commander for violent crime and bronze commanders leading work on night-time economy violence, domestic violence and youth violence. The night-time economy work has been exemplary and represents national good practice. Similarly, a silver commander for acquisitive crime is supported by bronze commanders for specific crime types such as burglary; there are also silver commanders for anti-social behaviour, criminal justice and offender management. All of the silver commanders are engaged in developing investigative standards and standard operating procedures to support operational staff. The force can build upon this successful initiative by ensuring that BCU commanders and others recognise that the silver commanders' inputs are not simply advisory, to be cherry-picked as individuals see fit, but force policy that should be implemented, with appropriate follow-up mechanisms to ensure compliance. Proven good practice must be followed unless there is a clear case to show that it is not appropriate.

Leadership

24. Although it has changed in recent years with the promotion of transformational leadership styles, policing retains some reliance on a hierarchical command structure. The chief constable is a powerful figure and the chief officer team – together with divisional/departmental commanders – drive the business. Inevitably, when a force has struggled with performance issues in the way that Nottinghamshire has, searching questions are asked of leadership. The Chief Constable in particular has been under enormous pressure to lift the force off the bottom, and acknowledges that the buck stops with him when results are deemed unacceptable. It needs to be recognised, however, that on his appointment in 2000 the Chief Constable inherited a divided top team and a force in more severe difficulty than was widely understood at the time. The structure was not fit for purpose and had to be changed but the re-organisation that the Chief subsequently initiated further disrupted performance. The force was heavily centralised and divisions lacked investigative capability, but the effort to redress this coincided with organised, gun-

related criminality taking a hold in the city. Performance in those early days was clearly not on the organisational agenda and the force was pervaded by a negative 'can't do' culture that strangled innovation and made change a tortuous process. Against this backdrop, the Chief Constable is commended for securing the improvements noted in this report but he knows that there is no room for complacency, especially in respect of volume crime.

25. The resilience of the Chief Constable has been severely tested but he remains confident and energetic in his pursuit of success for the force. He and the Deputy Chief Constable must provide the vision and leadership that keep the force on a clear path to progress and facilitate the ACCs' role in continuing to deliver operational improvement. Both also need to be totally focused on the Nottinghamshire endeavour while playing a part in the regional work towards possible amalgamation. They need to inculcate a more intrusive style of management throughout the organisation to embed a performance culture. The ACC (Operations Support) retires in autumn 2006 and his considerable experience will be difficult to replace. However, the recruitment of a replacement ACC presents the Authority with an acknowledged opportunity to complement the current management team with a robust performance specialist. A key issue for the Chief Constable in moving the force forward is to identify the best people in the organisation and put them in roles where they will have the most impact on performance. Conversely, managers who are not delivering must be either developed or moved to different roles. This may necessitate some difficult decisions about individual placements but business needs must take primacy over personal preferences or other considerations.

26. Nottinghamshire and particularly its senior managers have been in the eye of the storm in recent years. In an effort to support the force, a range of organisations have offered advice and in some cases significant funding. A raft of recommendations and initiatives have been piled one on another, from HMIC, PCSD, NCS/NCIS and various consultants. Although taken individually these inputs have been largely valid and constructive, their collective impact has been almost to overwhelm senior management capacity and capability. The chief officer team ask that the intensive scrutiny is scaled back to give some management headroom. This is a factor to consider in judging leadership and sustainability.

27. For the last three years, Nottinghamshire has been subject to more intense, detailed and critical scrutiny than probably any other force outside London and Northern Ireland. Its weak performance in key areas attracted this attention but few forces could survive such close scrutiny and emerge with anything resembling a clean bill of health. This is not to excuse the force's deficiencies, or the fact that at times it has moved slowly to rectify problems even when the solution seemed obvious. But these deficiencies are not unique – rather, they are more visible than those existing in other forces. A change in approach from the centre could well energise and empower the force's leadership; alternatively, there is a risk that it could engender complacency. Assurances from both force and Authority that this will not happen are accepted and HMIC and PCSD are agreed that the intense, on-site scrutiny should be replaced by more remote monitoring, although the force remains engaged in Home Office terms.

Infrastructure and processes linked to performance

Risk management and environmental scanning

28. In April 2005, HMI O'Connor expressed concern at the absence of a current problem profile for murder and other major crime issues such as Class A drugs supply, pointing out that the absence of such products is a significant disadvantage in understanding the problem. Progress is evident since that point; the intelligence directorate has been formed and has a comprehensive delivery plan, the force Level 2 tasking meeting is well managed and covers all relevant operations. A risk and threat assessment matrix is in place to inform decision-making and there has been a marked improvement in intelligence provision on divisions. These improvements are welcomed but there is some way to go before the force can be said to use quality intelligence products to manage risk and improve performance. A range of force problem profiles now exist but contain too much analysis and too few tactical options around prevention and enforcement. The murder profile is limited to murder and manslaughter with no proper consideration of 'near misses', Section 18 woundings, Osman warnings intelligence⁴ or relevant partnership information (eg, from health and ambulance services). These are significant gaps considering the nature of the work and Nottinghamshire's reputation.

29. More widely, a risk management working group has been created (with police authority representation) which reports to the strategic risk board chaired by the DCC. Risk is a standing item on weekly command team and monthly Focus meeting agendas. The force's risk register has been revamped to make it a more manageable and effective document and the new process looks sound. Environmental scanning is now better resourced with an analyst conducting PESTELO (political, environmental, social, technological, economic, legal and organisation issues) analyses regularly as well as monitoring HMIC, NCPE and PCSU websites. Issues identified through these processes are scored to ensure that their impact is understood. This all represents progress but further penetration is required to raise awareness of these approaches across the organisation.

30. One area of continuing concern – at a national level and not limited to Nottinghamshire - is the management of dangerous and sex offenders. Previously, both the Authority and HMIC highlighted deficiencies in this area and the force has responded positively. A central dangerous persons management unit (DPMU) oversaw the roll-out of activity to sergeant-led teams on division, with divisional management plans for their activities. A series of force-wide operations was conducted to eliminate the backlog of visits that had built up in 2004/05. The central DPMU audits a sample of cases regularly and debriefs or coaches staff as appropriate. Evidence from the inspection underscored the need for vigilance to embed a full understanding of risk management and for divisional staff to own offender management work. Performance data on visits was presented at Focus for the first time in October 2005, albeit without covering the quality of the visits and outcomes. The force recognises that this is an area for development.

Managing demand and matching resources

⁴ An Osman warning refers to an obligation on the part of police officers to alert individuals (and where appropriate their families) of a risk or threat of serious violence, to facilitate defensive responses.

31. Past HMIC baseline assessments commented critically on the force's weak performance in human resource (HR) management and this has been another area where Nottinghamshire has benefited from PCSD consultancy support. The core of the problem was the lack of a professionally qualified HR director able to operate at chief officer level, which meant that already hard-pressed ACPO officers had to cover some vital HR aspects of business. The problem was finally addressed with the appointment in autumn 2005 of an experienced HR professional who began quickly to make a beneficial impact. He is focusing HR delivery on operational priorities and developing a costed HR plan as well as securing some 'quick wins' in occupational health and better links between HR and training.

32. Officer and staff deployment, matched to business needs and priorities, was a feature of the strategic advisor's and HMI O'Connor's advice in 2005 and to its credit the force has made real progress. Succession planning has been undertaken for chief inspector posts – this is welcomed but the force needs to extend succession planning to other key police officer and police staff posts. The promotion process has been improved by being brought in-house but a significant gap is that the new policy was not assessed for diversity impact. In the absence of formal engagement with under-represented groups, the force is reliant upon support networks to ensure that women and minority ethnic officers are not adversely affected in the promotion stakes.

33. A considerable amount of work has been needed to reconcile Nottinghamshire's budget and staffing establishment – at one point in 2005/06 the force was over its establishment by 40 officers and 30 police staff, thus contributing significantly to the overspend in that year of £6.4 million. Further improvement in staff monitoring is essential, a fact recognised by the organisation, and HR and Finance managers are striving to ensure alignment of resource deployment with operational priorities. One pressing issue is the need to evaluate the new shift pattern introduced on divisions to ensure that it is delivering the greater capacity needed to keep on top of demand. This evaluation should encompass the impact of the working time directive and related health and safety issues. Overall, medium-term financial planning is now working well and the force has recovered from the overspend in 2005/06, although the tight financial settlement for policing means that it will confront some difficult financial decisions in the next year or so.

Reputation management and communications

34. The Better to Best improvement programme highlights the importance of reputation management for Nottinghamshire, to raise confidence in the organisation both externally and internally. The new structure for corporate communications has led to more effective control of marketing messages to partners and the wider public. The force produces a fortnightly newsletter for external contacts and the Chief Constable engages actively with editors and local media. Good practice is evident in the incorporation of media/communication strategies at early stages of major enquires, and senior investigating officers value the support of the press officers assigned to their enquiries. Important initiatives such as the opening of the custody suite at Carlton, to ease pressures on the central bridewell, and Operation Kingdom on the Bestwood estate, have also been well supported by corporate communications staff, with positive effect.

35. Nottinghamshire Police has received some very damaging publicity in the last few years, including the City BCU being labelled, undeservedly, the 'gun crime capital of the UK' and featuring in a statistically flawed league table which described it as the UK's most crime-ridden city (May 2006). The impact of such lurid descriptions on the organisation's professional reputation, while grave, is overshadowed by the damaging consequences for the economy of the city and county. In order to minimise these negative consequences and help to ensure balanced media messages, a joint protocol was agreed between the force, the police authority and the city council. With just one or two lapses this has worked well, with particular successes including joint briefings by the ACC (Crime) and the city council leader on measures to reduce gun crime, the joint branding of the 'Safer Nottingham' initiative and the previewing before issue of force press releases where the topic concerned may affect the reputation of either the force or the city. All parties need to sustain their commitment to this protocol, recognising the damage that can be caused by ill-considered communications.

Community consultation and partnership

36. In terms of community consultation there are both existing and new processes in place which help to incorporate community views in decision-making. The police authority conducts market research and telephone surveys which identified, among other things, the need for the 'Getting Back to You' campaign to bridge the gap between initial contact and follow-up information to advise on progress. A 'Tell Us' initiative aims to channel public concerns on direction and control matters to feed into analysis on strategic business review. The two pathfinders for neighbourhood policing have established local area groups to inform priority-setting. The force's gun and violent crime strategy was heavily influenced by consultation with voluntary and community groups; 'hard to reach' youth groups were embraced using some innovative questionnaires, while Nottinghamshire has won a national award for its effective use of independent advisory groups. One particular success has been the joint tasking process between the city BCU and relevant staff from the city council's community safety department, and this is being rolled out across the other three divisions. 'Hot spot' meetings are chaired alternately by the commander and city council leader, supported by an analyst and with proper accountability for action.

HMI judgement

37. A consensus before the re-inspection began was that another 'green shoots' report would be unhelpful. The force has, in effect, been on probation for several years and there is a need now for some certainty - either to initiate a statutory intervention, with the attendant consequences for the force and the county, or declare the force to be efficient and effective, with or without qualifications. This judgement is evidence-led; that is, based on whether the force has made sufficient progress against the objectives laid down in July 2005. The assessment criteria underpinning this inspection look for 'substantial practical advancement' to generate a final judgement on the force's efficiency and effectiveness. HMIC's interpretation of the evidence is summarised below (Table 6), together with areas for improvement, recognising that many of these are already in train.

38. Judgements on forces' overall performance are rarely straightforward, because policing is complex. This inspection of Nottinghamshire examined three broad areas of activity: neighbourhood policing which aims to provide visibility and reassurance; tackling volume crime at BCU level; and the prevention and investigation of serious and organised criminality, including murder.

39. Neighbourhood policing has, so far, been a success story for Nottinghamshire, with the two pathfinder sites likely to attract a *Good* grading in this year's baseline assessment. Real and sustained progress has been made in improving the force's response to the demands of Level 2 policing, although armed criminality is still a threat and there remain vulnerabilities in managing risk. The picture on volume crime is challenging. Detections are increasing for all crime types other than robbery. Total crime in both the county and city fell in 2005/06 while levels rose in comparator forces and BCUs. Increases were recorded in violent crime and robbery, as was also the case in peer groups, and the number of burglaries in both county and city fell more sharply than elsewhere. But the starting point for these reductions was so far off the pace compared with peers that, despite some creditable results in the last year or so, the levels of burglary and vehicle crime in Nottinghamshire – and the city in particular – are still far higher than in similar areas. Continued progress is needed bring the force's results closer to its MSF average.

40. Taking into account all of the evidence relating to the assessment criteria laid down by HMI O'Connor, and in the context both of Nottinghamshire's recent history and its current operating environment, I conclude that the force is efficient and effective within the terms of the Police Act 1996. This judgement acknowledges that unacceptably high levels of burglary and vehicle crime persist but policing is a far wider mission than volume crime. HMIC expects the force to continue making progress in reducing crime and it remains 'engaged' in that its performance will continue to be monitored by the Home Office (Police and Crime Standards Directorate) and HMIC, if and until disengagement is agreed by the Police Minister following a recommendation by the tripartite Police Performance Steering Group.

Kate Flannery
HM Inspector of Constabulary, Central Region
June 2006

Table 6 – Summary of judgements and areas for improvement

<i>Assessment criteria</i>	<i>Judgement</i>	<i>Areas for improvement</i>
<p><u>Tackling major crime</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - establish Serious & Organised Crime Unit - create dedicated source-handling unit - staff and train Homicide Unit teams - provide suitable MIRs - appoint a Director of Intelligence and create delivery plan - enhance proactive capability for Level 2 work 	Substantial practical advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop appropriate performance accountability frameworks ➤ Consider HMIC advice on location and vetting of DSHU staff ➤ Reconsider the staffing levels in the Homicide Unit ➤ Deliver training of Homicide Unit staff ➤ Continue improvement of problem profiles and other NIM products ➤ Enhance the capacity of the central TSU to support Level 2 proactivity
<p><u>Balancing serious crime/volume crime/citizen focus</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better to Best programme - comprehensive performance framework - neighbourhood policing 	Substantial practical advancement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue development of performance framework for Level 2 and citizen focus ➤ Build on initial success of neighbourhood policing to secure successful roll-out
<p><u>Volume crime performance</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - crime reduction performance in relation to MSF - sanction detections - improve City BCU performance 	Insufficient improvement to close MSF gap	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Continue improvement in crime reduction and sanction detections ➤ Build on improved partnership working to reduce crime further in city BCU ➤ Prioritise City BCU for improvement, including additional resources if necessary ➤ Encourage a more intrusive style of management and supervision ➤ Improve core processes and 'housekeeping'
<p><u>Improved performance management</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus meetings - silver commanders 	Significant improvement but need to re-energise performance meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Re-launch Focus meetings to secure greater engagement and impact ➤ Expand coverage to Level 2, citizen focus and all SPIs
<p><u>Leadership</u></p>	Significant improvement but further opportunities for impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identify the best people in the organisation and deploy them to posts which will have the greatest impact on performance; post-holders who cannot deliver performance need to be developed or moved.

<p><u>Infrastructure and processes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - risk management - demand management - reputation management - community consultation and partnership 	<p>Substantial practical advancement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Develop a full suite of problem profiles and keep these updated ➤ Raise awareness of risk management issues across the force ➤ Continue close oversight of DPMU work ➤ Undertake diversity impact assessments for HR work ➤ Extend succession planning to ranks other than chief inspector ➤ Evaluate the revised shift system to ensure that it is increasing capacity ➤ Ensure adherence to media protocol
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