

**Inspection of Newcastle BCU
Northumbria Police
February 2005**



CONTENTS

	page
Introduction	1
Overview	3
Newcastle BCU.....	4
Part One – Leadership	6
The BCU Management Team	6
Visibility of SMT.....	7
Strategic Management	8
Partnerships	9
Operational Management	12
Demand Management	16
Organisational Culture	16
Communications	16
Complaints	17
Working Relationships	17
Resource Management	19
Administration	19
Financial Management	20
Health and Safety	20
Absence Management	21
PDR/Training and Development	22
Estates	23
Special Constabulary	23
Police Community Support Officers	24
Part Two – Performance	25
Performance Management and Accountability.....	25
Intelligence-led Policing	26
Briefing Systems	28
BCU Performance	29
Crime Data Analysis	30
Crime Reduction	30
Crime Investigation	32
Draft Detection Plan	34
Forensic Hits Team	34
Summary	36
Recommendations	37

Introduction

1. Between 31 January and 4 February 2005 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary conducted the Inspection of Newcastle Basic Command Unit (BCU).
2. There are over 300 basic command units (BCUs) in England and Wales and no two are alike. They vary in size from a little over 100 officers to over 1,000; some serve densely populated, ethnically diverse inner cities, while others cover vast tracts of sparsely populated countryside. What they do share are some key aims and objectives, specifically to work with partner agencies on reducing crime in their areas, and to do so with integrity. Scrutiny of police performance is shifting from aggregate force outcomes to the performance of individual BCUs, with the recognition that policing is essentially a locally delivered service. However, BCUs are not islands – they operate within a framework of policy and support determined by headquarters based chief officer teams. The precise configuration of policing units and the balance of resources between HQ and BCUs varies across the 43 forces in England and Wales.
3. The focus on performance in reducing crime and disorder is likely to be relentless. Forces and police authorities, working with local authorities and other community safety partners, will need to raise their game year after year. Indeed, the statutory regime of Best Value demands 'continuous improvement'. The Government recognises the need for additional resources in the fight against crime, and the 2002-05 comprehensive spending review (CSR) settlement is acknowledged to be the most generous the police service has received for many years. More police officers, better communications and information technology and ever more sophisticated forensic techniques should all enhance police effectiveness. However, the potential for the service as a whole to deliver better results in crime reduction and detection cannot conceal an inescapable fact – that performance between BCUs operating in similar policing environments and with comparable resources varies to a degree that is at times remarkable.
4. Leadership by BCU commanders is probably the single most important determinant of BCU effectiveness. The responsibilities of command are significant, and some superintendents are not well supported in terms of the strength of their management teams and/or the quality and quantity of support from headquarters. Without exception, staff in pilot sites wanted their management teams to be more visible and accessible. One outcome from BCU inspections should be a better understanding of the practical manifestations of effective leadership.
5. In trying to make sense of the variations in operational performance, which exist – to differing degrees – in every force, a key ingredient is *focus*. The best performers focused efforts of their staff through timely, dynamic local briefings that are supported by a well managed intelligence system. They set targets and make sure that staff are aware of them; they communicate results and celebrate success. They define responsibilities and hold individuals to account for how they have used their time. In some BCUs this performance culture is absent, reflected in the fact that the personal development review

(PDR) system of setting and monitoring individual goals is in abeyance. A nationwide rolling programme of inspections that focus upon performance and leadership is thus likely to produce an upturn in results.

Note

For consistency, the term Basic Command Unit (BCU) will be used throughout this report, albeit that within Northumbria Police local policing is delivered through an area command structure.

Overview

- 1.** The Northumbria Police area covers approximately 5,553 square kilometres, serving a population of over 1,381,000. The resident minority ethnic population is estimated to be in the region of 37,000 based on the 2001 census figures.
- 2.** At the time of the BCU Inspection, the Force had an establishment of 4,083 police officers and 1,708 police staff.
- 3.** Since the start of 2004, the Force has been in the implementation phase of a widespread restructuring programme entitled 'Public Service and Performance Review' (PSPR), the main aims of which are:

Improved service

The vision is to build upon current success and equip all staff to provide an improved service to the public at a local level. This is fully supported by the Northumbria Police Authority.

Partnerships

To build strong links with partner agencies that will assist Northumbria Police to deliver an improved policing service to the community.

NIM/Problem solving

Resources should be more focused and better deployed through improved intelligence and problem solving.

Local policing

Each area command will have police teams led by community inspectors responsible for policing in their local communities. This form of policing is concerned with local officers being visible, accessible and providing reassurance, supported by headquarters departments.

Bureaucracy

Cutting bureaucracy to ensure more time is available to front line officers for patrol and community engagement.

Performance

Enabling Northumbria Police to achieve the highest levels of performance.

- 4.** The restructuring saw the Force reconfigure from 15 BCUs to six, commencing on 1 April 2004. One advantage of the change is that by 1 April 2005 all boundaries will be coterminous with CDRP and local authority designations.
- 5.** The Force is headed by the chief officer group, which has responsibility for the strategic direction and control of Northumbria Police. The team is led by the Chief Constable, and he is supported by a deputy chief constable, four assistant chief constables

and a director of finance and central services.

6. The following are agreed as the strategic priorities of the Force:

- To reduce crime and disorder and make communities safer;
- to release the potential of Force personnel;
- to improve the quality of life through working in partnership with the community and public, private and voluntary bodies; and
- to ensure that all activities support front line policing.

7. The annual revenue budget for Northumbria Police for 2004/05 was set at £249,810,000. Comparatively little is currently devolved to BCU control within the Force, although this position is changing with the devolvement of police staff salaries from 1 April 2005.

Newcastle BCU

8. The Newcastle area command is responsible for policing the whole of Newcastle, a unitary metropolitan borough council, with 26 council wards and serving a resident population of around 274,000 people. The local authority is led by the Liberal Democrat party following recent elections. This follows approximately 30 years of Labour control.

9. The borough has a diverse mix of people within its boundaries; approximately 6.9% of the resident population are from minority ethnic groups, the predominant group being Asian. There is a slightly younger age profile than the national average with almost 10% being full-time students compared to the average for England and Wales of 5.1%.

10. Newcastle has a strong economy with ongoing, competitive commercial development and a thriving night-time economy. There is a stated intention to move away from the 'party city' reputation of the past to more mature and co-ordinated management of these issues.

11. The BCU has an establishment of 825 police officers (including 15 funded officers) and 124 police staff (with 13.5% police staff vacancies at the time of Inspection) and 84 special constables (49 in post). Its devolved budget amounts to almost £2.4m for 2004/05.

12. The process of the Inspection was tightly focused around leadership and performance. Staff revisiting the baseline assessment process supplemented the inspection team: interviews with key stakeholders could thus be conducted for both disciplines without disrupting the business of the Force unduly. Pre-inspection analysis of key data and relevant documents was coupled with a series of interviews with headquarters portfolio holders, including the assistant chief constable (territorial operations).

13. During the BCU Inspection week, the team interviewed over 100 members of staff at all ranks and grades. Members of the Northumbria Police Authority and a cross-section of partner agencies, including the chair of the crime and disorder reduction partnership (CDRP), were seen. A number of reality checks and data gathering exercises were performed during this period, including discussions with staff at outlying police stations, the intelligence unit, the custody suite and both the Force's area communications rooms. The process concluded with a detailed debrief to the BCU Commander and his senior management team (SMT), followed by a similar meeting with the deputy chief constable.

14. The inspection team would like to express its thanks to the BCU Commander and his staff for the courtesy and assistance afforded them during the course of the Inspection. In particular, the constructive participation and the helpful nature of the BCU staff at all ranks and grades is a credit to the management team.

Part One: Leadership

The BCU Management Team

The Commander

1.1 The chief superintendent has 24 years' service. He was appointed Commander at Newcastle BCU on its restructure from four BCUs to one in April 2004. His service history is primarily investigative based, although he has broad operational experience having served in Newcastle City, Newcastle West, Sunderland North, Sunderland Central and Washington area commands in a variety of uniform and CID roles. He has experience working in the following headquarters departments: community safety, professional standards and criminal justice. The chief superintendent holds a BSc (Hons) in biochemistry and a BA (Hons) in criminal justice studies and has successfully completed the strategic command course.

Superintendent (Operational Policing)

1.2 The post holder has responsibility for operational policing within Newcastle BCU. He has 27 years' service and prior to his appointment as superintendent (operations) at Newcastle, he was head of the community safety department and has previous experience as a BCU Commander at Newcastle West and Newcastle Central.

Superintendent (Operations Support)

1.3 The superintendent (operations support) has in excess of 33 years' police service and has been a superintendent for eight years. He has worked within the professional standards department and as BCU Commander at Newcastle North. He has extensive training and experience appropriate to his role including that appertaining to the BCU's responsibility to Newcastle International Airport.

Chief Inspector (Operations)

1.4 The chief inspector (operations) has 31 years' service and has worked at Newcastle Central for four years. Prior to this posting, he was a detective chief inspector at Sunderland City. He is trained as a football match commander and as a silver commander for the management of serious incidents. His external qualifications include BA (Hons) in English literature.

Detective Chief Inspector (Crime)

1.5 The detective chief inspector has responsibility for crime investigation. He has 18 years' service and has fulfilled roles within uniform and CID at all ranks having served at several BCUs and within the operational support department. His external qualifications include an LLB (Hons) in law.

Detective Chief Inspector (Crime Support)

1.6 The detective chief inspector has 23 years' service with Northumbria Police. His service profile is primarily investigative based, having served at Hexham, Wallsend and Whickham BCUs. He has also served in the following headquarters departments: special branch, professional standards and training. His qualifications include a BA (Hons) in

criminal justice studies and a post graduate certificate in education.

Chief Inspector (Partnerships and Criminal Justice)

1.7 The post holder has responsibility for partnership working and criminal justice. He has 21 years' service in mainly uniformed roles. Operationally, he has served in Sunderland West, Sunderland North, Northumberland, Washington and Newcastle BCUs. He has also gained experience in two headquarters departments - operational support and performance review/inspectorate.

Chief Inspector (Community Policing)

1.8 The post holder has 23 years' service. His policing experience is primarily operationally based in uniform coupled with the following headquarters departments: personnel services, professional standards and performance review/inspectorate. He is fully qualified as a police trainer, a training development officer and an OSPRE assessor/role actor. His external qualifications include BA (Hons) in criminal justice studies and post graduate diploma in management studies, public administration.

Business Manager

1.9 The post of business manager was introduced in July 2004 as part of the Force public service and performance review. Prior to this the most senior BCU police staff member was the administrative services manager (ASM). The business manager for Newcastle BCU joined Northumbria Police in 1996 having held a number of supervisory and management positions in other public sector organisations. She has held the post of administrator and ASM in operational support and ASM criminal justice prior to joining Newcastle BCU as business manager. She has a diploma in management practice (distinction).

Visibility of the Senior Management Team

1.10 Without exception SMT members expressed their preference for personal interaction with staff. However, despite their best efforts, the vast majority of those staff interviewed during the Inspection stated that their visibility was at best sporadic since restructuring, and this was cited by many as a negative element of the change. As the BCU has restructured from four to one, it follows that visibility will be more difficult due to a lack of SMT members at each police station. This has manifested itself in many feeling undervalued, fuelled by lack of acknowledgement of good work and, in the case of police staff, uncertainty over future roles and additional work due to trying to cover unfilled vacancies.

1.11 Staff within functional areas, such as forensic science and the intelligence/NIM process expressed a more positive opinion of SMT visibility, possibly reflecting the particular importance and interest displayed in these areas by SMT members.

1.12 A recurring theme during interview was the lack of both formal and informal acknowledgement of good work by staff at all levels. For example, very few of those staff interviewed were aware of the staff bonus payment scheme and since implementation of the scheme in October 2004, no member of the BCU has been a

beneficiary of that scheme.

1.13 SMT members were keen to emphasise that many staff have received congratulatory e-mails for good work and a database of these is maintained. Nonetheless, staff interviewed raised this matter as an issue of concern and the BCU SMT needs to ensure that good work is effectively acknowledged and promoted to staff working within the BCU.

1.14 **HMIC urges SMT members to take every opportunity to ensure that staff working within the BCU feel valued and their efforts are appropriately rewarded.**

1.15 **In addition, HMIC hopes that the final police staff structure can be quickly finalised and appropriate vacancies filled to alleviate these additional pressures.**

1.16 Overall, staff had confidence in the SMT, understood the heavy workloads involved in running a large BCU, and expressed the view that SMT members are all approachable and supportive. Staff associations are very complimentary about the SMT and in particular they feel consulted, valued and their views properly considered.

Strategic Management

1.17 The BCU Commander has primary responsibility for the strategic development of the BCU, both internally, as leader of the change programme, and externally, with partner agencies. He represents Northumbria Police on both the local strategic partnership (LSP) and the area CDRP.

1.18 During the last eight months the Commander has led the BCU through an intense period of change - restructuring from four separate Newcastle BCUs to one command servicing the whole of the Newcastle area. One of the main advantages of this change is that the policing boundaries are to match those of the local authority and this will facilitate more integrated and consistent decision-making at the local strategic levels. Most of the policing structures are determined but work continues to finalise several key issues, including police staff structures and several technological matters (affecting boundary changes). The restructuring has clearly consumed a significant proportion of the SMT's time, yet its operational focus remains strong and members are particularly supportive of the National Intelligence Model process to ensure operational tasking meets priorities set through the BCU control strategy.

1.19 Longer term planning is less evident and may have suffered as a consequence of demands placed on the command team during this difficult period. Whilst acknowledging that it has not been a Force requirement to date to have a formal business plan, HMIC is concerned that there is no single plan or similar process to draw together all the separate strands of BCU development into a single, SMARTS document. This should provide direction for the BCU over the next 12 months, being an all-inclusive plan outlining strategies and intended resource usage to achieve intended goals. It is recognised that the Force has identified a corporate need for a business plan from April 2005. An 'Area Command Plan' exists setting out broad objectives but it does not provide the necessary

detail nor demonstrate how objectives are to be achieved.

1.20 Importantly, there are corporate plans and reviews that do not appear to have been actioned within the BCU. Senior managers are not aware of their existence and similar work is being undertaken in isolation of the corporate recommendations.

Recommendation 1

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the BCU Commander champions the introduction of an integrated and comprehensive business plan for Newcastle BCU. The Commander should ensure that the BCU has identified the capacity and skills required to co-ordinate, manage and evaluate this crucial work to ensure the BCU develops in a corporate and effective manner.

Partnerships

1.21 The inspection team met with a range of partner agencies during the Inspection, including the Newcastle community safety officer and the chair of the local crime and disorder reduction partnership, known locally as the Newcastle community safety partnership.

1.22 There are a number of working groups, some geographically focused and others based on key themes, which report to the Newcastle community safety partnership. The drugs action team is to be fully integrated from April 2005. The partnership has delivered well against the 2002/05 community safety strategy and a number of impressive initiatives are evident.

1.23 That strategy outlines ten objectives, as follows:

- a) Reduce burglary;
- b) reduce vehicle crime;
- c) reduce violent crime;
- d) reduce disorder at the neighbourhood level;
- e) reduce drug, alcohol and substance abuse;
- f) increase support for vulnerable groups;
- g) improve community confidence;
- h) focusing on areas of greatest need;
- i) improve partnership working; and
- j) reduce crime in the city centre.

1.24 There is strong synergy between this plan and the objectives of both Newcastle BCU and those overarching priorities of Northumbria Police. Overall, there was clear evidence that partnership working is integral to the performance of Newcastle BCU.

Partnership relationships are mature both internally and externally at many levels. Those partners interviewed spoke positively about the strength of the working relationships with police personnel, in particular the BCU Commander and the chief inspector (partnerships and criminal justice).

1.25 There is undoubtedly a progressive attitude to community safety and problem solving, evidenced by the number and quality of initiatives running within Newcastle, including:

- a) The establishment of joint working arrangements between the BCU's anti-social behaviour unit and 'Your Homes Newcastle' (an 'arms length' company to the city council managing the council housing stock). The unit consists of an inspector, a sergeant and four constables, working closely with the 'Your Homes Newcastle' (YHN) and other agencies. Joint information sharing protocols and very positive action have led to 129 evictions, 150 anti-social behaviour agreements and 14 anti-social behaviour orders since April 2004.

The Home Office initiative 'it's your call' anti-social behaviour hotline is currently answered by staff within YHN. Reports are linked to the council run Street Warden scheme in order to address quality of life issues for residents.

- b) the establishment of the Pathfinder/LIFE (Local Initiatives For the East end) team of an inspector, a sergeant, twelve constables (four externally funded) and four police staff members (all externally funded). The team, working with the YHN staff, 'Turning Point' (arrest referral), Newcastle City Council, street wardens, local schools and other partners, has undertaken numerous initiatives (proactive and preventative in nature) tied into renewal funding on local council estates;
- c) the use at the sector partnership level of the National Intelligence Model structure to determine an appropriate prioritisation through an agreed control strategy and action through tasking. This is innovative and was viewed very positively by those partners consulted during the Inspection;
- d) the introduction of the 'Arch', racist incident helpline and follow up action to ensure a 'joined' up approach by partner agencies;
- e) the employment of a partnership funded (now mainstream police funded) drugs liaison officer working with schools, housing providers and employers to deliver targeted drugs inputs;
- f) full participation in the 'prolific and priority offenders' scheme and

the 'restrictions on bail' linking both pre and post sentencing activity into a fully integrated approach to offender management;

- g) the impending introduction, through neighbourhood renewal funding, of two specialist domestic violence support workers to initially share victim support with the police but, over time, to take full responsibility for this role;
- h) the education led, 'Behaviour Improvement Programme' to fund a part-time worker in key secondary schools in the area; and
- i) the development of a multi-faceted problem solving approach to the problem of university students becoming the victims of domestic burglary, an ongoing problem for the Newcastle BCU.

1.26 In addition, there has been a dedicated community relations unit established in Newcastle West End that has received national acclaim and is considered by HMIC to represent good practice. This unit, which focuses on hate crime and race crime, has excellent relationships with partners (Arch), local minority communities and immigration (who welcome the single point of contact for asylum seekers). The unit also provides a greater understanding on hard to reach groups and is well placed to dispel community tension.

1.27 The main concern of CDRP partners is the impending changes to the role and, most significantly, the increased financial influence of the local strategic partnership (known as the Newcastle Partnership). In particular, there is concern to ensure that the focus remains firmly on crime reduction and safer communities; they fear a wider agenda could divert much needed funding away from effective initiatives and undermine the good work to date.

1.28 Notes from the Newcastle partnership board 'Away Day' (29 September 2004) indicate that the LSP had lacked focus, demonstrable delivery in some areas, and that there was a recognised need to address capacity issues, establish a strong performance orientated culture, look to align partners work and to demonstrate leadership. Government emphasis on the co-ordinating and planning role of this group, coupled with the necessity to better manage separate funding streams through the 'Safer and Stronger Communities Fund' emphasises the importance of this development. It is clear that the Newcastle partnership board has recognised the need for improvements in key areas, particularly the make up and structure of the partnership and the need for a LSP delivery driver or manager (as advocated in correspondence from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to LSPs in December 2004).

1.29 The second generation local public service agreement (LPSA2G) has been submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The proposed theme is '*Improving Life Changes Through Learning*', reflecting the partnership's key priorities.

1.30 In relation to community safety, it states:

‘The Newcastle Plan aims to improve safety in the city by encouraging partnership and community working targeted at local issues and concerns. This will seek to reduce all types of crime particularly burglary, vehicle crime, violent crime and anti-social behaviour. The intention is to increase:

- Support for vulnerable people;
- community confidence; and
- effort directed at areas of greatest need.

The focus for the LPSA will seek to tackle these issues with special reference to the life chances of young people with education and personal problems.

Possible target areas include:

- Crime offending rates; and
- anti-social behaviour.’

1.31 The current CDRP community safety strategy is to be reviewed this year, which is timely given the recent change in local government accountability and the enhanced role of the local strategic partnership. The BCU Commander has a firm grasp of these issues, is well respected by the partner agencies and must ensure that the interests of local policing remain high on all agendas.

Recommendation 2

Her Majesty’s Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the BCU Commander takes a proactive and visible stance to ensure that local policing issues are appropriately considered and resourced within the new strategic partnership arrangements in the interests of crime reduction, witness support, investigative process and community safety.

Operational Management

1.32 Newcastle BCU makes good use of external resources available to them and regularly bids through level two tasking for HQ resources. The BCU also features prominently in the headquarters operational support resource supply database.

1.33 The BCU is not fully settled following reorganisation, but there is clearly a strong infrastructure in place to deliver operational policing. The SMT acknowledges that there is still work to be undertaken in some areas, not least in rationalising duty rosters, as there

were a large number of different systems in operation at the time of reorganisation. Work is ongoing in this area and is subject to corporate review and Federation consultation.

1.34 SMT roles and responsibilities align to the new corporate area command policing model. However, some staff were confused about distinction in the roles of the two superintendents and there were issues raised in relation to the chief inspector (criminal justice and partnerships). Several of those interviewed considered that the latter role cuts across that of the chief inspector (community) and that criminal justice responsibilities lie entirely with HQ. The chief inspector (criminal justice and partnerships) provides support at both the strategic and tactical levels of the BCU through appropriate liaison with all partner agencies, including CDRP members, local authorities and CPS. This misunderstanding, whilst understandable, demonstrates the need to better communicate and market the valuable work being undertaken by this post holder. The BCU SMT should ensure that the roles of the two superintendents and that of the criminal justice and partnerships chief inspector are effectively communicated to staff.

1.35 The National Intelligence Model is prominent throughout the BCU and is clearly well utilised in the leadership and management of operational performance. A performance review process is in its infancy within the BCU and was less evident. These are discussed in detail under the 'Performance' section of this report.

1.36 There are a total of 92 sergeants and 700 constables on the BCU divided up between the disciplines as follows:

Figure 1: Distribution of Sergeants & Constables			
Response Policing	Community Policing	Crime	Support
60%	15%	20%	5%

1.37 Newcastle BCU, in accordance with the Force's style of policing, is fully committed to a community based problem solving approach, the chief inspector (community) taking the operational lead in this area and is visible, supportive and actively engaging with staff.

1.38 The Public Service Performance Review project has resulted in a realignment of some staff from response to community policing – community beat managers increasing from 57, on establishment of the single BCU, to over 100 at the time of the Inspection. These include a 'New Deal Team' of 10 officers and two 'Pathfinder Teams' totalling 22 officers.

1.39 For community policing, the BCU is divided into eight geographic sectors, each headed by an inspector, supported by a sergeant (two in the busier sectors), two field intelligence officers and between ten and fifteen constables (community beat managers). Inspectors and sergeants demonstrate strong commitment to their teams and engage fully with partner agencies including attending and participating in the MAPS meetings. These

meetings are well managed and focused and, as outlined in the 'Partnership' section of this report (paragraphs 1.21-1.31), there are numerous examples of initiatives involving partnership support at the operational level.

1.40 Each geographic area has a sector plan or 'inspector's strategy' setting out priorities, crime analysis, working arrangements with partners, background information, contact details and, to varying degrees, tactics and results. Each plan provides an excellent overview of the sector policing arrangements and reflects those issues emerging through NIM and partnership working. The inspectors are to be congratulated on this documentation. The SMT may wish to consider providing a standard framework for future plans and incorporating them (with other plans for the BCU) in the overall BCU business planning process, to include mechanisms for evaluation and identification of best practice (see Strategic Management section above).

1.41 Community beat managers (CBMs) work well with the field intelligence officers, CID officers and the intelligence unit and they feel that they are gradually reducing demand – but this is not measured. There is concern from some that they are covering for shortages on the shifts by attending lower level incidents and from others (in the identified hot spot areas) that ongoing operations are detracting from their ability to sustain community contact.

1.42 The anti-social behaviour team work well across the BCU with both CBMs and response officers in dealing with problem families/individuals on the estates and are acknowledged as having a very positive effect on calls for police service and quality of life issues for residents.

1.43 There is also a small and effective uniformed 'Street and Retail Crime' unit to deal with particular problems in the city centre.

1.44 Response policing is delivered through a five block/shift roster system, the BCU being geographically divided into its four constituent areas. Staff are operationally focused and committed, they know the divisional priorities and are very enthusiastic about the NIM/tasking process. However, they have no real concept of wider BCU performance relating to volumes of crime and detection rates.

1.45 The quality of response team supervision varies enormously in terms of experience and knowledge and the inspection team had some concern about the number of acting sergeants operating within the BCU (eleven acting sergeants were on duty on a single day during the Inspection). The public protection unit expressed concern regarding the knowledge and experience of sergeants to deal with initial action at the scenes of sensitive incidents and, in particular, their concerns referred to acting sergeants. **HMIC urges the SMT to review this situation to ensure that response police officers (many of whom are probationary constables) are appropriately supervised and supported and that supervisors are fully aware of policies and procedures appertaining to PPU issues.**

1.46 The area support group (ASG), dog section and motor patrols have been devolved to the BCU since September. Officers in the dog section believe that this change has improved service delivery, building upon existing good relationships with BCU officers.

1.47 ASG officers are concerned that their roles and responsibilities are not well understood by the majority of officers on the BCU and, in particular, they feel that there needs to be clarity in respect of who has priority over their deployment. They gave examples to the inspection team of officers with less specialist training than themselves struggling to make rapid entries to premises during operations when they were available to assist but were not considered. **In the interest of using ASG officers to best effect, the SMT should clarify issues around their deployment and ensure that these are communicated to all staff working in the BCU.**

1.48 As may be anticipated, motor patrol officers have some concerns about their deployment, resilience and training under the new, devolved structure. The SMT will need to monitor this carefully to ensure that this area of expertise is not devalued.

1.49 The BCU has two proactive teams (focus teams) who are appropriately tasked against the BCU control strategy and tactical assessment – acting on timely, well researched intelligence, they have strong links with the intelligence unit, the FIOs and CBMs working within the sectors. It is anticipated that this team will have a strong influence on performance particularly in relation to detection rates (see performance section later).

1.50 The reactive CID are tied to the old four BCU structure and this is likely to be impeding progress and missing opportunities for enhancing productivity and ‘cross-border’ integration. Officers interviewed did not have knowledge of BCU-wide detection rates in key performance areas. The inspection team was also disappointed that just one day after the BCU target profiles had been e-mailed to all staff, several reactive CID officers were unable to present it, stating that they had already deleted it from their e-mail accounts.

1.51 Operational officers are fully supported by a professional and effective post-charge administration system which includes case builders, case management of offenders and the FAST team (first appearance support team). The inspection team was impressed by the competence and motivation displayed by these staff.

1.52 The BCU has a large number of licensed premises to manage, with many of these concentrated in the city centre. The licensing unit works closely with the local authority licensing section and ‘saturation areas’ are now firmly on the agenda when licensing decisions are made. An appropriate door staff scheme is in operation and joint working with Trading Standards is evident.

1.53 There are a number of other supporting units including the intelligence unit, forensic hits (or converter) team, dedicated source unit, public protection unit, planning and support unit, crime desk, probationer unit and BCU training unit. As appropriate, these will be considered throughout the remainder of the report.

Demand Management:

1.54 One of the main concerns expressed by response officers related to the reduction in their numbers without experiencing a significant reduction in demand, particularly as under the new structure, they had expected CBMs to take responsibility for some of the lower level incidents. During the Inspection it was not possible to make an assessment of the levels of demand placed upon response officers as the BCU does not collate such information routinely. If response officers' perceptions are to be addressed, it is important that appropriate management information be collated, assessed and, importantly, communicated to them. Demand analysis undertaken in respect of response officers, CID and CBMs would properly inform decisions regarding appropriate duty rosters.

1.55 The use of fully (PEACE) trained police staff within the custody suite to undertake interviews and file compilation for more minor offences, to release operational officers' time, is viewed positively. There are appropriate safeguards in place to ensure operational staff are not deskilled and this initiative is proving very popular and will be evaluated shortly.

1.56 HQ communications department also accepts that more can be done centrally to alleviate pressures from response officers by dealing with calls for service in ways other than the deployment of an officer and this is to be the subject of a Best Value review in the near future.

1.57 Whilst reactive/investigative CID officers did not appear to hold excessively heavy workloads, the BCU allocates approximately 80% of all crime recorded for investigation.

1.58 **The SMT should satisfy itself that demand management profiles are assessed to inform their decisions on appropriate staffing levels. The level of 'screened in' crime based on solvability factors should be reviewed as greater focus may assist in improving the detection rate of crime in key areas (see Performance later).**

Organisational Culture

Communications:

1.59 Day-to-day communication in relation to individual roles and responsibilities is good.

1.60 There are appropriate management and functional meetings at the command team level. Policy group and SMT meetings are regularly held, are minuted and placed on the intranet for all staff to view, which represents good communication. However, actions from these meetings are not SMARTS based and proved difficult to track; the addition of an action matrix would represent a significant improvement.

1.61 Communication in relation to strategic development, both Force-wide and BCU level, was less apparent during interviews. Inspectors attend a bimonthly management group meeting with the SMT members but are not part of the SMT, policy group or

strategy days. There is a discernible gap in knowledge and understanding of ongoing BCU and Force-wide development at this level that is even more pronounced at sergeant level. This detracts from the potential benefits of restructuring as many staff question the changes without a good understanding of the rationale.

1.62 Inspectors’ meetings with their staff are not minuted and it is not therefore possible to determine how well corporate, policy, legislative and tactical matters are communicated by them to front line operational service deliverers. **HMIC feels that there are significant advantages in the BCU Command Team being able to monitor actions from such meetings and considers it essential that they be minuted.**

1.63 The BCU is externally marketing the new structures, community initiatives (including local contact through the sector teams), crime and drug related operations. The inspection team witnessed several positive examples both in local newspapers and on the Force web pages of initiatives taking place in Newcastle.

Complaints:

1.64 The table below illustrates the number of complaints received for officers in the Newcastle BCU area for the past two financial years:

Figure 2: Complaints						
Year	Complaints	Complaints per 1,000 officers	Complaints finalised	% of police officer complaints finalised	Complaints Substant.	% of complaints Substant.
2002/03	138	178.13	140	101.45%	3	2.14%
2003/04	154	197.22	200	129.87%	5	2.50%
% Change	11.59%	10.72%	42.86%	28.42 p.p.	66.67%	0.36 p.p.

1.65 Newcastle BCU experienced an 11.6% increase in the number of complaints recorded from 138 in 2002/03 to 154 in 2003/04.

1.66 The average rate of recorded complaints per 1,000 officers was 197.22 in 2003/04 (i.e. equating to almost a fifth of the BCU’s police officer establishment). This represents an increase of 10.7% compared to the previous year’s rate.

1.67 The BCU Commander has taken a strong interest in this area: all complaints are brought to his attention and the HQ professional standards department informs him whenever an officer receives three complaints within a 12 month period. The Commander then sees those individuals to ensure that there are no ongoing problems and emphasise the importance of such matters to these staff. Consideration is given to complaints that require a more strategic focus and these are discussed at SMT meetings.

Working relationships:

1.68 Working relationships are generally very positive, professional and supportive. The Force public service performance review has inevitably generated some uncertainty

amongst staff. As may be expected, the loss of staff from '24/7' response policing has caused concern among a number of sergeants and constables working in this area. There has also been resentment that those officers who move to the CBM role are eligible to special priority payments once they have two years' service, whereas uniform response officers are not eligible until they have completed five years' service. However, there is an acknowledgement by response officers that the community problem solving approach is beginning to reduce demand on them - in particular, the anti-social behaviour team and the civilian interview team (in custody areas), are viewed very positively by response officers.

1.69 As stated previously, some concern was expressed by uniform response officers that they had expected CBMs to deal with lower level calls for service from the public once the crime desk had been established to manage this process, yet it had not happened.

1.70 **HMIC feels that the BCU command team should ensure that the roles and responsibilities of the CBMs and the crime desk are clearly communicated to all staff to avoid ambiguity and a possibility of undermining the benefits of the review.**

1.71 During the Inspection there was evidence that many staff were not fully supportive of the restructure: loss of SMT visibility and centralisation of key functions (intelligence units and custody suites, in particular) were the main causes of dissatisfaction. Officers did not appear to appreciate the benefits that can accrue from the co-ordination and analysis of BCU-wide intelligence, nor the opportunities for improved handling of prisoners but rather lamented the loss of immediate personal contact and the need to travel slightly longer distances to access these facilities. Similarly, response officers, CBMs and reactive CID viewed their responsibilities narrowly, i.e. relating to their geographic area rather than looking at the wider issues facing the BCU. As a result response officers had concerns about the level of support they experienced (from an officer safety viewpoint) yet had no cognisance of the support available from neighbouring sectors. Reactive detectives may 'help out' their colleagues in a neighbouring sector rather than seeing it as their responsibility and there was limited 'cross-border' sharing of initiatives between CBMs.

1.72 Most sergeants interviewed regretted the changes seeing only the negative affects on their team of officers. Inspectors were, in the main, supportive, enthusiastic and operationally focused but displayed a tendency to 'wait and see whether it all works out' rather than proactively promoting and driving through the necessary changes. HMIC feels that, for the restructure to be successful and for the BCU to reach its full potential, it is essential that inspectors take a more proactive role and that they see themselves as facilitators of change rather than recipients of that change programme.

Recommendation 3

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the BCU Command Team renews its efforts to actively promote the PSRP change programme through a co-ordinated communications plan. BCU inspectors, in particular, must be well informed, actively engaged in this promotional work, and tasked to facilitate appropriate elements of the change programme.

Resource Management

Administration:

1.73 The new police staff structures are appropriate to the size of the BCU and the introduction of a business manager, strongly supported by two support services managers, is a key development. The business manager is extremely enthusiastic, committed and clearly has a good grasp of the development needed to take the BCU forward. It is expected that the finance officer vacancy will be filled shortly to ensure the team has the necessary skills and capacity to service such a large BCU.

1.74 Since 15 September 2004, a series of think tank or focus group meetings have been chaired by the business manager to identify improvements in a number of key areas. There has been a focus on ensuring that the BCU operates corporately, standardising where possible, and sharing best practice. The make up of this group is diverse and is drawn from staff around the BCU. Different police staff attend these meetings depending on the topic under discussion, and there is good representation from the outstations.

1.75 The minutes of these meetings identify that the following topics have been reviewed:

- a) Appropriate structures for word processing/tape transcription, administration, finance and secretariat support;
- b) administrative recording processes including use of the Force personnel system, file management, accident database, performance development review etc;
- c) asset management – including vehicles, communication, specialist/technical equipment and furniture;
- d) buildings/estates improvements and identifying their best use;
- e) best use of CCTV including resourcing and training;
- f) HR issues including training, welfare, diversity, recruitment, use of recuperative duties and special needs;
- g) lost/found/other property – including retention, security, storage, disposal; and
- h) health and safety issues.

1.76 The involvement of staff in this way represents good consultation and will undoubtedly lead to workable, pragmatic solutions and the sharing of good practice. Inclusion of an action matrix to the minutes, as suggested in relation to policy group and SMT minutes, would make tracking actions much easier and would help the group manage the outputs. **HMIC is impressed by the obvious enthusiasm and commitment of the participants and compliments the SMT on the establishment of this group.**

Financial Management:

1.77 The BCU has appropriate budgetary provision and is expected to complete the 2004/05 financial year with a balanced budget or will come in just under budget. As may be expected, given the recent reorganisation, the staff costs (overtime), vehicles and communications budgets are forecast to result in modest overspends but these can be appropriately managed within the overall financial provision allocated to the BCU. The SMT has recognised it needs to increase the vehicle fleet to provide more capacity and reduce ad hoc, incidental costs such as additional mileage payments and vehicle hire and this has recently been actioned. Overtime will decrease once the police staff structures are finalised and vacant posts filled. The BCU does not currently hold the police staff salary budget (but will from April 2005), so is unable to offset overtime costs from the savings that accrue from holding vacancies.

1.78 There are a number of external funding streams including:

- Life/Pathfinder;
- adult persistent offenders, Newcastle – intensive supervision and monitoring;
- funding for the arson taskforce officer;
- New Deal – CCTV;
- funding for policing the Newcastle Town Moor Festival; and
- airport – part-funding officers.

1.79 The SMT is aware of the need to consider long-term provision and possibly ‘exit strategies’ in the event that any of these external financial sources cease.

Health and Safety:

1.80 Health and safety structures are in place. Health and safety risk assessments have been undertaken at police stations, a health and safety group, although in its infancy, has been established within the BCU and health and safety is a standing agenda item at SMT meetings. The business manager takes a lead role in this area.

1.81 During the Inspection, staff associations raised health and safety concerns regarding the custody facilities at Pilgrim Street police station. It was pleasing to note that these matters had already been identified and were being addressed. The SMT should consider whether better communication of identified health and safety improvements is necessary and ensure that representatives of the staff associations are invited to attend the health and safety group meetings.

Absence Management:

Police Officers:

1.82 The sickness rate for police officers in Newcastle BCU (combining the performance of the four previous BCUs) during 2003/04 was commendable. The figure of 7.56 days per officer represents a 5.23% decrease in sickness compared to the previous year, ranking the BCU second in the Force (one day less than the Force average) and third in the most similar BCU group (MSBCU).

1.83 Consideration of recent sickness absence data collated by the Force indicates that the sickness rate per officer has been maintained at this low level, i.e. 4.78 days per officer for the part year period April to October 2004, compared to 4.63 for the same period in 2003. Whilst acknowledging that the establishment of police officers in the BCU has increased and that overall sickness absence is low, short-term sickness of police officers is showing a 45% increase on last year. The SMT is encouraged to ensure that its absence management policies are vigorously pursued by line managers as experience proves that back to work interviews and regular contact by supervisory officers can result in significant improvements on short-term sickness rates.

Police Staff:

1.84 Police staff sickness per employee is higher than that of police officers at 11.8 days (2003/04) which is slightly above the Force average (11.2 days) and one day higher than the MSBCU average (10.8).

1.85 Consideration of recent sickness absence data collated by the Force indicates that the sickness rate is increasing for police staff members in Newcastle BCU rising from 6.8 days per member of staff for the period April-October 2003, to 9.6 days over the same period this year. The main area of concern is in medium-term sickness (8-27 days) where it has increased by 121% compared to last year.

1.86 Overall time lost to sickness absence in relation to both police officers and police staff in Newcastle BCU is increasing (see table below). Increased numbers of police officers since 2003 explains why sickness has increased overall but not substantially per officer. Increases in police staff sickness is of concern.

Figure 3: Sickness Absence			
	Q1 to 2 of 2003/04	Q1 to 2 of 2004/05	Change
Hours lost through sickness - police officers	29,660 hours	34,081 hours	14.91%
Hours lost through sickness - police staff	5,979.20 hours	8,004.22 hours	33.87%

1.87 During the Inspection it was clear that considerable work is being undertaken by the local health management group on managing back to work, recuperative programmes and there is ongoing liaison with occupational health. Nobody within the BCU had single responsibility for both police officer and police staff absence however, and they tended to

be considered separately. The business manager took responsibility for police staff sickness whilst inspectors took responsibility for police officers under their command.

Recommendation 4

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the BCU command team review its application of absence management policies and procedures to ensure that police staff absence is subject to the same degree of supervisory attention, welfare support and information analysis as that of police officer sickness. Responsibility should be ascribed within the SMT to provide a single overview of sickness rates and that these are subject to regular assessment and review.

PDR/Training and Development:

1.88 The BCU has four dedicated and motivated training officers and there is a structured training programme in place for response officers with similar programmes being developed for community beat officers and CID. The probationer tutor unit consists of two sergeants and 22 constables and was favourably commented upon by those interviewed during the Inspection. The unit impressed members of the inspection team. The sergeants' drive and commitment in particular, is to be applauded.

1.89 The BCU SMT is actively encouraging short-term secondments of officers to work in specialist areas including CID, intelligence unit and the focus teams. This is an excellent way to develop knowledge and skills and break possible inter-departmental barriers.

1.90 Fifty performance development reviews (PDRs) for staff working within the Newcastle BCU were examined during the Inspection. In the main, performance had been assessed for the previous 12 months by the subject's line manager but there was a lack of identified development/training requirements and very few objectives tied into the longer-term priorities of the BCU.

1.91 There is an acknowledgement at Force level that the current PDR system is not effective and there is an intention to develop a new system based on the national competency framework. Until then it will be very difficult to draw training/development needs out of the existing process to inform an integrated training plan. In an attempt to overcome this deficiency the BCU has been required to undertake a skills audit but the inspection team had reservations that this did not appear comprehensive.

1.92 The Force has undertaken a poster campaign in order to, firstly, inform staff openly and honestly that the current system is not working and, subsequently, to positively build on this approach to gain staff confidence and support for the new system, once available. Unfortunately a number of those line managers interviewed at Newcastle

felt that the initial stage of the poster campaign was undermining their attempts to review officers' performance and to give them the direction necessary for their development. HMIC is concerned that this situation does not continue for longer than necessary and that, if the new system is to take some time to implement (particularly if dependent on technology), there needs to be consideration given to an interim solution. Line managers must be made aware of the importance of staff development and the need for SMARTS action planning, whatever system is in operation. If not this will threaten the success of the new system, once implemented.

Estates:

1.93 There are significant variations in the standard of police station facilities across the BCU with several in need of some refurbishment or replacement. The Force intends to build new facilities but there are difficulties in securing appropriate sites as they are in great demand with commercial developers. The SMT is fully aware of these issues and the inspection team was pleased to hear that essential work has been agreed through the building review estimates programme and this can now be progressed. In the interests of staff morale, the SMT should inform staff of this development as soon as practicable.

Special Constabulary:

1.94 There are just under 50 active Special Constabulary members supporting the BCU with some exceeding 800 hours' duty per year. They train weekly and those interviewed felt valued by operational colleagues however, not so by management.

1.95 The main areas of concern cited were:

- In the interest of community based policing, special constables feel they are being dissuaded from working with response officers;
- they feel that there is a lack of recognition by supervisors and management team; and
- they feel threatened by the introduction of PCSOs and expressed the opinion that they will become 'third class' officers. They consider that this view is reinforced by the fact that, apart from a few female officers, special constables do not have personal issue body armour.

1.96 Members of the inspection team were concerned that staff interviewed during the Inspection programme appeared to take these valuable volunteers for granted, with limited recognition of their work being offered.

1.97 HMIC urges the BCU SMT to address the Special Constabulary by explaining fully the reasons for aligning them to sector community teams.

1.98 There is also a need to ensure that they receive appropriate recognition of good work.

Police Community Support Officers:

1.99 The first PCSOs were appointed to Newcastle BCU during the Inspection week and have 12 planned appointments for the BCU this year. In the main, those members of staff interviewed during the Inspection were supportive of the introduction of these officers, particularly CBMs who see them as an asset in providing a visible presence and helping to deal with quality of life issues on the estates around the city.

Part Two: Performance

Performance Management and Accountability

2.1 There are a number of mechanisms by which BCU commanders are held to account. The headquarters' performance review team circulates biweekly data for the area command. On a six weekly basis, the Force policy group is convened, chaired by the Chief Constable, and attendees include all department heads and BCU commanders. On a weekly basis, the assistant chief constable (operations) meets with BCU commanders to discuss exceptional performance (based on iQuanta data). There is no formal agenda and minutes are not recorded.

2.2 Annually, a chief officer formally institutes an inspection of each BCU, conducted by the Force Inspectorate. The BCU Commander then draws up a development/action plan that is subject to a more detailed review by the relevant chief officer approximately six months later. A formal inspection was conducted for Newcastle in June 2004 and subsequently reviewed.

2.3 The BCU Commander discusses BCU performance at SMT meetings. The BCU superintendents and chief inspectors then hold appropriate meetings with inspectors and these are cascaded through team meetings with staff on a five weekly cycle for uniformed officers (to match the five week roster) including CBMs, and bimonthly for CID officers. There are no similar processes for the dogs unit, tactical support group or motor patrol officers. None of these meetings result in the recording of detailed discussions regarding performance issues or actions ascribed from them.

2.4 Charts showing the numbers of crimes committed in the key PI categories for the year to date and comparison with the previous year's performance is placed on walls of police stations. This data does not include information on crime trends or detection rates and is difficult to interpret in a meaningful way. Virtually all those staff interviewed had no understanding of the overall BCU performance and did not see it as relevant to their individual role. They considered the NIM process only to be important, as this is driving tactical level performance, which they fully supported. As a consequence, officers did not relate the detailed and accurate recording of MOs on crime reports to the opportunity to detect crime but rather saw it as a chore, for example. The huge potential of the forensic hits team to detect crime (discussed in more detail later) depends on accurate and detailed MOs emphasising that the important link between officers' activities and BCU performance must be made.

2.5 Several performance review systems have been developed but, to get the best out of a performance process, there needs to be a common format with information properly assessed and communicated. In the main, performance data collected was appropriate but the inspection team was concerned that simply measuring the number of intelligence forms submitted by officers as a PI without any qualitative assessment of that information, is likely to prove counterproductive. Intelligence unit staff indicated that they are having difficulty keeping up with intelligence data inputting and there is a danger that important information is delayed or lost because of the large volume being

submitted to them. Inspectors raised this as an area of concern as it is essential that they have full confidence in the timeliness of available intelligence when sanctioning various authorities presented to them.

Recommendation 5

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the BCU Command Team review its performance review regime. In particular, accountability should be ascribed for priority areas, a standard framework of assessment supporting BCU objectives should be introduced and performance information promulgated clearly, illustrating trends and proposed actions. Performance indicators should be reviewed to ensure that they are appropriate, properly measured and communicated to those concerned.

Intelligence-led Policing

2.6 There was substantial evidence that the National Intelligence Model is embedded in the BCU and is fully integrated and focused on driving daily policing activity and operational performance.

2.7 The BCU holds a strategic tasking and co-ordinating meeting (level one) every six months. The meeting is supported by a comprehensive strategic threat assessment. The current control strategy (November 2004–April 2005) identifies four priority crime areas (burglary dwelling, theft from motor vehicles, Class A drugs and the ft of vehicle/taking motor vehicle without owners consent). Whilst the control strategy clearly identifies appropriate prevention, intelligence and enforcement priorities for the crime areas, it is unclear who owns, and who is held accountable for, the delivery of each priority.

2.8 In accordance with the NIM, BCU strategic priorities are discussed at the tactical tasking and co-ordinating group (TTCG) which is chaired by the superintendent (operations). The TTCG is held biweekly and is preceded by two inter-related meetings. The first, held by the intelligence unit the day prior to the TTCG, reviews both results from the previous TTCG and the recommendations for the forthcoming meeting. This is appropriate and useful. The second meeting is held immediately before the main TTCG and is solely attended by SMT members who preview the latest tactical assessment. The value of the second meeting is in question as it appears to pre-task resources and agree priority areas before members of the main meeting have had the opportunity to participate. **The SMT should review the purpose and format of the second (SMT attended) meeting as it appears to limit full involvement of those participating at TTCG and may detract from a more in depth discussion of tactical options.**

2.9 The tactical assessment properly follows the corporate Force template, is of a high standard and is formulated into four main areas:

- A progress report outlining previous tasking and results;
- an overview of BCU crime and disorder offences and projections;
- analysis detailing crime hot spots, crime series and intelligence; and
- recommendations on proposed activity for each control strategy crime area and future events.

2.10 The document and format was well understood by all in attendance.

2.11 As would be expected, following the restructure and the increase in size of the new BCU, attendance at the TTCG has been revised. The meeting that was observed by the inspection team had good attendance from all SMT members, appropriate intelligence unit staff, key partners and scenes of crime officers. Sector inspectors no longer attend TTCG meetings however, the inspection team was satisfied that the BCU has clear structures for sector staff to contribute to the process. Mechanisms for this were clearly understood by staff and requests for the commissioning of target and problem profiles were being submitted and co-ordinated through the TTCG process.

2.12 The inspection team was impressed with the depth of knowledge shown by the chair and SMT members regarding local targets and problems discussed during the meeting. There was a clear commitment and energy for the value of the process by the SMT evident throughout the meeting and indeed across the whole BCU.

2.13 Although crime trends for each control strategy are appropriately assessed within the tactical assessment, this area received limited discussion or attention within the TTCG meeting observed. **The SMT is encouraged to give this information greater coverage during the TTCG meeting in order to develop a more forward looking approach to addressing projected crime trends identified for the BCU.**

2.14 Whilst, initially, tasking did not appear clear to the inspection team present at the main meeting, this was clarified by post TTCG processes. The post TTCG meeting included staff from the intelligence unit (including field intelligence officers) and focus teams. Appropriate tasking and promulgation of information was made at that meeting including use of the BCU NIM database (accessible by all BCU staff).

2.15 The intelligence unit strongly supports the NIM process. It has recently been amalgamated from four into one to match the new structure and provides better cross-boundary intelligence. The unit includes local intelligence officers, assistants, analysts and crime prevention officers. The forensic hits team and focus teams work closely with the unit.

2.16 A clear commitment and drive from all staff working within the intelligence unit was evident. They were motivated and clearly understood their role. Whilst restructuring from four intelligence units to one caused staff in the outer stations some concern, the allocation of two field intelligence officers to each geographic sector has resulted in intelligence sharing and productive working across the BCU.

2.17 Intelligence reports are typed directly onto the computerised intelligence system (CIS) by officers and these are later rated by the local intelligence assistants, who then link and cross-reference them to other nominal records. As stated earlier in the report, there is a clear conflict between operational staff being set performance indicators based purely on the volume of intelligence submissions with no qualitative assessment or alignment to BCU priorities against the need for timely evaluation and availability of intelligence from the system.

2.18 The dedicated source unit (DSU) is located adjacent to the intelligence unit. A detective inspector undertakes the role of dedicated source controller and is supported by a detective sergeant and eight detective constables. A detective inspector heading each unit ensures an appropriate firewall exists between the two units.

2.19 The DSU currently has 35 registered covert human intelligence sources and whilst this is slightly above the recommended level, the detective inspector feels comfortable that this is manageable. The current controller has undertaken extensive reviews in relation to quality of intelligence submitted and has reduced the number of covert human intelligence sources from the 50 inherited at the time of the BCU amalgamation to the more acceptable and manageable level. This is commendable. Similarly, gap analysis work in relation to acquisitive crime will assist the BCU in focusing on control strategy priorities.

Briefing Systems

2.20 The intelligence unit supports the briefing process, providing consistency and high quality briefing material across the BCU through both the circulation of a briefing aide-memoire for supervisors and the generation of daily information bulletins. The bulletins include crime trend/hot spot information, intelligence input (including community intelligence) and outlines appropriate tasking. They are circulated to all supervisors electronically on a daily basis and are relevant to each tour of duty. Community beat managers add any items of interest or areas needing attention through a connected diary system.

2.21 The BCU operates a two-tier briefing format in that response staff receive a standard briefing and an extended briefing. Standard briefings are delivered by supervisors based on the information provided electronically by the intelligence unit, coupled with a briefing note which necessitates them adding and merging details from other documents including the tactical assessment circulated on the NIM database. The briefing note places responsibility on the supervisors to determine the tactics to be employed for the identified tasking areas. Whilst this level of flexibility is valued, some response supervisors may not have the depth of knowledge necessary to undertake this effectively. The BCU management team should satisfy themselves that supervisors have the knowledge and skill to undertake this role. In particular, supervisors need to be able to integrate all NIM products from the intelligence unit to ensure the full range of intelligence-led tactical options are considered when tasking.

2.22 The extended briefing format has been developed for those officers returning to

duty following rest days and the timing of these briefings aligns to the duty rosters worked. Intelligence unit personnel attend these briefings together with sector inspectors and CBMs. These present a more in-depth briefing including an overview of crime during the period they have been away and intelligence updates on target and problem profiles.

2.23 The inspection team applauds the introduction of the extended briefings which require considerable commitment from the intelligence unit. However, the two extended briefings observed by the inspection team could have been improved by the use of technological support, more prioritisation of the intelligence provided (as it was voluminous), and a little more clarity in respect of tasking of staff. **The inspection team would urge the BCU to review the current extended briefing process against the National Briefing Model guidance in particular against the number of items presented and the structure of input.**

2.24 CBMs are encouraged to attend briefings intended for response officers, particularly during late shifts and the attendance and input provided by the CBMs during those ‘extended briefings’ observed was commendable. They demonstrated a commitment for integrated working, enhancing relationships with their colleagues and sharing intelligence. Less communication was apparent between CID and uniformed personnel.

2.25 The results from the briefing/tasking processes of response staff are electronically submitted to the intelligence unit by supervisors. The results are reviewed by the intelligence unit on a daily basis. There is a high level of compliance by response officers to the process but the quality of returns could be significantly improved. **The BCU management team should satisfy itself that appropriate attention is being given by response officers to quality submission of intelligence and tasking returns.**

2.26 The briefing rooms observed were fit for purpose although lacked the display of any meaningful performance data or intelligence information regarding hot spots, crime series, problem or target profiles.

BCU Performance

2.27 Within this section the term MSBCU will be used to make comparisons of performance. Newcastle BCU is grouped with 14 other most similar BCUs as follows:

- Avon and Somerset Bristol
- Cleveland Middlesbrough
- Devon and Cornwall Plymouth (Area 2)
- GMP Salford
- Lancashire Central
- Merseyside South Liverpool
- Northumbria Sunderland (amalgamated from three BCUs)
- Nottinghamshire Area C
- South Yorkshire Sheffield Central

- Staffordshire Stoke on Trent
- West Midlands E1
- West Midlands F2
- West Midlands G1
- West Midlands M1

Crime Data Analysis:

2.28 Throughout this report, data which was originally collated for the four separate BCUs prior to their amalgamation into the single Newcastle BCU, is combined to provide consistent analysis for Newcastle area.

2.29 The table below compares Newcastle BCU's performance for the period April to December 2004 to the same period in 2003. This data has yet to be fully validated and is therefore considered provisional in nature.

Figure 4: Crime Performance					
	Apr-Dec 2003	Apr-Dec 2004	% Change	MSBCU Group for April to December 2004	
				Rank	Average
Recorded crime per 1,000 population	114.86	106.07	-7.65%	9 th	114.14
% Recorded crime detected	32.15%	29.18%	-2.97 p.p.	3 rd	23.58%
Domestic burglaries per 1,000 households	18.08	17.11	-5.38%	8 th	19.51
% Domestic burglaries detected	11.64%	10.47%	-1.17 p.p.	10 th	12.15%
Recorded robberies per 1,000 population	1.05	1.04	-1.04%	3 rd	2.12
% Robberies detected	25.61%	24.48%	-1.13 p.p.	4 th	18.77%
Recorded vehicle crime per 1,000 population	13.82	12.44	-10.01%	8 th	16.76
% Vehicle crime detected	10.77%	9.92%	-0.86 p.p.	7 th	8.41%
Recorded violent crime per 1,000 population	18.91	17.84	-5.67%	3 rd	23.18
% Violent crime detected	55.34%	49.17%	-6.17 p.p.	7 th	44.33%

Crime Reduction:

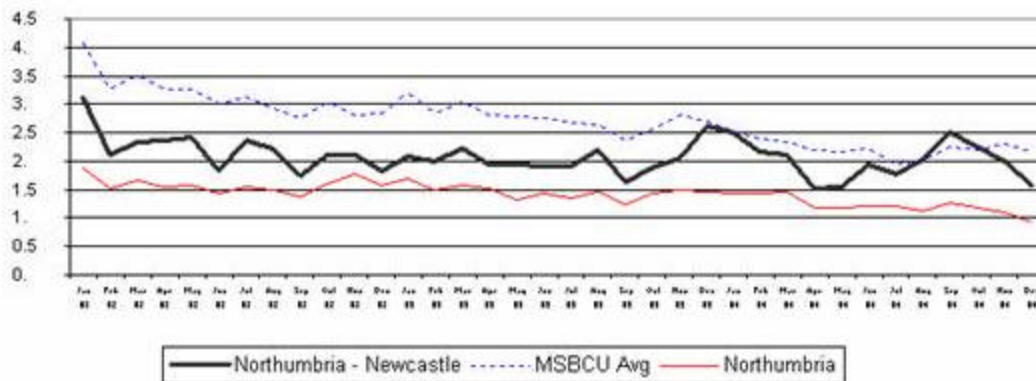
2.30 The BCU has the following targets set for crime and public order reduction during 2004/05:

- Burglary to homes - reduce offences by 2%;
- theft from vehicles - reduce offences by 2%;
- theft of vehicles - reduce offences by 2%;

- violent crime - reduce offences by 3%;
- public order - reduce incidents by 5.2%; and
- criminal damage - reduce offences by 7.1%.

2.31 Newcastle BCU, consistent with the Force, has an enviable track record in crime reduction and this has been the main focus. The BCU continues to experience a reduction with a 7.65% decrease in total crime per 1,000 population from 114.86 to 106.07 crimes. This is 7.5 crimes per 1,000 population below the MSBCU average during 2004 and places it ninth out of the 15 in this group. Crime trend analysis shows that there has been a slight increase in crime since September 2004 to date but longer term projections indicate a continuing steady reduction.

2.32 In relation to domestic burglary per 1,000 households, the BCU has seen a 5.38% reduction compared to 2003. However as the table below illustrates, this is somewhat distorted by the fact that domestic burglaries were relatively low during April to July but from that point onward there was an increase resulting in a high in October that was above the MSBCU average and considerably higher than the Force. During November 2004 the upward trend was reversed, continuing in December (not on the chart displayed) but the SMT needs to monitor this situation carefully and identify remedial action as appropriate.



Comparison Chart - Crimes per 1000 Households: Northumbria - Newcastle Domestic Burglary 'Most Similar' BCU: 01 Jan 2002 - 31 Dec 2004

2.33 In relation to vehicle crime per 1,000 population, the BCU experienced a similar trend to that of domestic burglary. The period April to June 2004 enjoyed relatively low rates of vehicle crime but from that point to October 2004 there was a significant increase (almost 16%) before dropping back slightly in November.

2.34 Newcastle BCU is ranked third in its MSBCU group for robbery which represents good performance. The BCU has seen a 1.04% decrease in the number of robberies per 1,000 population over the year to date and a 2.76% decrease over the last 12 months.

2.35 Similarly, the violent crime target is being easily met (reduction of 2%) as the BCU has enjoyed a 5.67% decrease over the year to date.

2.36 The total number of public disorder incidents during the 2003/04 financial year was 39,280. This equated to 150.6 public disorder incidents per 1,000 population. There was a 5.10% increase in such incidents during 2003/04 compared to 2002/03. In addition, during the nine month period April to November 2004 there has been a further increase compared to the previous year of 5.28%. **The inspection team was surprised, given the high incidence of public disorder, that this did not feature in the BCU control strategy although there was limited discussion on this at the TTCG meeting observed. This is an area the SMT should explore further.**

2.37 In respect of racially aggravated offences per 1,000 population Newcastle BCU has experienced a 30% decrease during 2003/04 compared to the previous year. The BCU is experiencing a decreasing trend, which is currently below the MSBCU average but above the Force average.

2.38 Criminal damage offences have increased by approximately 1% compared to last year and this is clearly above the target reduction required.

2.39 Overall, the SMT is to be congratulated on its performance in relation to crime reduction. Vigilance in relation to crime trends for both domestic burglary and vehicle crime is essential and the Force may wish to consider more challenging reduction targets in several key crime areas for 2005/06 if the BCU is to move into the top quartile of its MSBCU group. It is important that the BCU considers a strategy to reduce public disorder, to embrace prevention, enforcement and partnership initiatives.

Crime Investigation:

2.40 The BCU has the following targets set for crime investigation during 2004/05:

- Burglary to homes - increase detections by 3.4%;
- theft from vehicles - increase detections by 1%;
- theft of vehicles - increase detections by 1%; and
- violent crime - increase detections by 1.5%.

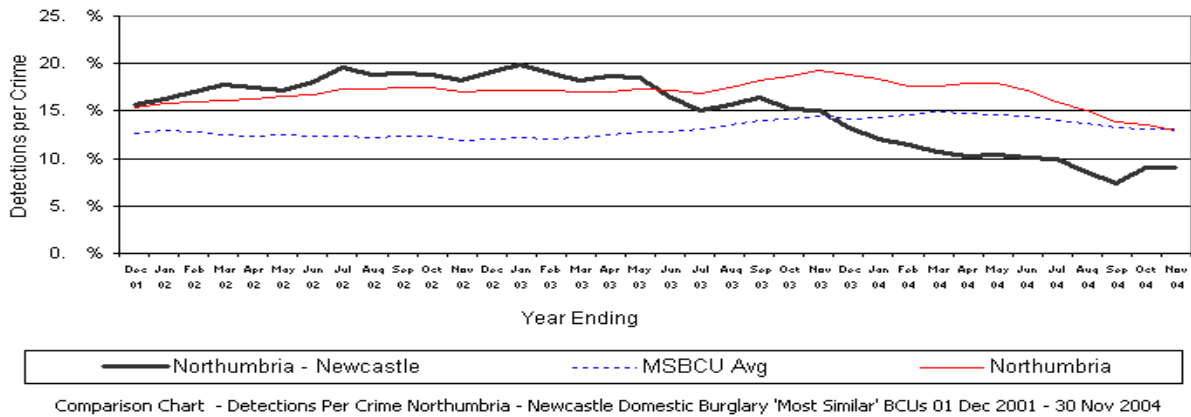
2.41 For the year to date the BCU has an overall detection rate of 29.18% placing it third highest in the MSBCU group for this period. There is concern however, that this could soon change if the 2.97 percentage point deterioration since April 2004 continues.

2.42 Newcastle BCU detects the majority for crime through either charge or summons 4,730 offences (56% of detections) compared to the MSBCU average of 2,991 offences (57% of detections). A further 30% of crime is detected through caution (mainly theft from shop) compared to 17% MSBCU average but only 4% through TICs compared to 6.5% for the MSBCU.

2.43 The BCU has experienced decreases in all categories for both the rate of detection and numbers of sanctioned detection. However, with the exception of domestic burglary, the detection rate remains higher than the MSBCU group averages.

2.44 The current detection rate for domestic burglary is of concern being approximately 5 percentage points below target. For the latest 12 month period the BCU had a detection rate of only 9.78% and for the year to date period of 10.47%. This places the BCU tenth in the MSBCU and is a lower rate than both the MSBCU group average and the Force rate.

2.45 The table below illustrates how Newcastle's domestic burglary detection rate has been in decline for some time (particularly since November 2003). Over the same period the MSBCU average has increased slightly and the overall Force rate has decreased but not as dramatically as that of the Newcastle BCU.



2.46 In respect of vehicle crime, the detection rate has also deteriorated but is currently above the MSBCU average. The BCU had a detection rate of 9.92% for the year to date (almost one percentage point below that of the previous year).

2.47 The detection rate for robbery has steadily decreased since October 2003 to the current rate of 24.48% (1.13 percentage points lower than the same period the previous year) but remains six percentage points above the MSBCU average detection rate and ranks Newcastle BCU in fourth place.

2.48 The detection rate for violent crime in Newcastle BCU over a three year period demonstrates a decreasing detection rate. During the latest nine months (year to date) there has been a 6.17 percentage point decrease compared to the same period last year with a rate of 49.17%. This ranks the BCU seventh in the MSBCU group (which has an average of 44.33%).

2.49 Newcastle BCU has a lower than average rate of administrative detections and higher proportions of charges/summons and cautions which reflects their good practice and the vigilance of the detective chief inspectors.

2.50 The inspection team has concerns about the declining detection rates in Newcastle BCU particularly in respect of domestic burglary. A significant area of weakness was

identified during the Inspection in that there is no formal bail tracking system within the BCU. The first appearance support team (FAST) has a recording system for those on bail and there are several ad-hoc systems developed by block supervisors but the inspection team felt that this important area requires a professional monitoring arrangement within the custody suite. Without this there is a real danger that bail evaders go undetected and possible detections are lost. **HMIC urges the SMT to review this situation and establish a formal bail tracking system within the custody suite.**

2.51 The BCU has identified detection rates as an area for improvement and several developments have been initiated including the development of a draft detection plan and implementation of a forensic hits team. These are outlined below.

Draft Detection Plan:

2.52 In draft form this plan outlines the BCU intentions for 2004/05 to address tactical performance issues associated with improving detection rates. Although the plan was identified for 2004/05 it is still not finalised and is in the consultation phase, waiting for feedback from stakeholders.

2.53 The proposed plan outlines ownership, review dates and evaluation in respect of the following:

- Forensic issues;
- improving overall detections;
- improvements regarding violent crime investigation; and
- improvements regarding burglary investigation.

2.54 It includes identified training needs, intelligence opportunities, investigation processes and offender/process management.

2.55 Significant effort has gone into collating this plan and the inspection team commend the energy and commitment of the detective chief inspector involved in its development. A thematic inspection into detection rates has recently been undertaken centrally and the plan would benefit from alignment to the recommendations identified through that work. The plan needs to be finalised and implemented as soon as practicable. **The BCU Commander is urged to finalise this detection plan as soon as practicable, ensuring it is SMARTS based and includes qualitative and quantitative performance measurements. The SMT should fully support the process and review progress to measure the overall impact on performance.**

2.56 A major contributory factor in the delivery of this plan is the scientific support unit. This unit is positively reported upon by the forensic science service as performing well and there is support from the Force in obtaining professional accreditation. This is a strong foundation on which to build the detection plan.

Forensic Hits Team:

2.57 In recognition that Newcastle BCU was struggling to action those forensic submissions from scenes of crime that came back positively, a dedicated team was

established. This team consists of a detective sergeant, four detective constables and a research officer and has the remit to manage positive DNA and fingerprint returns by either co-ordinating necessary action by the officers in the case or by taking positive action themselves. This ensures that, where there is sufficient evidence to arrest a suspect, the arrest is not delayed for longer than necessary, minimising the time potentially prolific offenders are committing offences unchecked.

2.58 The team is co-located with the intelligence unit enabling greater flow of information and analysis. By linking the MO of similar offences to that of the positive forensic sample and undertaking further intelligence work, this unit is able to furnish investigating officers with an intelligence pack ensuring they have all the available information to assist with interviews of suspects. As a consequence the speed and quality of action following a positive hit has improved dramatically, as has the percentage of detections per positive forensic hit.

2.59 The table below illustrates how well Newcastle BCU is doing in this area (data for quarters 1–3 for the year 2004/05) compared to the rest of the Force.

Figure 5: Forensic Science				
BCU	DNA Positive Identifications	Detections	TICs	% Detections & TICs to Positive identifications
Sunderland	161	66	19	53%
South Tyneside	61	34	10	72%
Gateshead	85	70	11	95%
North Tyneside	73	24	63	119%
Newcastle	209	156	79	112%
Northumberland	121	71	37	89%
	Fingerprint Positive Identification	Detections	TICs	% Detections & TICs to Positive identifications
Sunderland	274	139	13	55%
South Tyneside	193	78	16	49%
Gateshead	258	132	15	57%
North Tyneside	176	76	89	94%
Newcastle	357	292	219	143%
Northumberland	212	105	105	99%

2.60 The further success of this unit is dependant on detailed, high quality MO forms being recorded by those speaking to victims of crime and inputting these details onto the crime recording system. Some staff within the BCU are using an aide-memoire

consisting of a 10 point minimum standard of MO recording, others are not.

2.61 HMIC considers the development of the forensic hits team to represent good practice. HMIC urges the BCU SMT to review the aide-memoire for MO recording to ensure it provides the best possible advice and is in common use across the BCU in order to further improve the productivity of this valuable unit.

Summary

2.62 Newcastle is a well managed and effectively led BCU. The commitment and operational focus of the SMT during a period of significant change is commendable. The financial management of the BCU, the development of the ‘think tank’, the community based policing arrangements and associated partnership initiatives are particular strengths. There is, however, an urgent need to finalise and implement the new police staff structures as this is leading to uncertainty and affecting the morale of a very committed workforce.

2.63 As the new structures are becoming more settled and effective, a greater focus on strategic development is needed to take the BCU forward. This should manifest itself in the development of an all-inclusive business plan to provide direction for the BCU over the next 12 months and outline intended strategies and resource usage. Action plans should be SMARTS based and used more when recording minutes of strategically focused meetings. The importance of the CDRP/LSP relationship is clearly an issue for the BCU Commander particularly as the new ‘Stronger and Safer Communities’ fund moves into its first year.

2.64 The new business plan should be supported by a structured and robust performance review process complementing the effective use of the NIM and several very productive developments within the BCU. The detection plan should be quickly finalised and fully implemented and the forensic hits team supported by actions aimed at improvements to the quality of MO completion to facilitate further analysis of detectable crimes.

2.65 Crime reduction has been a strength of the BCU and the Force in general. However, if the BCU wishes to remain highly placed in its MSBCU group for this and crime investigation, challenging targets will have to be set and, very importantly, plans identified to meet them.

2.66 There is still considerable work required to break down very deeply entrenched views by the majority of operational staff that the single BCU structure has more disadvantages than advantages. Key to this is the engagement of inspectors who must be drivers and catalysts for change rather than those who are ‘waiting to see whether it works’.

2.67 Overall, the BCU Commander is to be complimented for what has been achieved to date. He and his team are clearly taking the lead in many difficult areas, are well respected and have considerable operational credibility to take this BCU forward.

Recommendations

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary makes five recommendations:

1. That the BCU Commander champions the introduction of an integrated and comprehensive business plan for Newcastle BCU. The Commander should ensure that the BCU has identified the capacity and skills required to co-ordinate, manage and evaluate this crucial work to ensure the BCU develops in a corporate and effective manner.

[Para 1.20 refers]

2. That the BCU Commander takes a proactive and visible stance to ensure that local policing issues are appropriately considered and resourced within the new strategic partnership arrangements in the interests of crime reduction, witness support, investigative process and community safety.

[Para 1.31 refers]

3. That the BCU Command Team renews its efforts to actively promote the PSRP change programme through a co-ordinated communications plan. BCU inspectors, in particular, must be well informed, actively engaged in this promotional work, and tasked to facilitate appropriate elements of the change programme.

[Para 1.72 refers]

4. That the BCU Command Team review its application of absence management policies and procedures to ensure that police staff absence is subject to the same degree of supervisory attention, welfare support and information analysis as that of police officer sickness. Responsibility should be ascribed within the SMT to provide a single overview of sickness rates and that these are subject to regular assessment and review.

[Para 1.87 refers]

5. That the BCU Command Team review its performance review regime. In particular, accountability should be ascribed for priority areas, a standard framework of assessment supporting BCU objectives should be introduced and performance information promulgation clearly, illustrating trends and proposed actions. Performance indicators should be reviewed to ensure that they are appropriate, properly measured and communicated to those concerned.

[Para 2.5 refers]