



**HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
South of England Region**

**Follow up/Monitoring visit to Milton Keynes BCU
Thames Valley Police**

BCU Inspection Conducted - February, 2004

Monitoring Visit Conducted - 24 March, 2005

Introduction

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 a little 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 do so with integrity. Scrutiny of police performance has moved from aggregate force outcomes to the performance of individual BCUs, with the recognition that policing is essentially a locally delivered service. But 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.

The focus on performance in reducing crime is likely to be relentless. Forces and police authorities, working with local authorities and other community safety partners, will need to raise performance outcomes year after year. Indeed, the statutory regime of *Best Value* demands 'continuous improvement' and an array of sanctions exist if authorities fail to deliver this. 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.

The purpose of the follow up/monitoring inspection is to assess BCU progress in implementing the recommendations of the full BCU inspection, and also to highlight any significant developments and performance issues which have evolved on the BCU since the full inspection took place. It is not a further inspection report and makes no extra recommendations.

Challenge and Change Programme

The Challenge and Change programme, introduced by the Chief Constable and led by an Assistant Chief Constable, is designed to place a firm focus on delivery of a neighbourhood policing style. The Police Authority is actively involved in all stages of the programme.

On 1st April 2005 the Force reduced its command units (BCUs) from ten to five, each of these are further sub-divided into 16 Local Policing Areas, which correspond with CDRP boundaries. The new BCUs will be Milton Keynes, West Berkshire, East Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, and Oxfordshire. The Force is confident that the changes described will provide the necessary platform from which to deliver the key challenges contained within the Government's green paper "Building Safer Communities Together" (2004), in particular accountability and capacity.

Leading up to 1st April a number of key developments have been made including:

- New policing areas established with the command teams agreed and operational;

- The launch of Local Area Policing Boards (LAPBs), one for each local police area. The boards will work closely with BCU commanders and develop strong links with the CDRPs;
- The Police Authority will introduce Area Committees for each BCU, again working closely with commanders to provide guidance and improve performance.

Significant developments since the original inspection

The BCU commander was promoted into post in 2004. He has 25 years service and is a recognised expert in major and critical incident command. His broad operational background also includes a secondment to the HMIC and was the Thames Valley Police Head of Operations.

The Superintendent with responsibility for BCU functional issues was promoted into post in 2004. His background is predominantly in uniformed operations.

Follow Up/Monitoring Visit to Inspected BCUs

Milton Keynes BCU

Date of inspection	HMIC re-visit inspector	Head of BCU	Date of final report	Date of follow up/monitoring visit
February, 2004	Chief Supt John Green	Chief Supt John Liversidge	February, 2004	March, 2005

The revisit to Milton Keynes BCU took place on Thursday 24 March, 2005. The revisit was conducted by Chief Superintendent John Green on behalf of Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary (HMIC).

The final BCU inspection report in 2004 made two recommendations in relation to Milton Keynes BCU. These recommendations are listed below:

Recommendation 1

The SMT reviews the meeting structure adopted by the AIT and pro-active units in order to ensure that it is efficient and meets the needs of the BCU.

Recommendation 2

In order to improve efficiency and performance, the SMT reviews the investigation processes that support control crimes in particular, domestic burglary and vehicle crime.

Performance Information¹

Performance Tables

Crime Levels and Detections	March 2003 to February 2004	March 2004 to February 2005	% Change
Total recorded crime	24,595	27,145	10.37%
Number of crimes detected	6,660	7,760	16.52%
% Crimes detected	27.08%	28.59%	5.57%
Total recorded crime per 1,000 population	114.02	125.84	10.37%
Total residential burglary	1,144	1,010	-11.71%
Number of residential burglaries detected	180	181	0.56%
% Residential burglaries detected	15.73%	17.92%	13.90%
Total residential burglaries per 1,000 households	12.97	11.45	-11.72%
Total vehicle crime	3,411	3,566	4.54%
Number of vehicle crimes detected	338	361	6.80%
% Vehicle crimes detected	9.91%	10.12%	2.16%
Total vehicle crime per 1,000 population	15.81	16.53	4.55%
Total violent crime	4,030	5,361	33.03%
Number of violent crimes detected	2,056	2,647	28.75%
% Violent crimes detected	51.02%	49.38%	-3.22%
Total violent crime per 1,000 population	18.68	24.85	33.03%
Total robbery	275	261	-5.09%
Number of robberies detected	77	88	14.29%
% Robberies detected	28.00%	33.72%	20.42%
Total robbery per 1,000 population	1.27	1.21	-4.72%

¹ Please note that this performance information is based on non-validated returns received from forces by HMIC.

Total Crime

Total crime in Milton Keynes has seen a **10.37% increase** for the year March 2004 to February 2005 when compared to the same period the previous year. The BCU is **above the MSBCU (Most Similar BCU) average** for total crime per 1,000 population. For the period March 2004 to February 2005 the BCU is ranked **12th out of 15** in the MSBCU group.

The number of total crime detections have seen a **16.52% increase** in March 2004 to February 2005 when compared with the same period the previous year. The BCU is **above the MSBCU average**. Milton Keynes is ranked **4th out of 15** in the MSBCU group.

Domestic Burglary

Domestic Burglary in Milton Keynes has seen an **11.71% decrease** for the year March 2004 to February 2005 when compared to the same period the previous year. The BCU is currently **below the MSBCU average**. For the period March 2004 to February 2005 the BCU is ranked **4th out of 15** in the MSBCU group.

The number of domestic burglary detections have seen a **0.56% increase** in March 2004 to February 2005 when compared with the same period the previous year. Milton Keynes is ranked **7th out of 15** in the MSBCU group.

Vehicle Crime

Vehicle crime in Milton Keynes has seen a **4.54% increase** for the year March 2004 to February 2005 when compared to the same period the previous year. The BCU is **in line with MSBCU average**. For the period March 2004 to February 2005 the BCU is ranked **8th out of 15** in the MSBCU group.

The number of vehicle crime detections have seen a **6.80% decrease** in March 2004 to February 2005 when compared with the same period the previous year. The BCU is ranked **9th out of 15** in the MSBCU group.

Violent Crime

Violent crime in Milton Keynes has seen a **30.03% increase** for the year March 2004 to February 2005 when compared to the same period the previous year. The BCU is **above the MSBCU average** and is ranked **12th out of 15** in the MSBCU group.

The number of violent crime detections have seen a **28.75% increase** in March 2004 to February 2005 when compared with the same period the previous year. The BCU is **below the MSBCU average**. Milton Keynes is ranked **14th out of 15** in the MSBCU group.

Sickness

Days Lost	2002/03	2003/04	% Change	MSBCU Ave 2003/04
Police officers	13.04	10.41	-20.17%	10.05
Police support staff	9.89	8.92	-9.81%	11.17

Complaints

	2002/03	2003/04	% Change	MSBCU Average 2003/04
Complaints per 1,000 Officers	250.00	207.65	-16.94%	228.52

Inspection Recommendations

<i>Recommendation</i>	<i>Action taken by BCU</i>	<i>Measurable impact</i>
<p>The SMT reviews the meeting structure adopted by the AIT and pro-active units in order to ensure that it is efficient and meets the needs of the BCU.</p>	<p>Each proactive team now has a dedicated meeting on Monday mornings where actions are reviewed and issues of concern are addressed.</p> <p>Each of these themed meetings is attended by a member of AIT to formally discuss the intelligence that has been received.</p> <p>On Monday, a Crime Series meeting is held. Chaired by the Crime Manager, the weekly actions are agreed, based on intelligence, priorities and crime trends. The actions are allocated to the specific team leader to own and report back.</p>	<p>The meeting subsequently feeds the briefing process and changes to the briefing system have been incorporated to assist.</p> <p>Each team will have a structured plans and targets for the week, subject to changing intelligence and demand through the tasking process. These targets are promoted to all officers through the briefing system and any updates are added to the Operational Briefing database.</p> <p>Minutes of each meeting are kept and reviewed at the next meeting where the action owner must account for their performance against the agreed target. These minutes are now widely circulated.</p>
<p>In order to improve efficiency and performance, the SMT reviews the investigation processes that support control crimes in particular, domestic burglary and vehicle crime.</p>	<p>There is now a nominated detective who is allocated daily to attend domestic burglaries. This officer will, subject to demand, attend and deal with the incident thereby ensuring consistency in the service provided.</p> <p>Forensic identifications are allocated upon arrival within the department. For dwelling burglaries, they are allocated</p>	<p>This approach has greatly reduced false reporting and ensured the correct classification of offence.</p> <p>Scenes of Crime attendance is more frequent as the dedicated officers have greater forensic</p>

	<p>primarily to the investigating officer or, if unavailable, another officer to action.</p> <p>Identifications are recorded on CEDAR and actions are updated.</p> <p>Both the domestic burglary and vehicle crime unit have their own dedicated intelligence officer.</p> <p>The area has invested in a Dedicated Interview Team who deal with bulk crime offenders.</p> <p>Forensic identifications for non dwelling offences are prioritised before allocation.</p>	<p>awareness.</p> <p>Interview teams make greater use of the mapping systems to identify crime trends and patterns</p> <p>This unit has achieved some impressive results, most recently 50 TIC's for a prolific vehicle crime offender who was a priority target through the tasking process.</p> <p>There is greater emphasis on housekeeping and the detections action plan is being adhered to.</p>
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Monitoring Assessment & Follow-Up Action

Both recommendations contained within the BCU inspection report have been accepted and acted upon by the BCU. There is a clear determination amongst the Senior Management Team (SMT) to deliver a high quality service across the BCU. The recommendations have been used, in part, as a springboard to further developmental work. This was particularly evident in discussions with the BCU Crime Manager, who has detailed and in depth knowledge of the National Intelligence Model. This officer was driving the BCU agenda to ensure tasking and co-ordination products were delivered. This work should be viewed as good practice.

The detailed report provided to HMIC prior to the revisit was valuable in assisting the HMIC Staff Officer in facilitation of constructive dialogue with BCU staff. Such

preparation was indicative of the commitment by BCU managers to address highlighted issues and recommendations. The previsit report clearly outlined the work which was being done on the BCU. The action plans demonstrated a plan which was grounded in practical implementation.

Where performance gives cause for concern the BCU works to address the causes and factors. Co-location of the SMT within Milton Keynes Police Station facilitates timely intervention.

Conclusions

The original inspection at Milton Keynes has been used constructively by the BCU. The present Commander had considered the recommendations and had ensured key members of his SMT were fully involved in the implementation of the action plan.

The clear enthusiasm and determination of members of the SMT should stand the BCU in good stead over the coming months. The BCU Commander, in particular, has a very clear picture of how his BCU should perform and be perceived. He does have some concerns, reflected across the Thames Valley Police, regarding retention of police officers. The BCU had recently lost staff to other Home Office police forces, private organisations seeking to utilise police skills and also to the South Australia Police Service. The BCU Crime Manager, as previously stated, has a full and detailed knowledge of the National Intelligence Model. His focus on ensuring its full integration within the working practices of the BCU is worthy of note.

Recent iQuanta data would suggest that the BCU should continue to pay particular attention to detection rates across all control strategy crimes.

The BCU has responded positively to the recommendations contained within the original inspection report. Her Majesty's Inspector will continue to monitor detection rates on the BCU in the coming months. Otherwise the recommendations should be considered to have been properly addressed.