

**Inspection of
Solihull (L1) BCU
West Midlands Police
February 2005**

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1. The inspection of Solihull Basic Command Unit (BCU), (referred to as L1), West Midlands Police was conducted on behalf of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary by a staff officer for BCU Inspections, Mr Stephen Griffiths, assisted by chief inspector Christopher Ward between 7 and 11 February 2005.

Force and BCU Overview

2. West Midlands Police is the second largest police force in England and Wales, covering an area of approximately 348 square miles and serving a population of almost 2.63 million in an estimated 994,820 households. The region includes the three major centres of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton together with the busy districts of Sandwell, Walsall, Solihull and Dudley. Averages of 170,000 motorists travel through the region daily, making its motorways some of the busiest in Europe.
3. Within the boundaries of the force area are seven unitary authorities: Birmingham City, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall and Wolverhampton. The Authorities encompass a diverse population in terms of deprivation levels, unemployment and visible minority ethnic communities who comprise just over 16% of the working age population of the area (2001/02 census figures).
4. The force is divided into 21 basic command units (BCUs), each headed by a chief superintendent who is responsible for the overall policing and management of the area. Each BCU is split into a number of sectors individually headed by an inspector. These sectors are responsible for local policing in the community.
5. Solihull BCU is responsible for policing the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull; an area characterised by a mix of both affluent and socially deprived areas. The borough motto, 'the town in the country', accurately reflects the challenge of policing large urban areas and rural communities. Over the past year, an increase in private housing developments has been evident and the vibrant commercial sector has continued to expand.
6. Solihull has a population of 199,517, residing in 80,930 households. Of this population, 5.4% are minority ethnic. 4.7% of economically active population is unemployed in Solihull compared to an average for the West Midlands of 5.5%. Average earnings are £511 a week (gross) compared to an average for the West Midlands of £439.
7. The BCU headquarters and senior management team (SMT) base is at Solihull town centre. The BCU has a current establishment of 406 police officers; 162 members of police staff, including 12 police community support officers and 61 members of the special constabulary. The BCU contains the National Exhibition Centre and Birmingham airport within its boundaries, although policing of the airport is delivered by a stand alone police unit headed by a chief inspector.

Circumstances of inspection

8. Of particular note at the time of inspection, was that the SMT were developing and implementing a change plan that captured the issues the team felt would holistically develop the BCU. The plan emanated from the comparatively recent arrival of both

the BCU commander and superintendent operations and was conceived in autumn 2004. The SMT has appointed an inspector, as project manager, to lead the change programme and evaluation plans are in place. There has been extensive consultation and a strength and weakness analysis, which to develop a framework for improvement. The plan has four main headings with a member of the SMT or the SMT itself having responsibility to co-ordinate each one. Each heading has numerous actions, owned and driven by a named inspector and are as follows:

Structure – led by BCU commander

- Shift pattern change
- Internet accountability
- Specials supervision and accountability
- Anti-Social Behaviour team – reassurance and communities
- Performance review functions
- Road Policing Unit – aims and accountability

Standards – led by crime manager

- Investigative/Key Performance Indicator/detection standards
- Tasking
- PDR (appraisal) – template/compliance
- Define/manage critical incidents
- IMS (intelligence) submission standards
- Resource deployment
- Detections strategy

Culture – led by SMT

- Diversity- local action groups
- Resource/Demand management
- Probationer Development Unit/Specials integration
- Police staff – forums/staff appraisal/PDR development
- BCU welcome pack
- Communications strategy
- Problem Orientated Policing – PDR/Bonus pay

Performance – led superintendent operations

- Minimum standards for each rank
- Reassurance/Anti – social behaviour ownership
- Proactive capacity
- Team performance culture
- CDRP targets – Tasking and co-ordination meeting.
- Iquanta (Home Office data) – Tasking and co-ordination meeting.
- Strategic performance forum.

9. Some strands of the change process has been significantly delayed due to Force level work regarding shift patterns, but other issues such as increasing the pro-activity at sectors has continued. Further consultation and plan developments were agreed during the inspection and the full implementation phase has started.

10. Overall, the inspection team was impressed with the change programme. The findings very much mirror the headline findings from the BCU inspection. The team from HMIC found no evidence to negate and substantial evidence to support the view of the SMT and the need for change. This report discusses some of the proposed changes under the various generic headings used for the inspection of every BCU by HMIC and issues that should be included by the BCU commander in the change programme will be evident. It is a credit to the BCU staff and their change programme that the main inspection findings mirror the issues identified for the plan.

Performance

Crime and disorder reduction partnerships

11. In accordance with the crime and disorder act 1998, the local authority, police, health, fire service supported by other key agencies and voluntary groups have joined together to form a crime and reduction partnership (CDRP). The CDRP's second strategy to cover the year's 2002/05 identified seven specific priorities for action:
- Domestic Burglaries – with a focus on reducing the risk, particularly repeat burglaries amongst older and vulnerable people.
 - Vehicle Crime – measures to improve security in both council and private car parks, issues relating to on-street parking and a continuation of promotional work with, for example hotels to raise the awareness of risks.
 - Robbery – targets and actions to reduce the incidents by promotional work (eg with children) and targeted policing. Specific consideration for street robberies of mobile phones.
 - Violence – including assaults but excluding domestic violence, with a focus on main shopping centres.
 - Domestic Violence – priority to the establishment of a refuge and repeat offences.
 - Racist and other Hate Crime – priority to raise confidence amongst black and minority ethnic communities with the improvement of monitoring and multi-agency reporting.
 - Anti-social behaviour – the development of Anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs), curfews, anti-graffiti schemes and the street warden scheme as part of an overall approach to crime reduction.
12. The inspection team was impressed with partnership working, which is no doubt enhanced because the CDRP is coterminous with BCU boundaries and the synergy between police and CDRP targets. There are apparent, appropriate structures of a strategic group for community safety working under the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and three main delivery groups (since summer 2004). Key leaders for all partner agencies appear to be engaged with the Local Authority chief executive currently chairing the CDRP. The CDRP has a jointly funded co-ordinator post at

executive level to ensure strategic and tactical synergy including proper scrutiny and assessment of initiatives. This work will be enhanced by the secondment of police staff led by an inspector to work as a team with the co-ordinator's staff based in the Local Authority offices (see below). The inspection team was impressed that the co-ordinator attends police tasking and co-ordination meetings where she is tasked. She also appears to be well integrated with the police management team, attending monthly management meetings and briefing the SMT on funding opportunities for CDRP work. This role is seen positively by partnership representatives, particularly sector inspectors. Funding achieved appears impressive including £300k year on year for one area from the Pathfinder funding stream.

13. A further strength of partnership working is the merger of the Drugs Action Team (DAT) and CDRP. A Drugs Intervention Programme (DIP) started on 15 January and seven custody assistants funded by the programme will start in April 2005.
14. Appropriate police involvement with the delivery groups is apparent, with the BCU crime manager chairing the domestic violence group and being a member of another group.
15. Partners describe partnership delivery as more positive and successful since the Local Authority chief executive took the role as chair, seeing that influence as critical to promote greater representation from agencies.
16. West Midlands BCUs often appoint an inspector to work with partnerships known as a Local Authority Liaison Officer. At Solihull, police and partner representatives are positive about the post's conversion to a Crime and anti-social behaviour reduction team inspector, who will be co-located with the CDRP co-ordinator's team within the Local Authority offices. The team was very positive in terms of further enhancing information and intelligence sharing giving more efficient delivery of crime reduction and community safety initiatives. The inspection team understands that a perceived lack of analytical support to this team will be dealt with. The unit has clear terms of reference and will be developing a communication strategy to ensure internal and external marketing. . The team members envisage that they will be seeking out good initiatives and practice in other areas of the country and transferring these ideas to local partnership working. Overall the inspection team was impressed with the plans but would urge the BCU to carefully examine the draw on the inspector by his commitments to the duty inspector role.
17. The inspection team met an extremely positive group of partner agency representatives who were positive about the co-terminus structure and synergy between police and CDRP, with good work ongoing and excellent integration of partner agencies. At that meeting, it was evident that there may be more opportunities of joint agency strategic and tactical action. For example: the collection of intelligence from agency employees such as home help; use of the marketing skills that are apparently within Solihull college and closer relations between the pub watch scheme and the college. The inspection team would advocate more meetings of partner agency leaders where "blue sky thinking" is possible.
18. Partners praised police commitment and detailed good contact with a genuine desire to raise service to public from police at all levels.

19. Consultation with public appears structured with a local consultative forum including police authority members. Sector inspectors hold meetings with the community and attend Parish council meetings. There are demonstrative outcomes from this work as the feedback in part resulted in the purchase of three mobile police stations and the creation of two parish constable posts in the North of the BCU.
20. There was ample evidence of the good tactical working and some examples are:
- The jointly funded CDRP co-ordinators post - discussed above.
 - A partnership funded police community support officer (PCSO) - In February 2005, the first fully partner agent funded PCSO in the West Midlands Force area, took up her post within Solihull College. She is fully funded by the College, and will be jointly tasked by both Solihull police and the college – using the National Intelligence Model.
 - Shirley Police / Local Authority Jointly Run Front Counter Facility – There are plans to open the first jointly run and funded Police and Local Authority front counter facility in the Midlands. Staff will be trained to provide both Police and council services, offering a one-stop shop for members of the public within Shirley. Their core role will be to solve community problems, particularly anti-social behaviour.

Performance against operational targets

21. BCU performance against operational targets is detailed below in several tables, charts and commentary. BCU performance data is available for all BCUs throughout England and Wales. To allow useful and fair comparison of certain performance indicators, similar BCUs are grouped together into ‘most similar groups’ (known as MSBCU) based, in general, on similar socio-economic and demographic characteristics. Figure 1, below, show crime reduction performance for the 12 months to December 2004 compared with the same period the previous year.

Figure 1- Crime reduction performance

Crime Type	Number of offences	Offence per 1000 pop/h 'hold	BCU family average	Rank in BCU family	% Change
Total Crime	21019	105.31	97.83	12 out of 15	-10.19%
Domestic Burglary	1323	16.24	15.12	11 out of 15	-22.50%
Robbery	474	2.37	1.07	14 out of 15	-1.66%
Vehicle Crime	3871	19.39	13.97	15 out of 15	-11.15%
Violent Crime	3643	18.25	19.36	8 out of 15	+4.12%

Source - Home Office performance data. (Domestic burglary figures are calculated per 1000 household as opposed to population)

• Total Crime

Year on year, total crime has fallen by 10%. Trend analysis indicates that the fall in crime was achieved in the first half of the year whilst levels of crime have been stable for the last 6 month period. Despite the year on year improvement, levels of crime remain significantly higher than the MSBCU average and the current stable trend will not close this gap.

- **Domestic Burglary**

Domestic burglary has fallen by over 22% year on year. Despite this significant improvement, domestic burglary levels are still higher than the MSBCU average although not significantly so. The BCU is ranked 11th in the MSBCU group for performance over the last 12 months. Recent burglary reduction figures are encouraging but it is of note that there were significant reductions over the period April to June 2004.

- **Robbery**

Robbery levels have fallen slightly from the previous year but remain well above the MSBCU average with the BCU ranked 14th. Trend analysis shows a recent rise in robbery levels, which, over the last 3-month period, have been the highest in the MSBCU group. The BCU has identified the weakness in terms of robbery reduction performance through the change plan with strategies to tackle this problem. In particular 6 of the 32 beats have been identified and targeted as robbery hotspots, accounting for 50% of all robbery recorded on the BCU.

- **Vehicle Crime**

BCU vehicle crime has fallen by over 10% year on year, most notably in the first 6-month period with the trends of the last 3 and 6 month period starting to level out. Again, despite these reductions the BCU has recorded the highest level of vehicle crime in the MSBCU group. Over the last 12-month period the MSBCU average has also improved at a similar rate, which means, despite improving performance the gap is no smaller. Whilst the large number of visitors to the NEC is a significant factor, the BCU has recognised it is more widespread than just one location.

- **Violent Crime**

Violent crime levels have increased year on year by 4% but remain below the MSBCU average with the BCU ranked 8th. Figures have risen steadily and consistently for some time but this trend is also evident in the MSBCU average.

22. Figure 2, below, shows BCU crime investigation performance for the 12 period to December 2004, compared with the same period the previous year.

Figure 2 – Crime investigation performance

<i>Crime Type</i>	<i>Total Detections</i>	<i>Detection Rate (%)</i>	<i>BCU Family Average</i>	<i>Rank in BCU family</i>	<i>% pt Change in detection rate</i>
Total Crime	4055	19.29%	25.51%	15 out of 15	-5.35% pts
Domestic Burglary	150	11.34%	16.36%	14 out of 15	-6.71% pts
Robbery	91	19.20%	26.57%	14 out of 15	-1.76% pts
Vehicle Crime	198	5.11%	10.79%	15 out of 15	-7.69% pts
Violent Crime	1450	39.80%	52.30%	14 out of 15	-7.78% pts

Source-Home Office performance data

- **Total Crime**

Year on year the total crime detection rate has fallen by over 5% points and is the lowest detection rate in the MSBCU group. There has been a sustained decline in detection rate since the start of 2004 and the slight improvement in the last 3-month period may simply be normal fluctuation.

- **Domestic Burglary**

The domestic burglary detection rate has fallen, year on year, by 6.7% and is the second lowest detection rate in the MSBCU group. Analysis of the trend in detection rate indicates that it has consistently been in decline over the past 12-month period.

- **Robbery**

The robbery detection rate has deteriorated slightly over the last 12 months, falling by almost 2 points year on year with the BCU ranked 14th. However, trend analysis indicates that the detection rate is starting to improve.

- **Vehicle Crime**

The detection rate for vehicle crime is poor, significantly below the MSBCU average and falling. Year on year there has been a fall of over 7% points, to a detection rate of just 5%. This is the lowest detection rate in the MSBCU group.

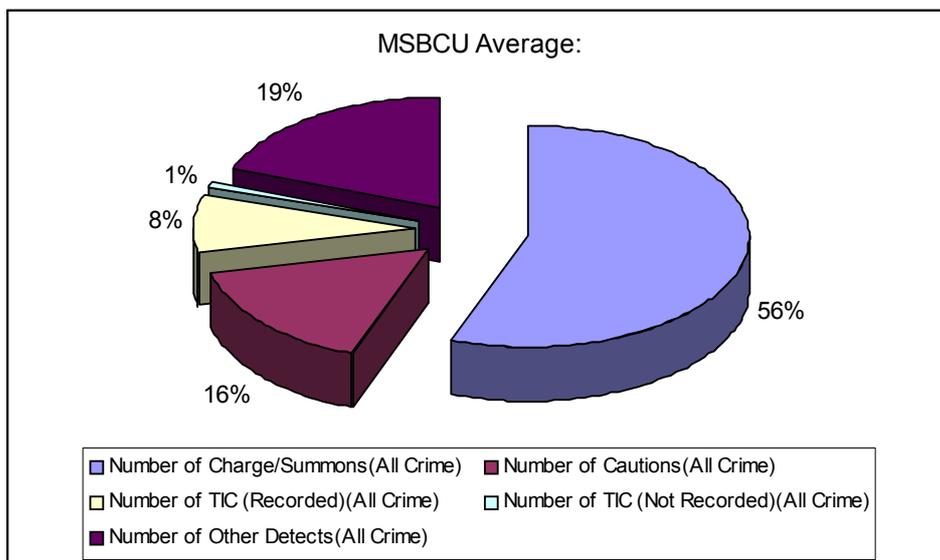
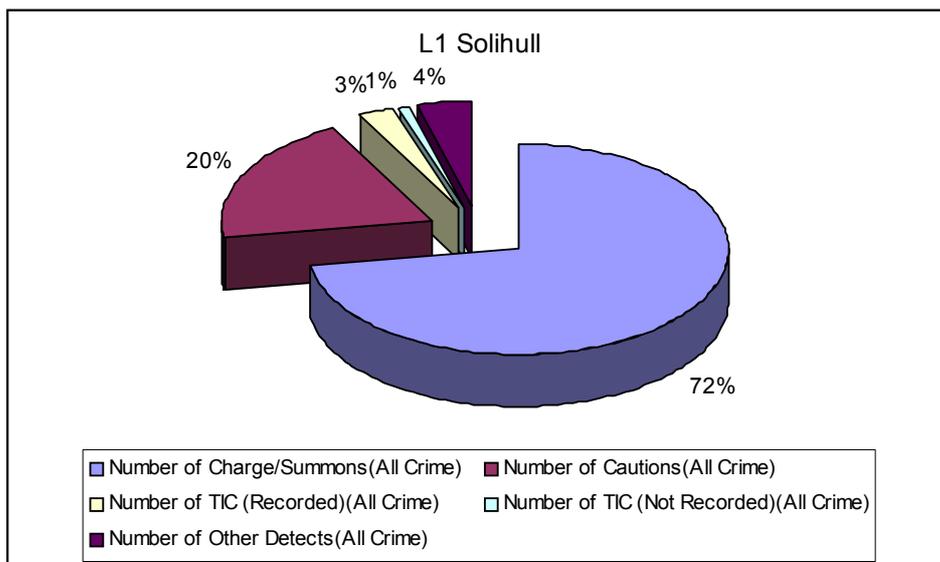
- **Violent Crime**

Year on year, the violent crime detection rate has fallen by almost 8% points and in the last 12 months the BCU has detected the second lowest proportion of violent crimes in its MSBCU group. However, when compared with peers in terms of sanction detections, the BCU is in line with the MSBCU average, due to the comparatively small proportion of administrative detections.

23. In summary, whilst there have been substantial and sustained reduction of crime, the BCU is still not well placed against its MSBCUs. Robbery reductions are of particular concern. At the time of inspection the BCU is 30 offences up over the same period last year. Detection of all crime has fallen and is a further area of concern. The BCU is generally, some distance from its MSBCU averages.
24. To its credit, the BCU is well aware of the need for improvement and has devised a robbery reduction strategy and an all crime detection strategy that crosses every department of the BCU as part of the change plan. In the interim, 3 separate proactive teams (burglary; robbery and vehicle crime) have been created to focus on their specific remit and drive reduction and detection.
25. The SMT's comment on performance (that was also evident to the inspection team) was that the abstraction of detectives to investigate several high profile serious incidents has impacted upon detection figures. An ongoing discipline case involving several detectives and their role in obtaining detections that are 'taken into consideration' (TICs) has also impacted in that there is a lack of clarity and desire to deal with such issues. This is reflected in the figures below which clearly indicate that the number of such offences taken into consideration is far lower than MSBCU averages (both these issues are discussed in detail under the heading of crime investigation). The BCU is fully aware that the Home Office judges its performance against its MSBCU grouping and not how it performs against other BCUs of its Force. It is to the credit of the SMT that they have already started to examine how other BCUs of the same group achieve higher reduction and detection rates.
26. The BCU has a much lower proportion of administrative detections than its MSBCU average for the last 12-month period. The proportion of detections that are Charge/Summons is almost 20 points higher than the MSBCU average, which is

encouraging. This can be seen in the detections by type charts below in figures 3 and 4. Whilst the BCU compares poorly to its peers in terms of detections, it is of note that other BCUs have high administrative detection rates (offences detected but not prosecuted). If one was to examine the sanction detection rates (detections that are either charged, reported, summonsed or taken into consideration) as opposed to the overall detection rates then the BCUs position improves slightly from bottom of its MSBCU to third bottom.

Figures 3 and 4 – Detections by type charts for Solihull BCU



27. Figure 5, below, shows performance in relation to stop/searches conducted by officers. There is large disparity between white and minority ethnic PACE stop/searches in the BCU, with the minority ethnic PACE stop/searches per 1000 minority ethnic population more than double the MSBCU average and 21% higher

than the previous year. The proportion of stop searches leading to arrest is near parity although this figure has fallen from the previous year in both cases.

28. It would appear that the main areas of stop/search coincide with the locations of higher education establishments, which are key locations for robbery. Thus the BCU has adopted a stop/search tactic in these locations. Student populations are disproportionate, for example 39% of students at Solihull college are white, 61% non-white and consequently whilst activity at these locations is based on intelligence the profile of the area is leading to disproportional number of searches of the overall population of Solihull.

Figure 5 – BCU stop/searches

	2002/03	2003/04	BCU Family Average	% Change 02/03 to 03/04
Total Ethnic PACE Stop/Searches	457	533		
PACE Stop / Searches of minority ethnic persons per 1000 minority ethnic population	42.62	51.57	22.35	+21%
Total Ethnic PACE Arrests	75	72		
% of PACE stop / search of minority ethnic persons leading to arrest	16.41%	13.02%	13.35%	-3.39% pts
Total White PACE Stop/Searches	1269	1387		
PACE Stop searches of white persons per 1000 white population	6.72	7.35	8.94	+9.4%
Total White PACE Arrests	236	182		
% of PACE stop / search of white persons leading to arrest	18.60%	13.12%	12.49%	-5.48% pts

Source-Home Office performance data

29. Figure 6, below, provides an analysis of Solihull's performance against its most similar BCU (MSBCU) family group and national average for the last full year of available data, 2003/04. Performance is generally consistent with the figures and commentary provided above. Crime rates are relatively high, whilst detections, in all but burglary dwelling are below MSBCU averages. The BCU has a high level of complaints against police, and this is discussed later in the report under a specific heading. Sickness levels of both police officers and police staff are low in comparison and the BCU is congratulated on this achievement.

Best Value Performance Indicator Solihull BCU	BCU Performance 2003/04	MSBCU average 2003/04	England and Wales average 2003/04
Complaints per 1000 officers	368.97	259.12	192.24
% of police strength from minority ethnic communities	5.27 %	2.78 %	3.28 %
Work days lost sick/police officer	9.14	9.4	9.39
Work days lost sick/police staff	7.82	9.47	10.84
Recorded crimes per 1000 population	114.44	105.63	113.08
Recorded crime % detected	22.73 %	24.37 %	23.49 %

Domestic burglaries per 1000 households	20.71	18.67	18.20
Domestic burglaries % detected	17.19 %	16.85%	15.01 %
Violent crimes per 1000 population	17.80	18.51	21.13
Violent crimes % detected	44.44 %	52.25 %	46.76 %
Robberies per 1000 population	2.25	1.27	1.93
Robberies % detected	20.94 %	24.7 %	18.37 %
Vehicle crimes per 1000 population	21.35	16.41	16.94
Vehicle crimes % detected	9.01 %	10.02 %	8.97 %
Public disorder incidents per 1000 population	50.50	55.75	49.88
Traffic collisions death/serious injury per 1000 population	0.39	0.4	0.46
Racially aggravated crimes % detected	34.09 %	38.05 %	33.50 %

Origin - HMIC matrix of performance 2003/04

Accountability mechanisms and performance management

30. The inspection team found a strong accountability of the BCU commander to the Assistant Chief Constable-crime (ACC) of the Force. Performance targets are set in the BCU commander's PDR (appraisal) and the ACC meets with him monthly at Force performance meetings. These meetings are seen as a challenging, but supportive and learning forum, which is not quite a COMPSTAT style (robust interrogation of performance using computer-generated data). Internal accountability is also strong for the BCU including monthly performance meetings with inspectors by the BCU commander and superintendent operations. These meetings are held at Solihull, BCU headquarters, but may be more holistic if held on sectors and include other members of the SMT to examine performance, for example the personnel and business manager. This process would also reduce meetings, such as monthly meetings of inspectors with the personnel manager.
31. The inspection team found a clear demarcation of roles across the SMT, for example the crime manager was clear on his areas of accountability such as investigations; crime recording; detections; performance compliance with the NIM and the working of the CSB. This demarcation and accountability was also evident with sector inspectors who clearly felt accountable for sector performance and communicating SMT messages to staff by E-mails, meetings and national intelligence model (NIM) processes.

32. The superintendent operations role as silver commander for “safer motors” (the Force strategy to combat vehicle crime) is seen positively across the BCU. His expertise in this matter is assisting the BCU develop in this area, both strategically and tactically.
33. The BCU commander should monitor the situation of the personnel manager being “pulled in two ways” between BCU and Force commitments instigated by the Force Director. At present there does not appear to be a conflict of interest but the potential was evident to the inspection team.
34. The National Intelligence Model (NIM) structure also provides for robust accountability within the BCU. There is a review of performance at the daily meeting and fortnightly tasking and co-ordination meeting. Force performance information assists comparison with daily information on performance against targets provided at sector and BCU level
35. The inspection team found little evidence of performance information being readily provided at team or individual level, for example, number of arrests; intelligence submissions and detections, which the BCU described as a temporary situation. The inspection team found overwhelming support for the regular provision of team level information from staff interviewed, providing it is used as a guide to assess performance, not as a definitive indicator and is used in a supportive manner. The development of such information has been identified within the change plan and HMIC would endorse its production.

Reassurance and visibility

36. As discussed the BCU is sub-divided into sectors, each headed by an inspector. Each sector is then further divided into beats led by a sergeant who has specific geographical responsibility. There are some community beat officers allocated to specific areas to counter demand and work on problem profiles in certain areas. This is in line with the Force’s strategy for the national reassurance programme (the force has a reassurance and resource deployment strategy called Spectrum).
37. The Force has recently prescribed the introduction of a post to deal with communication and marketing, partly funded by the force, and the inspection team noted there are opportunities to develop this role from within the partnership, possibly using existing or joint resources.
38. The inspection team met two enthusiastic and determined police community support officers (PCSOs), who clearly enjoy their work and feel accepted and integrated into the BCU. They currently self brief and act on tasking via e-mails from inspectors. The Community Safety Bureau (CSB) has carried out intelligence awareness input/training for PCSOs, which has resulted in increased intelligence submissions. PCSOs are viewed positively by all staff who are frustrated on behalf of the PCSOs, regarding their lack of detention powers and non issue of stab vests. It is interesting, because the PCSOs, spoken to during inspection, do not want to be issued with stab vests. The inspection team believes this contradiction may be resolved by communication. There were also issues regarding inconsistency of double crewing of PCSOs. Presently the BCU instructs PCSOs to double crew at Solihull, but not at Chelmsley Wood. This policy, if correct, needs to be re-iterated to all staff so that the

reason for variance is understood. PCSOs generally feel that they can contribute more to BCU policing, and that there is a lack of understanding of their role amongst BCU staff. In their opinion, the communications room is not deploying them as much as it could. The inspection team suggests that PCSOs could market themselves and their role, perhaps by use of a training day. There was some frustration from trainers and PCSOs that they were recently trained in the use of traffic fixed penalties and then received instructions that they were not allowed to issue them. The inspection team understands that the Force/BCU may consider such roles as confrontational and not within PCSO's current remit but why were they trained? The BCU commander is urged to review the following issues regarding PCSOs: communication issues regarding the non-issue of stab proof vests; inconsistencies of double crewing; better marketing of PCSOs and their role to BCU and control room staff and ensuring the training that PCSOs receive is relevant to their role.

Intelligence-led policing

39. The National Intelligence Model appears to be embedded across the BCU. All meetings of the structure such as the daily tasking, two weekly tasking and co-ordination meeting are in place and appear to be driving BCU activity and outcomes in line with the BCU control strategy. Documents examined during inspection such as the tactical assessment appears professionally produced and cover the requisite areas. Sector inspectors recognise an improvement in the process, but more progress can be made, for example, the use of technology, dedicated and equipped briefing rooms and consistency of briefings delivered by sergeants. Work is ongoing, with briefing environments being reviewed including the provision of 'Smart boards'.
40. Both uniformed and CID officers were positive regarding the daily tasking process and the BCU commander may wish to consider the use of airwaves (radio system) for daily tasking. The inspection team has recently seen it being used to enable all appropriate BCU staff to listen in remotely no matter where or what they are doing.
41. The quantity and quality of intelligence coming into the CSB appears adequate but, as discussed there is presently no regular monitoring of submission levels. It was clear that some staff of the BCU could submit more intelligence, such as the special constabulary with only two of the sixty-one members currently trained to use the electronic system. The provision of this performance information and consistency of submission has already been identified by the SMT and forms part of the on-going change programme. Members of the intelligence staff (from within the CSB) met during inspection were positive about their role and consider existing staffing levels adequate apart from the current abstractions. BCU staff were positive about the role of the CSB, sector inspectors described it as the fulcrum for activity and evaluation of outcomes.
42. Staff of the BCU perceived that there are problems gaining force support for level 2 crime (criminals that transcend BCU or Force boundaries) due to a lack of Force level resources. Seeking level 2 support is seen by the CID as bureaucratic and not available in quick time allowing further criminality to occur. The inspection team was pleased to see that these perceptions have not prevented the BCU from asking for such support when appropriate.

43. CSB staff were very positive about intelligence gathering from partner agencies but referred to bureaucratic difficulties in sharing information, for example policies on computer security. This was highlighted several times during inspection and the BCU commander is urged to resolve this issue to assist joint agency working.

Crime Investigation and recording practices

44. BCU crime investigation capacity has been severely reduced over the last few months by several major enquiries and some are:
- In February 2004, a local high profile radio DJ was killed. An incident room was established and staffed with officers from the BCU. Following a lengthy investigation, 4 males were charged with Burglary and Manslaughter in July 2004 and the trial is ongoing.
 - In June 2004, following a burglary at his house where force was used to commit the offence, an elderly victim subsequently died. The offence formed part of a series of burglaries targeting elderly victims some of whom were subject to violence. A suspect has been arrested and is currently charged with murder and offences of burglary.
 - In August 2004 a male sub-contractor at a local vehicle manufacturer was killed whilst removing a water pump from a water testing facility at the works. A joint investigation has been undertaken with the Health and Safety Executive to establish the circumstances of his death and whether there is evidence to support a charge of Manslaughter. A file has recently been submitted to the Crown Prosecution Service for consideration.
 - At the end of August a female was raped just outside Touchwood Shopping Centre. As a result of the collection of CCTV evidence, the circulation of images through the local media and house to house enquires, a suspect was identified. A male from Windsor is currently charged with Rape.
45. In addition to the above, there have been detailed investigations into an attempted murder of a young child and non-accidental injuries to a 4 week old baby who sustained brain damage. Whilst resourcing these major enquiries, the BCU has also supplied detective staff under the terms of 'precept' and 'exceptional precept' arrangements for staff to be abstracted to deal with Force level major investigations. At present the BCU has six staff abstracted on 'exceptional precept' in addition to six officers who are part of the 'normal precept' arrangements.
46. As mentioned earlier, three detectives remain on non-operational duties awaiting a misconduct hearing. The BCU has plans to appoint two officers that will specifically address the lack of offences currently 'taken into consideration' by offenders. The inspection team believes that this, together with new Force guidance will address the present lack of confidence in such work.
47. The Force has plans to create a permanent major investigation unit that will permanently take staff from each BCU to deal with major enquiries. This is seen positively by the BCU as it will bring certainty to the availability of detective strength.

48. The inspection team heard some concerns from CID officers about initial investigations by uniformed staff, for example contamination of crime scene issues, statement taking and hand over packages were all described as poor. They also believe that front line supervision is weak and the workforce is relatively inexperienced. Reactive officers stated that investigations often suffered because of time pressures to move from one incident to the next. A specific comment from interview was “The most experienced officer on my shift has 3 years service and basic time and know how is lacking”. Not all reactive shifts have a supervisor on duty and the change programme includes the realignment of sergeants onto specific teams. It may be appropriate when this happens to re-communicate minimum standards of investigation and reinforce standards by divisional training for team leaders and uniformed officers.
49. The BCU CID is based at two sites, Solihull and Chelmsley Wood. To overcome potential communication problems, the detective inspector (DI) works at whichever station the ‘duty crew’ (detective officers dedicated on a rota to respond to BCU enquiries) is based. There were positive views regarding the duty team that enables other CID officers to progress enquiries without distraction. There is a weekly meeting between the inspector and detective sergeants where workloads are openly discussed.
50. It is apparent the detective inspector is often called out unnecessarily to deal with incidents or when called out, initial actions of staff have been poor. There were examples of incidents attended, where the duty inspector had failed ‘to get a grip’ or a lack of supervision in communications room (no supervisor at all times) had meant that basic actions had not been completed. One example was a critical incident regarding a baby death where investigative decisions had been made such as scenes of crime (SOCO) call out, attendance and work undertaken without any referral to the DI. The BCU commander is urged to review these issues.
51. The inspection team found positive views regarding the BCU offender management team. It consists of a sex offender officer, warrants officer and two others that identify persistent offenders and then engage partnership activity by a monthly meeting or daily contact. The team also instigates proactive targeting by use of other BCU resources. Created 10 months ago, the team has been recognised for its work at a local business awards ceremony.
52. Uniformed officers perceived that they were completing substantial extra paperwork regarding domestic abuse incidents. This has led to frustration as they suspect that a lack of staff in the domestic violence unit has meant that paperwork is just filed and there is little outcome or feedback. Some constables, tasked to conduct revisits to injured parties were not sure why or what their role was. There was also frustration that they took lengthy statements (20 pages on occasion) when they believed they had a unit with this remit. The BCU commander is urged to review these issues.

Use of forensic, DNA and scientific techniques

53. A forensic audit was introduced by HMIC as part of a Force or BCU inspection from January 2002 to ensure a standard approach to the evaluation of scientific support services, the effective use of resources and to identify good practice. The

methodology for the inspection of Solihull BCU was to examine the management and recording of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) samples, fingerprints, and the procedure for the monitoring and dealing with crime scene identifications, as well as to identify any links to the intelligence system and crime analysis.

54. The inspection team examined the taking of DNA samples from prisoners to ensure that every opportunity is utilised. DNA is currently taken from every prisoner arrested for a recordable offence, which is a recent change as previously samples were only taken if the prisoner was charged, reported, summonsed or had the offence TIC'd. The process is impressive in that when the prisoner is presented, the custody sergeant has the responsibility for checking the police national computer (PNC) to identify the need to take a sample or not. The custody computer (ICS) has a direct link to PNC and it will not allow closure of a screen page if the DNA question to take a sample or not has not been answered – if DNA is not taken it forces the custody sergeant to record reason why not.
55. An audit of 50 custody records from December 04 was undertaken and cross referred to corresponding PNC records that confirmed the BCU had not missed any opportunities to take DNA. The BCU is congratulated, however, because of the recent change in policy the BCU commander is urged to conduct a similar audit in the near future.
56. DNA storage facilities were examined and appeared good. There is a regular collection of DNA samples once per week and the integrity of the sample maintained by adequate security arrangements.
57. The inspection team examined the management of forensic identifications. DNA or fingerprint identifications are forwarded to a nominated officer within the CSB. Identification packages are hard copy and delivered via internal mail although the dedicated officer is able to proactively interrogate the electronic system to identify hits in advance of packages arriving. A more detailed package is then developed within the CSB and prioritised for arrest (14 days for all offences except 5 days for burglary). There was evidence of the BCU robustly monitoring progress of the identification by database, the tasking and co-ordination meeting and the provision of a weekly list of outstanding identifications to the crime manager. There were issues raised regarding consistency and quality of some of the packages received by arresting officers in that on occasions there was further research required prior to arrest. It is clear that due to current staffing shortages within the CSB, an analyst or intelligence officer is not viewing all identifications. As a consequence, the intelligence sergeant has to make a judgement call on which identifications are developed or not.
58. The BCU has five police staff SOC officers and two police officer vehicle examiners who have been in post since 1996. The inspection team urges the BCU commander to consider if police officers represent best value in these positions. SOCO accommodation and equipment is considered excellent and there is clear accountability to the crime manager. There were positive views from CID and uniform officers regarding SOCOs, who described them as both professional and approachable. SOCOs regularly provide forensic awareness bulletins via E-mail for issues such as storage/preservation in inclement weather but SOCOs believe that there

is a need to enhance probationer training regarding crime scene awareness. The BCU does not have a dedicated rota garage (garage where recovered stolen vehicles are taken) and as a consequence SOCOs travel to other BCUs to complete their examinations. As a result, there is often increased travelling and a duplication of effort with several other BCUs providing staff for the same role.

Managing demand

59. All inspectors (apart from DIs) currently undertake a patrol inspector (duty inspector) role. Recent consultation has created a situation where some sector inspectors cover less than colleagues due to the nature of their role. Generally this is seen positively and the inspection team liked the recent development under the change plan of minimum standards for the patrol inspector. This should clarify what is expected from the position and therefore provide consistency. The inspection team noted that sector inspectors do not currently nominate a deputy to cover sector issues in their absence and has seen a deputy or similar support for sector inspectors elsewhere. The deputy has lowered the tension over dual roles and has been able to resolve sector issues for the inspector. The patrol inspector completes an E-mail template of key crime; incidents of note and staffing issues that occur during their period of duty and this is adding further accountability to the role. There is a strong emphasis on being visible during their tour of duty. There are good links between operational staff, patrol inspectors and the control room. The level of demand on the role raises the issue of an opportunity for cluster arrangements with neighbouring BCUs.
60. The inspection team encountered some frustrations from reactive officers regarding deployments to some incidents that they felt could have been dealt with on the phone. Presently, Shirley sector uses restricted officers to act as a filter to avoid unnecessary deployments but the inspection team were not convinced that this was being evaluated and if successful therefore could be transferred to other sectors or deployed at a BCU level. Further clarity is required regarding the BCU single crewing policy. Some staff were unsure on specific instructions and some have strong views against it in any case. The BCU commander is urged to review this issue.
61. Generally, there were positive views from uniformed officers regarding BCU support services such as the roads policing unit (RPU) and also of Force resources such as the dog section and operational support unit. The BCU RPU has good relationships with partner agencies. The inspection team was impressed that a recent review under the change programme had given their activity more emphasis in accordance with BCU priorities, particularly in relation to priority crime reduction. RPU officers perceive that they are under establishment in comparison with other BCUs of the Force. They also feel that automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) operations could be better supported by sector staff, when available.
62. The BCU special constabulary has an establishment of 61 with a target of 100 by 2006. The inspection team found generally good relationships between regulars and specials although regular uniformed constables perceive there is a skill gap between the two. As a consequence, regular officers were not convinced that specials were able to fully contribute to the high demands on front line policing. There is a strong accountability and relationship between special supervisors, special constables and

sector sergeants and inspectors. There was evidence that sector inspectors regularly task specials and specials generate their own operations. Specials were positive regarding the recent work that is ongoing to develop special constable probationers and the structured system of training for special officers. It was also positive that specials are allowed to conduct attachments to specialised departments such as roads policing and CID.

63. Specials are currently managed by their own management structure (SDO and DO ranks) who link into the BCU SMT. Many members of the special constabulary expressed reservations about the role performed by their own special managers. There were concerns regarding a lack of operational visibility; weak management; being inaccessible apart from charring monthly meetings; lack of contact from them after a recent assault on one of their officers and a failure to submit expense forms for their officers. Specials intelligence submissions are hampered by the fact that only two of the 61 specials are currently trained on the intelligence system. There appeared to be ad hoc police attendance at the specials meeting. There were some issues regarding equipment – a lack of dedicated vehicle, lack of personal issue stab proof vests – pool allocation described as often short in supply, ill fitting and smelly. Uniformed sergeants stated they were not aware of when specials were coming on duty. There was no advance roster information and on occasions specials finished duty early without reference to sergeants. There appeared to be no clear deployment principles and sergeants use specials as they felt best. The BCU has a specials' recruitment co-ordinator post but it is vacant currently. Clearly there are significant developments that need to occur to ensure that the BCU makes the best use of the valuable resource that the special constabulary provides. The BCU has recognised all of the issues detailed above within the change programme and there is an internal review ongoing but it is clear that these issues are in urgent need of remedial action.

Leadership

BCU Management team

64. The BCU commander (chief superintendent) has been in post since June 2003. He has 24 years police service and joined as a graduate entry. Prior to his current role he worked as staff officer to the Deputy Chief Constable and within the Force inspectorate. He was promoted to chief inspector in 1992 when he was posted to Stoney Stanton road BCU in Coventry, and in 1994 became a detective chief inspector at Queens road, Birmingham, BCU. Promoted to superintendent in 1995 he led a Force project on a new crime recording system before becoming the BCU commander (chief superintendent) at Little Park street BCU, Coventry. In 1999 he briefly headed Crime Support before returning to Coventry as BCU commander.
65. The superintendent operations joined Warwickshire police in 1982 and has 23 years service. He was promoted to detective sergeant in 1994 and then to detective inspector in 1997. He was promoted in 2000 to chief inspector operations where he was sub-divisional commander covering Leamington Spa, Warwick and Kenilworth. He was temporarily promoted to superintendent within Warwickshire until he was appointed as operations superintendent in his current role in June 2003. He currently carries a

Force wide portfolio as silver commander for Operation Safer Motors (a Force level operation to tackle vehicle crime).

66. The BCU Crime Manager (detective chief inspector) has 21 years police service, having joined in 1983. He was promoted to sergeant in 1989 and worked in the Force's training department between 1990 and 1993. In 1996 he held a Force level position in the Research and Development department. He was promoted to inspector in 1997 and led a sector at Bournville Lane, Birmingham. From 2000 to 2002 he was a detective chief inspector in the Force Professional Standards Department, from where he joined Solihull BCU as crime manager.
67. The BCU Personnel Manager is a member of police staff and started working for West Midlands police in 1979. She initially worked in the Personnel department as a Senior Personnel assistant. She has worked at both a local level and Force level over her service having a key role in the delivery of strategic human resource projects. In 1988 she left the service and rejoined in March 1995 undertaking a job share role within the Force Welfare Department. She then returned to full time working in the Personnel Department in 1998 as a Personnel Assistant and progressing to Team Leader. In December 2002 she took up her current role as Personnel Manager for Solihull BCU.
68. The BCU Business Manager is also a member of police staff. She has 22 years within the police service having joined in 1983. She started as a typist with the Prosecuting Solicitors (now known as CPS) based at Little Park Street, Coventry. In 1985 she became secretary to the BCU commander at Little Park Street and in 1987 was appointed as Senior Administration Officer in the newly created Administration Support Unit. In 1997 she was appointed Business Manger at Solihull.
69. There is an extensive devolution of budget to the BCU managed by the business manager. The BCU has the ability to shape resources according to needs. Overtime is devolved to sector and manager level but there is some inconsistency regarding ability to manage and there is room for some training or further development of middle managers. Secretarial support has been devolved to sector level and these posts are seen very positively across the BCU. There were many examples of the use of external and or joint funding, for example;
 - PCSO funded by Solihull college
 - Solihull council paying for motorcycles and training of youngsters
 - 2 x PCSOs funded by building safer communities project
 - 2 x PCSOs funded by 'pathfinder'
 - A national exhibition centre (NEC) beat officer being paid for by the NEC
 - 'Domehawk' cameras (CCTV cameras fitted to lampposts) by the local council and linked to CCTV systems.
 - 3 mobile police stations (2 current 1 pending) paid for by BCU funding – their use is being evaluated at present.
70. The inspection team heard positive views and praise from all levels on BCU of the accessibility and communication of the SMT. There is a structured programme for the BCU commander and superintendent operations visibility, including attendance at training days. All staff knew the SMT members but some were not so positive on

visibility of police staff members of SMT particularly at sector level. All staff spoken to were positive about communication of messages within the BCU – all knew about minutes of meetings available on the Intranet and there was evidence that managers are personally briefing teams after meetings.

71. All SMT feel part of team and able to contribute. The team meets weekly and a record kept of actions and shared understanding on issues. The personnel manager has specific meetings with sector inspectors to deal with human resource issues (discussed earlier regarding an opportunity to merge this meeting into a performance meeting). There are good meeting structures at management level with a wide inclusivity of attendees. However, some police staff managers stated they had little to input at key note meetings (monthly management meeting) and the BCU commander is urged to ensure agenda management or ensure that such managers realise the relevance to them of what is being discussed. The BCU commander holds a regular forum meeting with representatives from each department of the BCU present. The inspection team found that this is a valued meeting with many tangible outcomes.
72. There is an apparent good relationship between police staff; police officers; CID and uniform colleagues. The relationship between CID and uniformed colleagues has no doubt benefited from the mixed proactive teams in place at sector level, which has also allowed for the exchange of good practice.
73. The inspection team continually heard of a divide between Chelmsely Wood and Solihull. This divide, it is believed, is historical and stems from when the BCU was divided into two. It would appear that it does not prevent good relationships but is probably more about culture and methods of policing and the fact that the BCU is physically divided into two by the A45 road. The divide has led to a perception that Chelmsley Wood is often the poor relation when it comes to such issues such as staffing and equipment. The BCU commander is urged to dismantle the perceived barriers.

Self-review and learning

74. The inspection team was impressed with the change programme started in the autumn of 2004. There has been extensive consultation with staff that has produced a very comprehensive strength and weakness analysis. It is to the credit of the SMT that the findings very much mirror the headline findings from the BCU inspection process. An inspector has been appointed as the project manager and there are arrangements for evaluation of the change. The further consultation and development of the change plan has been agreed recently and now moves into the full implementation phase. Areas for development from the strength and weakness analysis appear to have plans to resolve the main areas of concern, for example a plan for increasing detections; a plan for dealing with robbery offences; the development of the special constabulary and the development of individual/team performance information.
75. Sector inspectors are positive and feel involved in the process, but raised the issue of evaluation of change programme, and the BCU commander may wish to consider the provision of regular feedback of developments ensuring that consultation does not end with the production of the plan itself. A challenge for the BCU is that officers like the

current shift pattern and they perceive it is appropriate for the current demand profile. An important aspect of the new deployments will be the creation of initiative and training days from an overlap in the shift pattern. As part of change programme, the BCU may wish to consider red circling certain roles or establishing priority order of abstraction.

76. The inspection team was impressed with trainers met and the overall set up to deliver training to BCU staff. A training need analysis has been completed with appropriate links from PDR and also local BCU identified needs. The SMT and Force executive set the training programme. Crime investigation standards are already identified as a BCU priority for training. Trainers were not aware of the future plans to allocate training days within the new shift pattern and hence were unable plan long-term training. Training facilities appeared excellent with a good-sized room and equipment. Some evaluation of training was occurring, in the form of training evaluation sheets; informal feedback and some prescriptive evaluation planned for the victim personal statement training. There was some evidence of some staff persistently not turning up for allocated training sessions and also that some staff are turning up for the same course 3 times running. The BCU commander is urged to consider these issues. There were some concerns from BCU trainers regarding current level of training at Force level in relation to sexual offences, which they described as inadequate. E- Learning is not used by the BCU, as it was described slow to load on computer systems, often switching off, requiring the member of staff to re-start the course.
77. The inspection team was impressed with the establishment of the probationer development unit (PDU) and people development officer post (PDO). The BCU commander may need to consider vehicles for the PDU when it moves location under the change programme and further support to the PDO to ensure development in line with current plans.
78. There is an apparent good recognition system within the BCU with a bi-monthly presentation ceremony with various categories of awards and referral to the chief constable for his commendations. Uniform constables were generally positive about rewards and recognition but some officers believed that some awards may not be merited and consequently devalued the process. This is something for the BCU commander to be aware of at the quality assurance stage of recommending staff for awards.
79. There was evidence that the BCU is a healthy participant in the Force suggestion scheme, known as 'Launch pad'. The BCU has contributed 40 suggestions from November 2003 to November 2004.

HR and diversity issues

80. BCU Health and Safety issues are managed by a bi-monthly meeting chaired by the BCU commander and are seen positively across the BCU. The meeting has a comprehensive attendance including Federation (currently no Unison representative on BCU). There are regular Health and Safety workplace assessments conducted, however, it would appear that Federation representatives are not involved in 'walk

through assessments' and this is an area that the BCU commander may wish to consider.

81. There are good family friendly policies, with evidence of job sharing and part time working. The personnel manager has fronted meetings with staff to enhance awareness of such opportunities. As in many BCUs there is often conflict of personal versus organisational needs that the personnel manager has been able to resolve. The inspection team was not convinced that the BCU was aware of the impact of flexible working or that the impact of family friendly policies was being evaluated. Sector inspectors were of the view that they are now at saturation point and there is unlikely to be many more opportunities for part time working or job sharing without some impact upon performance. The BCU commander is urged to monitor this situation.
82. Presently, the Force sets PDR (appraisal) completion on a cascading basis eg chief officers in April, cascaded down the rank structure to PCs/equivalent police staff due in December. There has been slippage in BCU compliance rates and it does not appear that the Force is regularly asking for information regarding completion. Although the PDO monitors completion rates and sends out e mail reminders, there appears to be a lack of management use of compliance data within the BCU. The BCU commander is urged to consider the regular provision of such data at a forum such as the monthly 'key note' meetings. This will enhance accountability and demonstrate the value that the SMT places on the PDR system.
83. All supervisors have recently received mandatory PDR training and the inspection team felt that the process was enhanced by the PDO acting as a focal point, collating training needs, feeding them into the training needs analysis and regularly conducting quality assessments of PDRs submitted. There was evidence that PDRs are being returned if below standard. The inspection team noted that team PDRs do not consistently get forwarded to the PDO. This will create some problems when trying to quality assess, particularly in the future when more specific targets are introduced into the PDR process (as part of the change plan). Some PDRs were examined at random. Generally there were objectives set linking the individual to BCU performance but there is room for 'Smarter' target setting. The development of team/personal level performance information will allow PDRs to become much smarter and consistent in the future.

Equipment

84. Generally staff of the BCU viewed buildings and equipment as adequate. There were some issues that are highlighted below, which the BCU commander is urged to review;
 - Officers gave the inspection team examples where there were insufficient vehicles for their needs, particularly at Chelmsley Wood. There is a lack of sponsored vehicles and this could be considered, however the business manager is of the view that vehicles need to be managed better in that some departmental vehicles were not being used to their full extent. There was evidence that the keys to such vehicles were not always available with a belief that officers are too precious regarding the use of such vehicles. The BCU

intends to lease 9 vehicles for next year and the inspection team would ask the BCU commander to consider the above aspects.

- There was a lack of breath test kits available for front line officers, not every vehicle has them and this creates extra work for officers to bring one to the scene.
- Earpieces for airwaves radios are perceived to be of poor quality, resulting in officers resorted to using plaster and elastic bands to hold them in place.
- The BCU has acquired community police vans, which have been seen as a good idea, but there are frustrations amongst staff that there is not enough staff trained to drive them. BCU staff believe that the Force keeps changing driver authority levels. Staff currently need a 2-week authority to drive general purpose vehicles which used to be a 20 minute assessment. This is seen as bureaucratic and adds to the lack of drivers.
- The BCU has a new and comprehensive property system. This has links to the crime recording system and generates E-mails to officers to chase up property in stores. Despite this system there were examples where officers have to be chased for updates. With the automatic disposal policy and lack of response to memos, property required for court has sometimes been disposed of. (After 12-month period and several reminders to officers).

Attendance management and sickness statistics

Figure 7 – BCU sickness data

Staff Type	Days lost per officer 02/03	Days lost per officer 03/04	MSBCU average 03/04	Rank in MSBCU Family 03/04	% Change of days lost per officer 02/03 to 03/04
Police Officers	9.43	9.14	9.4	8 out of 15	-3.1%
Police Staff	10.27	7.82	9.47	4 out of 15	-23.9%

Home Office performance data

85. Figure 7, above, details BCU performance in relation to sickness levels. Police officer sickness levels are below the MSBCU average and have reduced from the previous year by over 3%. Police staff sickness levels have fallen, year on year, by almost 25% and are low when compared with peer BCUs, fourth lowest out of 15 in the MSBCU group. The BCU is to be congratulated on these results. The Force and BCU managing attendance policy shapes the BCU response to dealing with sickness and there was widespread evidence of knowledge and compliance throughout inspection. The Force runs an attendance recognition award known as ‘always there’ and this is viewed positively by BCU staff. There are awards for 5, 10,15,20,25 and 30 years service without absence through sickness. There are good initiatives from the BCU itself such as well-being sessions run to enhance officer awareness of the importance of looking after themselves. There is also a strong emphasis on return to work interviews.

Complaints

Figure 8 – Complaint data

	2002/03	2003/04	MSBCU Average 03/04	Rank in BCU Family 03/04	% Change from 02/03 to 03/04
Total Complaints	120	147			
Complaints Per 1000 Officer	298.93	368.97	259.12	14 out of 15	+23.4%
Complaints Substantiated	1	3			
% Complaints Substantiated	0.83%	2.04%	4.15%	7 out of 15	+1.21% pts

Source – Home Office performance data

86. Figure 8, above details levels of complaints made against officers of the BCU. There has been a 23% rise in the number of complaints per 1000 officer. This is high when compared to the MSBCU average and is the second highest level in the MSBCU family. In 2003/04, 2% of complaints were substantiated, lower than the MSBCU average but a rise of 1.2% points from the previous year. Figures provided by the BCU suggest that levels of complaints have continued to rise into 2004/05 and the BCU has recorded the highest number of complaints in West Midlands Police between April and November 2004. Complaints have also risen from 64 to 85 in the corresponding period.
87. The BCU commander should consider monitoring complaint trends in real time rather than relying on retrospective data from HQ. This should ensure timely remedial action, such as staff training. Grievances are under the scrutiny of the personnel manager, but she has no involvement with complaints and is therefore not able to examine the trends and potentially put relevant training in place through the PDO.

Conclusions and recommendations

The inspection team wish to thank the SMT for the warm welcome and provision of facilities to carry out the inspection, and also the staff and partnership representatives for the positive way they reacted to the process and their co-operation. The Inspection team would like to make particular mention of the liaison officers assigned by the BCU who did an excellent job of drawing together the necessary documentation, preparing the programme and were very flexible for the inspection visit. They were a credit to the BCU and Force.

Solihull BCU is responsible for policing the Metropolitan Borough of Solihull; an area characterised by its large geographical size and mix of both affluent and socially deprived areas. The borough motto, 'the town in the country', accurately reflects the challenge of policing large urban areas and rural communities. Recent increases in private housing developments are evident and the vibrant commercial sector has continued to expand.

Year on year, total crime has fallen by 10%, but despite these improvements, levels of crime remain significantly higher than the MSBCU average and a current stable trend over the last 6 months will not allow this gap to close. Vehicle crime is identified as the major problem for the BCU and despite recent reductions and a current achievement of its vehicle crime reduction targets, the BCU has recorded the highest level of vehicle crime in the MSBCU group. There have been excellent recent reductions for burglary dwelling house offences, but overall the momentum of the year on year reduction needs to be improved upon if the gap with peer BCUs is to close. Unfortunately over the last 12-month period the MSBCU average for all crimes has also improved at a similar rate, which means, despite improving performance the gap is no smaller.

Recently, the total crime detection rate has fallen by over 5% points and is the lowest detection rate in the MSBCU group. Analysis of the trend shows that there has been a sustained decline in detection rate since the start of 2004 with only a slight improvement in the last 3-month period.

The BCU has had to resource major incidents, which has to be a significant factor when considering the BCU efforts to improve its detection rate for volume crime. To its credit the BCU has carried out a strength and weakness analysis and worked hard to produce a programme of change which has included a specific plan to increase detections. In the changes, the BCU is restructuring and introducing policies to improve performance across all areas.

Overall, the inspection team was convinced that the BCU is able to provide an effective policing service and can improve its performance with the proposed changes if implemented in a structured and properly managed way. As such the inspection team make one recommendation and this is to continue the change programme that has been outlined to the inspection team and include the elements that have been specified in this report. A proper change programme should be followed, led by people with the relevant skills and a particular emphasis on maintaining the good communication and consultation evident so far.

RECOMMENDATION 1

It is recommended that the BCU commander continue the change programme that has been outlined to the inspection team and include the elements that have been specified in this report. A proper change programme should be followed, led by people with the relevant skills and a particular emphasis on maintaining the good communication and consultation evident so far.

Summary of good practice

- Plans are advanced to open the first jointly run and jointly funded Police and Local Authority front counter facility in the Midlands. Staff will be trained to provide both Police and council services, in order to offer a one-stop shop for members of the public within Shirley, their core role being to solve community problems, particularly anti-social behaviour.
- The BCU offender management team identify persistent offenders and then engage partnership activity by a monthly meeting or daily contact. The team also instigates proactive targeting by use of other BCU resources. The team, created 10 months ago, has been recognised for its work at a local business awards ceremony.

Issues for management consideration

- Overall the inspection team was impressed with the plans to form a crime and anti-social behaviour reduction team, but would urge the BCU to carefully examine the draw on the inspector of his commitments to the duty inspector role.
- Despite the time implications for the SMT, the monthly performance meetings with inspectors by the BCU commander and superintendent operations may improve if the meetings were held on sectors and included other members of the SMT.
- BCU staff supports the reintroduction of performance information. The development of such information has been identified within the change plan and HMIC would endorse its production.
- The BCU commander is urged to review the following issues regarding PCSOs; communication issues regarding the non-issue of stab proof vests; inconsistencies of double crewing; better marketing of PCSOs and their role to BCU and control room staff and ensuring the training that PCSOs receive is relevant to their role.
- CSB staff were very positive about intelligence gathering from partner agencies but referred to bureaucratic difficulties in sharing information, for example policies on computer security. This was highlighted several times during inspection and the BCU commander is urged to resolve this issue to assist joint agency working.

- It may be appropriate when the new shift pattern is introduced to re-communicate minimum standards of investigation and reinforce standards by divisional training for team leaders and uniformed officers.
- It is apparent the DI is often called out unnecessarily to deal with incidents or when called out initial actions of staff had been poor.
- Uniformed officers perceived that they were completing substantial extra paperwork regarding domestic abuse incidents. This has led to frustration and there is little obvious outcome or feedback. Constables are tasked to conduct revisits to injured parties and were not sure why or what their role was. There was also a frustration that they were taking lengthy (20 pages on occasions) statements when they believed they had a unit for this type of work.
- The BCU has two vehicle examiners who are police officers. The inspection team urges the BCU commander to consider if police officers represent best value in these positions?
- Further clarity is required regarding the BCU single crewing policy. Some staff were unsure on specific instructions and some have strong views against it in any case. The BCU commander is urged to review this issue.
- Some police staff managers stated they had little to input at key note meetings (monthly management meeting) and the BCU commander is urged to ensure agenda management or ensure that such managers realise the relevance to them of what is being discussed.
- The inspection team continually heard of a divide between Chelmsely Wood and Solihull. This divide, it is believed, is historical and stems from when the BCU was divided into two. It would appear that it does not prevent good relationships but is probably more about culture and methods of policing and the fact that the BCU is physically divided into two by the A45 road. The divide has led to a perception that Chelmsley Wood is often the poor relation when it comes to such issues such as staffing and equipment. The BCU commander is urged to dismantle the perceived barriers.
- There was evidence of some staff persistently not turning up for allocated training sessions and also that some staff are turning up for the same course three times running.
- The BCU commander may wish to consider vehicles for the PDU when it moves location under the change programme and further support to the PDO to ensure development in line with current plans.
- There are regular Health and Safety workplace assessments conducted, however, it would appear that Federation representatives are not involved in 'walk through assessments'.
- The inspection team was not convinced that the BCU was aware of the impact of flexible working or that the impact of family friendly policies was being evaluated. Sector inspectors were of the view that they are now at saturation point and there is unlikely to be many more opportunities for part time working or job sharing without some impact upon performance. The BCU commander is urged to monitor this situation.

- The BCU commander is urged to consider the regular provision of PDR completion data at a forum such as the monthly ‘key note’ meetings.
- There were some issues raised during inspection regarding buildings and equipment that are highlighted below, which the BCU commander is urged to review;
 - ❖ Insufficient vehicles
 - ❖ Lack of breath test kits
 - ❖ Earpieces for airwaves radios which may be part of the National equipment provision and needs to be raised as such after BCU commander review.
 - ❖ Lack of staff authorised to drive certain types of vehicles
 - ❖ Disposal of property

Recommendation

The BCU Commander is recommended to:

- Continue the change programme that has been outlined to the inspection team and include the elements that have been specified in this report. A proper change programme should be followed, led by people with the relevant skills and a particular emphasis on maintaining the good communication and consultation evident so far.