

**Inspection of  
Stechford BCU (D3 Division)  
West Midlands Police  
July 2005**

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1. The inspection of Stechford Basic Command Unit (BCU), 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. Also present were Chief Superintendent Aidan Reid and Inspector Josephine Crowe, who were observers from the Garda Police, Republic of Ireland. The inspection took place between 18 and 22 July 2005.

## **Force and BCU Overview**

2. West Midlands Police is one of the largest police forces in England, covering an area of 348 square miles and serving a population of approximately 2.63 million. The region sits at the very heart of the country and covers the three major centres of Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton. It also includes the busy and thriving districts of Sandwell, Walsall, Solihull and Dudley. On average, 170,000 motorists travel through the region daily, making its motorways some of the busiest in Europe. Against this backdrop, the Force deals with more than 2000 emergency calls for help every day, as well as patrolling the streets and responding to incidents 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
3. The Force is divided into twenty one 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 further divided into a number of sectors – each headed by an inspector. These sectors are responsible for local policing in the community.
4. Stechford (D3) BCU covers an area stretching from Birmingham city centre to Birmingham International Airport and parts of its boundaries are formed by the M6 motorway to the north and the A45 arterial road to the south. The BCU has four sectors at Stechford, Shard End, Sheldon and Small Heath, serving a population of more than 152,000. The BCU has excellent transport links with good rail links and also is central to the midland motorway network including nearby access to the M6, M42, M5 and the recently opened Northern Relief Road. The BCU houses Saint Andrews, the home of Birmingham City Football Club of the Premier League. The BCU has a broad diverse ethnic community with minority ethnic groups being much higher than the national average. It also houses asylum seekers from many different countries. Statistics show that unemployment is higher than the national average as are residents with limiting long-term illness or poor health indicating a generally poorer lifestyle that may also impact on crime.
5. The BCU senior management team is headed by a chief superintendent and is based at Stechford police station, the BCU headquarters. As at 31 March 2005 the BCU has an establishment of 403 police officers; 106 members of police staff (including traffic wardens) and 10 members of the Special Constabulary.

## **Performance**

### **Crime and disorder reduction partnerships**

6. In accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the local authority, police, health service and fire service supported by other key agencies and voluntary groups have joined together to form a crime and reduction partnership (CDRP). There is one

such partnership within Birmingham City known as Birmingham Community Safety Partnership that is currently operating under a strategy for the years 2005 to 2008. The strategy contains the following main themes as priorities and aims:

- Public Perceptions of Safety – to help those who live in, work in and visit Birmingham feel safer
- Burglary – reduce house burglary by 22%
- Robbery – reduce robbery by 11%
- Theft from Person – reduce theft from person by 22%
- Vehicle crime (theft of; theft from and interference) - reduce vehicle crime by 22%
- Theft and unauthorised taking of pedal cycle – reduce theft and unauthorised taking of pedal cycle by 20%
- Reduce fires (Accidental dwelling; vehicle arsons and arson-non dwelling) – targets yet to be agreed
- Wounding – reducing wounding by 18%
- Common assault – reduce common assault by 20%
- Alcohol Related Violence – reduce alcohol related violence by 18%
- Violence in Public Places – reduce violence in public places by 18%
- Safer and Cleaner Neighbourhoods – to achieve safer and cleaner neighbourhoods
- Anti Social Behaviour – reduce public anti-social behaviour and across all housing tenures
- Business Crime – to reduce crime directed against the business community
- Criminal Damage – reduce criminal damage by 20%
- Road Traffic Accidents – to reduce, year on year, incidents of death and injury through road accidents
- Safer Travel – to reduce offending and anti-social behaviour on transport routes.

7. In recognition of the complexities of operating in partnership across such a wide area, the City Council has formed eleven local delivery groups (LDGs) for Birmingham City Council but it is clear to the inspection team that the situation is still not ideal for successful partnership working. The BCU covers 3 of the 11 LDGs and this brings with it many challenges that are detailed below. It is clear that at present the districts are ‘maturing’ and may still change which is a rationale for not altering BCU boundaries at this time. However, as with other Birmingham City BCUs the inspection team found evidence of duplication in some of the areas of partnership working. Some specifics for consideration include:

- Dealing with funding aspects. A variety of people are involved. Some are more proficient than others.
- There are a large number of meetings. Sector inspectors have to prioritise meetings, as they are unable to attend them all. There was substantial evidence that BCU community safety specialist staff are having to attend numerous meetings that overlap with staff from other BCUs. This is a product of the CDRP district structure, but it may be that some rationalisation can occur from a strategic overview of the situation. In particular the inspection team together

with BCU staff feel that it must be possible ‘to streamline to one police representative’. A specific quote from staff was “the district situation makes things so repetitive”.

8. Despite the issues regarding duplication of effort the inspection team found many positives regarding the BCU working in partnership. Some examples are provided as follows:

- It is apparent that the BCU has a large strategic influence within partnership working. The BCU commander and superintendent take the lead for two of the districts that have large geographical areas within the BCU.
- It is apparent that good relations exist between roles such as the sector inspectors for different BCUs covering the same district. It was found that these present good relationships were helping to negate potential problems with the three-district set up.
- There were some good examples of fund acquisition.
- There were many examples of successful partnership initiatives that are impacting well at a tactical level. Many of the initiatives involve all of the nine Birmingham BCUs and are detailed on the Birmingham community safety partnership website. Hence there is a transparency of action. It was clear to the inspection team that these initiatives and funding gained from partnership resources was being evaluated on a regular basis. There is a comprehensive formal review of BCU funding and partnership work quarterly.
- There is a large emphasis on dealing with anti-social behaviour through partnership working and a wide range of initiatives is being taken forward for crime. An example was the footprint leaflets (leaflets in the shape of a footprint that are left by officers at identified insecure premises) to tackle dwelling house burglaries and anti robbery material to small businesses.
- Prolific offenders are tackled robustly with partners.
- There was high praise from partner agency representatives for the enthusiasm and commitment of the BCU with particular mention made of the commander and superintendent. Specific quotes included – “Considerable leadership in Steve and Jon, not just in terms of being involved but taking on issues with the LDGs and other partnerships”. “I wasn’t expecting a lot from the police as I assumed they had a narrow focus. I was pleasantly surprised”. “Partnership working at leadership level is very positive”. There was also praise from partner agencies and community representatives regarding sector inspectors who were well known and considered productive. There were good and productive relations with named officers at sector level and a good two-way flow of intelligence. There was generally a good police attendance at partnership meetings.
- There was evidence of joint training and development along with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). CPS praised further work ongoing.

9. There were a couple of points raised by partner representatives that are common to BCU inspections. Firstly a lack of continuity in post meant that relations had just developed to provide an efficient response when the individual moves on. Secondly they detailed frustrations at trying to contact officers via the Force's central switchboard. They stated that there were often problems in getting through and a lack of knowledge of local issues by those answering the phones. Although several members were still concerned regarding this issue, that did state that in their opinion that it has improved recently.

### Performance against operational targets

10. To allow useful and fair comparison of certain performance indicators, similar BCUs are grouped together into 'most similar basic command unit groups', based, in general, on socio-economic and demographic characteristics. Table 1, below details D3's crime reduction performance from June 2004 to May 2005 compared with the same period the previous year and MSBCU and national averages.

*Table 1 – Crime Reduction Performance (June 2004 to May 2005 compared with same period previous year)*

<i>Crime Type</i>	<i>Number of offences</i>	<i>Offence per 1000 pop/h 'hold</i>	<i>MSBCU family average</i>	<i>Rank in MSBCU family</i>	<i>% Change</i>
Total Crime	18,784	124.77	124.26	8 out of 15	<b>-6.23%</b>
Domestic Burglary	1337	22.88	19.43	12 out of 15	<b>-2.19%</b>
Robbery	681	4.52	3.25	11 out of 15	<b>+2.87%</b>
Vehicle Crime	2988	19.85	17.81	12 out of 15	<b>-14.41%</b>
Violent Crime	4343	28.85	28.96	10 out of 15	<b>-0.46%</b>

*Source – Home Office data*

- **Total Crime**

Year on year total crime has fallen by 6.23%. Trend analysis indicates that the fall in crime has been constant both in the short and long-term and D3 BCU is reducing crime at the same rate as the MSBCU average. For the year ending May 05 D3 BCU was ranked eighth in the MSBCU group.

- **Domestic Burglary**

Domestic burglary has fallen by 2.19% year on year. Levels remain high compared with peers, ranking twelfth in the MSBCU group. Year to-date figures show a 7% reduction.

- **Robbery**

Robbery levels have risen by almost 3% year on year and remain high when compared with peer BCUs. The BCU is ranked eleventh in the MSBCU group. However recent year to-date figures show there has been a 2.5% decrease.

- **Vehicle Crime**

Vehicle crime in D3 has fallen by over 14%. This is the largest percentage improvement made by the BCU and year to-date figures indicate a further reduction of 12.4% (see later).

- **Violent Crime**

Violent crime levels are relatively unchanged on the previous year. D3 remains above the MSBCU average, ranked tenth.

11. Table two, below, details crime investigation performance for the period June 2004 to May 2005 compared with same period the previous year and against MSBCU and national averages.

**Table 2 – Crime Investigation Performance (June 2004 to May 2005 compared with same period previous year)**

<i>Crime Type</i>	<i>Total Detections</i>	<i>Detection Rate (%)</i>	<i>MSBCU family average</i>	<i>Rank in MSBCU family</i>	<i>% pt Change in detection rate</i>
Total Crime	3495	18.61%	23.5%	15 out of 15	<b>-2.41% pts</b>
Domestic Burglary	181	13.54%	14.29%	7 out of 15	<b>-10.97% pts</b>
Robbery	126	18.50%	18.64%	11 out of 15	<b>-4.61% pts</b>
Vehicle Crime	163	5.46%	9.29%	12 out of 15	<b>-5.89% pts</b>
Violent Crime	1451	33.41%	42.79%	14 out of 15	<b>-6.42% pts</b>

Source – Home Office data

- **Total Crime**

D3 has the lowest total crime detection rate in the MSBCU group and has seen this fall by 2.4% year on year.

- **Domestic Burglary**

There has been a decline in the burglary detection rate year on year although current performance is only slightly below the MSBCU average.

- **Robbery**

Again there has been a notable decline in the detection rate but performance is more or less in line with the MSBCU average.

- **Vehicle Crime**

The vehicle crime detection rate has fallen by 5.89% and is very low at 5.46%, ranked twelfth in the MSBCU group.

- **Violent Crime**

Year on year, the violent crime detection rate has fallen by almost 6.5% and is currently well below the MSBCU average, ranked fourteenth in the MSBCU group.

12. In summary, in general there have been reductions in most crime areas (all except robbery). Trend analysis indicates that the fall in crime has been constant both in the short and long-term and D3 BCU is reducing crime at the same rate as the MSBCU average. There have been significant reductions in vehicle crime (14.5%) and it was apparent that the BCU had deployed several tactics that have impacted. For example

the use of local media to advise car owners regarding security and has also amended its vehicle crime strategy to increase the number of times officers attend vehicle crime incidents. D3 has the lowest total crime detection rate in the MSBCU group and has seen this fall by 2.4% year on year. Key areas are that there has been a significant decline in the burglary detection rate year on year, although current performance is only slightly below the MSBCU average. Also year on year, the violent crime detection rate has fallen by almost 6.5% and is currently well below the MSBCU average, ranked fourteenth in the MSBCU group. There is little doubt that detection rates for the BCU in common, in general with the Force are an area of some concern.

13. Recognising that detections need improvement the SMT has instigated a more intrusive style of management and performance monitoring. Specific actions such as the monitoring of police bail; review of wanted/missing people; review of crime reports with named suspects; robbery policy compliance; vehicle crime attendance policy and the like are allocated to specific managers who have the responsibility to report progress at the monthly management team meeting. The SMT via the DCI are also reviewing compliance to the force level 'positive actions on detections' guidance recently introduced. There are early indications that detection rates are starting to improve and performance figures for April to July 2005 show a rise in detections in every category from 2004/05 figures. Total crime detections have risen from 18.61% to 21.07%; domestic burglary detections from 13.54% to 13.69%; robbery detections from 18.50% to 26.42%; vehicle crime detections from 5.46% to 6.5% and violent crime from 33.41% to 37.28%. These figures are encouraging.
14. Table 3, below shows some areas of BCU performance compared against MSBCU and national averages for the last full year of available data (2004/05).

*Table 3 – BCU performance against MSBCU and national averages*

<b>Best Value Performance Indicator West Midlands – D3 OCU</b>	<b>BCU Performance 2004/05</b>	<b>MSBCU family average 2004/05</b>	<b>England and Wales average 2004/05</b>
<b>Work hours lost sick/police officer</b>	36.54	67.21	70.48
<b>Work hours lost sick/police staff</b>	64.57	76.96	63.47
<b>Recorded crimes per 1000 population</b>	126.21	125.85	106.00
<b>Recorded crime % detected</b>	18.63%	22.92%	25.68 %
<b>Domestic burglaries per 1000 households</b>	22.64	19.96	14.54
<b>Domestic burglaries % detected</b>	14.36%	14.29%	15.88 %
<b>Violent crimes per 1000 population</b>	28.82	28.72	22.57
<b>Violent crimes % detected</b>	33.98%	42.56%	49.51 %

<b>Robberies per 1000 population</b>	4.55	3.17	1.69
<b>Robberies % detected</b>	18.98%	19.56%	19.90 %
<b>Vehicle crimes per 1000 population</b>	20.21	18.22	14.07
<b>Vehicle crimes % detected</b>	6.01%	9.43%	10.14 %
<b>Racially aggravated crimes % detected</b>	25.87%	31.14%	36.43 %

Source – Home Office

## Accountability mechanisms and performance management

15. Strategic direction for the BCU is seen by the commander to come from three areas. Firstly the commander has a very prescriptive PDR (Performance Development Review – appraisal) set by the Assistant Chief Constable (ACC), which includes specific performance targets for the BCU. His PDR objectives are cascaded to other members of the SMT and this is playing a large part towards accountability. Second is the development of neighbourhood policing for the BCU and thirdly is working in partnership with the three districts of Birmingham City Council that are covered by the BCU.
16. There is an overtly strong accountability of the commander to the ACC. The PDR plays its part, as detailed above, but there is also a monthly meeting with the ACC and other Birmingham City commanders that reviews BCU performance. There are also bi-monthly force performance meetings chaired by the Chief Constable using monthly and year to date data. The meeting is described as a challenging forum, but also learning, and not quite COMPSTAT (robust meeting holding persons to account using computer generated performance information). Every three months there is a cluster meeting (D1, 2 and 3) with the ACC. The DCC also makes frequent reality checks to the BCU. Within the BCU monthly performance meetings with all inspectors provide internal accountability where performance is reviewed. The inspection team noted that SMT meetings used to be held weekly but are now more ad hoc due to other commitments. This needs consideration. It is now the norm for the inspection team to encounter regular SMT meetings where action points are noted and placed on the internet (maybe excluding some confidential items). The superintendent further cascades his performance objectives to sector inspectors via the PDR process and there was evidence that he is in contact with them virtually every day. The two weekly tasking and co-ordination meeting is also providing accountability. For example the detective inspector is accountable to the meeting for the offences and detection rates of robbery and burglary.
17. The Force sets each BCU differential targets and the BCU has been given very stretching detection targets. The BCU is currently in the process of setting individual detection targets to all officers. The inspection team met some concerns from officers that as a consequence if they hand prisoners to support teams such as CID then their work will not be recognised with other officers gaining the detection. Whilst this approach is supported by HMIC it is clear that it will need careful management and

understanding that such figures are influenced by many factors and can be used very effectively to drive performance if used as a starting point and not a definitive to evaluate individual performance.

18. The business manager has a devolved accountability for the BCU budget of £16 m and was able to detail some significant recovery of budget over the last year. It is clear that the BCU is still recovering from the budget overspend from 2003/04 (£½ million) but the inspection team was impressed that spending savings were not impacting upon 'front line' policing or performance. The inspection team found that budgetary monitoring is robust with monthly reports of finance and a regular review of overtime spending at the monthly management team meeting with a 'naming and shaming' stance of managers that overspend. The business manager also reviews spending and prioritises expenditure as needed or 'nice to have'. The commander is using the shortfall in staffing levels to supplement the BCU overtime bill. He has a philosophy of fully utilising the budgetary provision and consequently it appears the BCU has good information technology, a good vehicle fleet and there is large usage of mobile phones. Each sector has 150 hours overtime per month, which is devolved to sector inspectors and reviewed at the SMT meeting. The commander has made a business case to the Force for extra staff and also made bids to partners to have funding for PCSOs. There is income generation through the various national and local funding streams such as NRF (Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund) and Birmingham City football duties. There is also significant sponsorship in the form of several vehicles and local sponsorship of cycle equipment for officers.
19. The superintendent operations has recently held a series of away days with sergeants (leadership training) and this was used to clarify and define their responsibilities. He has also introduced bi-monthly performance practitioners meetings (attended by constables and police staff from all areas of the BCU which are used to examine the effectiveness of current policy and discuss ways of improvement) along with the creation of a good practice guide to the use of Dispersal Order powers (recently granted under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2004).

### Reassurance and visibility

20. As discussed the BCU is divided into four sectors, each headed by an inspector and supported by response teams and community officers such as beat managers who are accountable for specific geographical areas of the sector. The BCU is moving towards neighbourhood policing teams (national move to have teams of officers and members of the extended police family dedicated to specific communities) but as of yet there is little development of the extended police family within the BCU. Hence neighbourhood policing in the BCU is all about police officers currently. Specials in particular are a weak resource (more later) and D3 is currently the only BCU within the city and one of only three in the Force not to deploy police community support officers. Local district groups of the city council are starting to recruit wardens (the BCU currently has three) but this has only been over the last 12 months. The BCU is currently looking at the use of volunteers to man the front offices of some police stations (Shard End). In summary, the BCU has some way to go before it can claim to have 'embraced the concept' of neighbourhood policing but the SMT recognise this position and work is underway. There are plans that eight neighbourhood teams will

be in place by 1 September, each covering a specific beat. Examples of progressive BCUs in this area recently seen by the inspection team include Wolverhampton East in West Midlands.

21. Communication with the public appears appropriate. There are Police Authority led consultative meetings and sector inspectors are attending ward meetings. There are no overall sector meetings due to political geography. The BCU is appointing a communications officer who will be set an objective of two public communication documents per year to go to each household on the BCU. It is planned for a close link with neighbourhood policing teams and the communications officer.

### Intelligence-led policing

22. The National Intelligence Model (NIM) provides the structure for BCU intelligence collection and subsequent action. Whilst the main 'building blocks' of the NIM (such as the production of relevant documents and the provision of regular meetings) were found during inspection it is clear that significant development issues are required in some areas and are detailed later. It is also clear that the BCU has recognised the need to develop some areas and as such has created an intelligence development plan.
23. The inspection team attended a confidently chaired and productive daily and tasking and co-ordination meeting. Tasks allocated from the previous day were reviewed and prescriptive tasks allocated for the day. The basis for the meeting was a clear and comprehensive template that included priority persistent offenders (PPOs), key crime warrants, prisoners, missing persons, crimes/incidents of note, sector and force issues. It also reviewed the number of open incidents by sector. In summary, the inspection team found it a structured and accountable way of doing business.
24. The two-weekly tasking and co-ordination meeting was a lengthy, (but necessarily so) productive meeting with a lot of business dealt with. The tactical assessment was comprehensive and gave an excellent structure to the meeting itself. There was a robust review of tasks allocated from the previous meeting and it was clear that sectors were held to account for performance and tasks/operations on their sectors. The meeting was driving BCU activity and there was evidence of several successful operations (days of action to increase sanctioned detections and an operation regarding arsons using a camera and the arrest of suspect). There was discussion about the positive use of Home Office advice regarding the counting rules of crime incidents that occur on school premises and this discussion will lead to a crime recording policy for incidents at school premises in accordance with the circular. One issue to consider was the distinct lack of partnership involvement or mention at the meeting (apart from the schools liaison officer) and it was apparent that the meeting was more about internal solutions rather than partnership.
25. As highlighted, the BCU has a four strand strategic plan to enhance the intelligence capability. This will include giving more accountability and responsibility to sector inspectors and supervisors to ensure the right quality of information. The fact that the BCU has recognised the need for intelligence improvement and has a plan for such has negated the need for HMIC to make a formal recommendation in this area. An extra sergeant is being placed in the community safety bureau as part of the plan,

which also includes marketing the unit to all staff. The inspection team discussed with the BCU intelligence officers the next steps after the plan such as the direct tasking of partner agencies from the tasking and co-ordination meeting and the likely importance of the sector inspectors in that role. There is little doubt that there is much work to do in the intelligence arena. As such the inspection team advocates that the SMT ensures a proper project management methodology is around the proposals and the following areas of concern about intelligence/CSB raised during inspection are considered along with the plan:

- There is a poor submission rate of IMS logs (intelligence inputs). It is apparent that only 20% of officers regularly submit logs.
- Officers are frustrated that when they submit intelligence there seems to be little action or feedback on what happened with the intelligence that they submitted. “Intelligence is going into a black hole” was frequently quoted.
- The briefing environments of the BCU are poor. There are imminent plans to rectify this situation.
- The inspection team attended a shift briefing. There was a lack of direct tasking from the briefing with the last task allocated on late shift was 30 June (some three weeks prior to briefing). The inspection team is aware that the BCU was starting a new electronic briefing system the following week after inspection and was given a preview of it. It is impressive in that prescriptive tasks are allocated for each shift in one location and there is a facility to update the task in real time so that officers and the CSB are aware of progress. This system will drive performance but it is important that managers robustly monitor allocated tasks.
- It was clear that CID do not regularly attend shift briefings.
- The BCU currently only has one analyst, although there are plans to recruit another shortly.
- Some sectors are holding their own sector tasking and co-ordination meeting following the main BCU tasking meeting, however this is not consistent across all sectors.
- Sector inspectors stated that they are acutely aware that they are accountable for detection rates but stated that they felt impeded without what they described as their main tool to deal with it (intelligence). They stated that very few intelligence packages are sent to sectors and those that are were described as poor quality.
- Local intelligence officers (LIOs) rarely attend briefings.
- Intelligence clearly needs marketing within the BCU and the inspection team heard many negative comments from BCU staff during inspection that need addressing. Specific issues criticised by staff were briefings; a lack of regular outputs from CSB; IMS (intelligence system) is not user friendly; and a believe that officers will only submit intelligence if it's of a high grade consequently the lower level of intelligence is absent from systems.
- Identification packages are not viewed positively by sergeants who stated that they often have to return them for basic intelligence checks such as prisoner location checks to be completed and the like.
- Sergeants have little training on the delivery of briefings and therefore briefings are inconsistent.

- There is no daily meeting at weekends. The inspection team has seen other BCUs where the duty inspector chairs the meeting and allocates tasks. Impressively there is a briefing package produced by the CSB seven days a week that could facilitate the meeting. The inspection team is aware of plans to introduce video conferencing to assist the daily meeting and would support such progression.
  - Some staff felt there was not enough emphasis in the CSB on community initiatives and the efforts were more around intelligence and strategy. The CSB was viewed as reactive in terms of partnership working by the sector inspectors. They considered that it was not providing enough support and should be assisting with funding applications.
26. In summary, intelligence provision and the way that it is handled is a critical success factor for the BCU. It is clear that there are significant challenges to the BCU in this area, however the inspection team was convinced that the BCU has identified the majority of relevant developmental areas within the plan and therefore negated the need for specific recommendation.

#### Crime Investigation and recording practices

27. The BCU's criminal investigation department (CID) is a centralised resource based at Stechford police station. CID teams, however, are geographically aligned to sectors, and hence retain ownership for major and volume crime performance at sector level. BCU officers spoken to during inspection liked the current structure. Some specific quotes were "being centralised around one custody block is our bread and butter" and "centralised means every job is everyone's responsibility". It was apparent that CID officers currently have a manageable workload and there was evidence that officers had some limited time for pro activity such as the patrolling of hot spot locations. CID/uniform relationships appear generally good, but mention was made that the emphasis on detection performance figures may be starting to put up barriers between CID and uniform officers. As discussed, this is an area that needs careful management.
28. The BCU has a robbery team that is viewed by BCU staff as a group of young and enthusiastic officers and generally seen in a positive light, particularly by uniformed sergeants who described them as supportive and professional. The team is mainly judged on the robbery detection rate that is currently 23% (2% above the BCU target). Arrest figures for the robbery team appear consistently high compared to other force BCUs.
29. The BCU has an offender management team that consists of two sergeants and ten constables plus two officers in the CSB to link with partners for offender management. The team has been in place for approximately 12 months and has two teams that provide coverage six days a week. Its main remit is to target persistent offenders. Partner links are provided by the two officers in the unit that work in the CSB and work together with other agencies with a particular remit of rehabilitation of persistent offenders. Staff interviewed impressed the inspection team with their enthusiasm and professionalism for their role. There was one issue that needs consideration regarding the unit and that was that there was little knowledge with

BCU officers that the OMT is able to assist them with certain categories of prisoners. Further marketing of the OMT role may resolve this issue.

30. As highlighted, the BCU is currently struggling for detections, in particular, offences that are 'taken into consideration' by offenders once charged or reported for a similar offence. The BCU is rightly trying to encourage its officers to maximise this area but a barrier was identified during inspection. The prison service has become more and more reluctant to release prisoners to police officers on production. As a consequence prisoner interviews are taking place at prisons, which may not be the ideal environment for such interviews. This is an area that may need consideration.
31. The BCU has a shortage of officers trained to conduct interviews with vulnerable or intimidated witnesses (v and i). Sergeants also questioned whether inspectors (who have to authorise such interviews) were being told the full facts about the need for such interviews, as there was a feeling that some officers may exaggerate the need to avoid completing a witness statement. These issues may need consideration.
32. The inspection team was impressed with the BCU approach to domestic violence. It has its own unit that focuses on such issues. Training sessions have been provided or are planned for all officers and appear effective according to positive comments from the domestic violence unit. Referral to the unit appears to be at appropriate levels with unit staff making themselves available for callout if required. Witness interview facilities are not ideal, but there are plans for better facilities at Stechford soon. There are strong links with partner agencies, but this is more through local contacts and not in a structured way through the CDRPs, which is understandable given the difficulties in the district set up. Repeat domestic violence incidents are prioritised and there are links that ensure the BCU offender management team becomes involved with the relevant individuals. The superintendent is the lead for a domestic violence project with the CPS and domestic violence courts, which are the first in region and there were positive comments from unit officers regarding the support that he provides the unit.
33. The BCU has a shared (D1, D2 and D3 cluster arrangement) child protection unit. CPU officers raised concerns regarding their workload and lack of officers (currently three under establishment). It is clear that this role is potentially a very stressful one but encouragingly the BCU provides three monthly screening for officers. Potential sickness was a concern but figures were examined and appear consistent with other departments at present. Accommodation was also raised as an issue as officers are working in cramped conditions. The commander may need to satisfy himself that current workloads are and remain appropriate.
34. BCU officers are frustrated by the force policy in relation to vehicle pursuits. The policy dictates that vehicles can only be pursued by road policing unit (RPU) resources. It is clear that they understand the rationale behind the policy but they stated that there is very rarely an RPU unit to assist and other resources are thin on the ground such as dog handlers or the helicopter. There was a considerable desire from BCU officers for the policy to be reconsidered.

## Use of forensic, DNA and scientific techniques

35. 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 D3 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.
36. DNA is currently taken from every prisoner arrested for recordable offences. A force computer software package known as integrated custody system (ICS) is used in the custody centres of West Midlands. This system identifies if a DNA sample is required from a prisoner or not via a direct link to the Police National Computer (PNC) that identifies if a sample has previously been obtained. The system will not allow users to proceed unless the DNA question has been answered. If DNA is not taken the system forces the user to record the reason why not. An audit of 50 custody records was undertaken from persons arrested in March 2005 that had not had DNA taken at the time of arrest. The records were crossed referred to PNC to ensure that every opportunity to take a sample had been taken. The audit found that the decision not to take such samples had been correct on every occasion. The BCU is congratulated on this result.
37. DNA storage facilities were examined and appeared appropriate. There is a regular collection of DNA samples (twice a week). Continuity of the sample is provided by manual entries in a lever arch folder. However at the time of audit there was only one sample in the freezer and when this was checked against the folder no record had been made. This is an issue to consider. The cell block appeared in good order and compared to other suites is relatively staff and prisoner friendly. There are two custody sergeants on duty 24/7. There was a stark absence of Crimestoppers information and this is an issue that could be considered. Generally, the facilities and services provided by custody to BCU staff received consistent praise throughout inspection from 'front line officers' a quote heard several times was "the best in Force".
38. DNA or fingerprint identifications (packages) are forwarded from the Force SSIU (scientific support investigation unit) to a central point on the BCU within CSB. Packages are hard copy and delivered via internal mail although CSB officers can proactively interrogate the system to identify hits in advance of packages arriving. A more detailed package is then developed within the CSB which takes on average a couple of days (there are plans to speed this up to same day service) and then prioritised for arrest (burglary dwelling seven days all others fourteen days). Packages are allocated to either CID, robbery team or sector officers. Packages are monitored by a database maintained by the CSB and reviewed at the tasking and co-ordination meeting. There are plans to increase the accountability for dealing with packages and arrest of the suspect by the CSB identifying outstanding packages to the daily meeting. The inspection team would support this move.
39. The inspection team met an enthusiastic scenes of crime officer (SOCO) supervisor and crime scene examiner from the BCU SOCO department who were positive about

the way they are able to serve the division. SOCO are well regarded on the BCU and there were several quotes provided during inspection such as “excellent. The officers work tirelessly”. “All very helpful and respond quickly”. There are clearly excellent working relationships between SOCO and CID. The inspection team examined BCU SOCO performance figures in relation to other BCUs of the Force and were found to compare well. In 2004/05 the BCU had the third highest DNA identification rate and second highest fingerprint identification rate. There were a couple of SOCO issues found during inspection that the commander may wish to consider:

- There is a lack of vehicles available to SOCO. Generally the BCU has a large vehicle fleet and it may be that the BCU has capacity already to increase the SOCO fleet. It was apparent that an increase of one vehicle would increase efficiency.
- There are plans to move SOCO temporarily from Bromford Lane police station and this may lower the level of good interaction the unit has with the CID.

## Managing demand

40. There is little doubt that incident per incident the BCU is significantly busier than other force BCUs and had nearly 70,000 incidents between 2004/05. The nearest force BCU had just over 60,000 with some BCUs having less than 40,000 incidents. There were nearly 16,000 ‘early response’ incidents and 8,500 immediate response incidents for the same period (both also largest in the Force). Whilst there was generally a recognition that ‘front line’ staffing levels reflected this demand, a common theme of inspection was a belief that the BCU is under resourced in certain posts such as the number of inspectors. Many people spoken during inspection referred to the fact that the BCU was the biggest in West Midlands and were not convinced that a ‘one size fits all’ approach to posts had not disadvantaged the BCU. This was particularly true of sector inspectors interviewed who all partake in the BCU ‘duty rota’ to cover response and critical incident requirements. They stated that they believed that they had the largest response role in the Force and this was impacting on their sector role and are often attending meetings and the like in their own time and are often away from their sector for a week at a time. The intelligence manager often has to delegate issues to the sergeant. In summary, inspectors are concerned regarding the level of management that they are able to offer BCU staff and the effect that the ‘duty role’ was having on their ‘core role’. Importantly, however, the inspection team did not find any evidence of them being unable to manage BCU response demands, although it was apparent that they regularly attend incidents and do not know the names of staff at the scene or importantly their strengths and weaknesses. Attempts have apparently been made unsuccessfully to increase the inspector establishment and staff believe that potential ‘cluster’ arrangements for ‘duty cover’ with neighbouring BCUs is not practicable due to demand. Inspectors currently conduct video identifications that can take up 2-3 hours each. This is having a big impact on inspectors’ roles. The inspection team has seen other BCUs that delegate much of the process to a member of police staff (Worcester) and this is an issue that the commander may wish to consider as one method to reduce the workloads of inspectors. Communication between inspectors is difficult and it can be that they do not see each other for some

months at a time. They would like a separate inspectors' meeting forum but feel that it is not practical given the demands on them.

41. It is perceived that reassurance and patrol teams (RAPS) are constantly working at minimum staffing levels due to abstractions plus officers working on force wide operations. It was clear from BCU staff that they see the main driver of BCU activity as demand. Sergeants stated that there were opportunities for better call handling that would prevent officers attending certain incidents. They stated that there was little opportunity for proactivity. They felt that the inexperience of front line response officers was adding pressures as often they were taking longer to deal with incidents and there was little experience on the shifts to develop them.
42. Presently the BCU has a small prisoner handling team at one sector only and this has limited capacity. There was unanimous support from sergeants and other officers for the creation of a BCU prisoner handling team. This was despite the fact that it would impact on their resource levels and consequently these were significant comments. Sergeants also felt it was an opportunity for probationers to be developed with attachments to such a unit.
43. Generally the inspection team found that shift patterns reflect demand and are working well. There is a need for officers in support roles to cover two particular response shifts (Sunday early and Tuesday late duties). This appears to be working well and helps with retention of skill levels and develops the wider team ethos. There is regular single crewing of vehicles following a BCU policy, identification of persistent callers to the BCU and a problem solving approach to reduce the future demand.
44. There is a lack of intoximeter (breath test machine at police station) trained officers and as a consequence there are often delays with many examples of officers being called away from patrol duties. There is a clear need to review the current level of training.
45. There are frustrations regarding the lack of arrest powers for the warrant officer. There are currently 180 warrants outstanding and the warrant officer believes that this would not be the case if he had arrest powers. The main problem is arrest warrants where the suspect lives outside the BCU (currently 100 from a total of 180). There was evidence that sectors are being proactive with those that are of high profile on their area, however the problem appears to be with the lower level end of warrants such as road traffic matters and fines where there seems to be less enthusiasm. There was a positive attitude displayed by the superintendent at the tasking and co-ordination meeting to drive warrant execution by the tasking of officers to go across border but the inspection team feels that the warrants officer issue needs consideration.
46. There was evidence of good support from force level resources to the BCU. This support has been gleaned because of consistent and high quality bids to the Force. In particular surveillance support appeared excellent and there were many examples of their recent successful usage. Dog handler support was generally seen as good and it was clear that they are readily available if pre-booked. The coverage of spontaneous

incidents is not as consistent and often dogs are not available particularly on nights but BCU staff appreciated the demands and had realistic expectations.

47. The inspection team was impressed with the BCU roads policing unit (RPU) structure and officers they met. The BCU has its own devolved RPU unit headed by an inspector and contains a sergeant and fourteen constables. The unit currently provides one double crewed car 24/7. The inspector detailed impressive plans to increase staffing levels and provide more local accountability for RPU issues. He is trying to encourage regular attachments (3 months) of sector staff to firstly enable the provision of a second double crewed car 24/7 but also to achieve local objectives with the attached officer being set specific objectives to achieve for the sector (for example, speeding and parking issues). The current structure is clearly allowing RPU officers to become integrated into BCU policing. They were able to demonstrate activity not only as regards to RPU issues but also BCU priorities such as targeting of level 2 criminals (offenders who cross BCU and force boundaries) who steal high powered motor vehicles. RPU is linked to intelligence by regular attendance and tasking at the tasking and co-ordination meeting. They were able to detail good relations and provided evidence of joint working with groups such as DVLA and VOSA (vehicle inspectorate). They shared a concern of other officers (detailed earlier) in that they are more and more being judged on detections but often their prisoners are handed over to others for processing and hence may not be credited with a detection. One issue that needs consideration is that the unit is currently reviewing and re classifying accidents where persons are killed or seriously injured (KSI - a national performance indicator). It was apparent that if they feel the injury is not 'serious' in their view eg broken finger then it is currently being re classified outside of the performance indicator. The commander will wish to be satisfied that BCU current figures reflect the national definition of KSI recording and that the BCU is not 'out of sync' with other BCUs.
48. The inspection team found a definite void of specials on the BCU. There are currently ten specials, which for a BCU of this size is disappointing. Of those eight, only four are active and some have not performed duties in many months. It is clear that the overall situation and numbers has deteriorated over the last few years. There are plans for recruitment, which are positive, but efforts need to be co-ordinated. For example one sector was actively trying to recruit specials that work at the Heartlands hospital under the STEP project (employers agree for staff to be specials and allow them to perform some duties in work time). But these efforts were not consistent across all sectors. The overall situation for the Special Constabulary is not good. It is clear that the absence of a divisional officer (DO) for a considerable time has not helped the position, but there is some optimism for improvement since a recent DO appointment. He was spoken to during inspection and described the current position as 'rock bottom'. An inspector has been appointed as liaison and the SMT has made commitments to the new DO to assist in whatever way they can. Whilst this is positive, it may be appropriate that a member of the SMT directly oversees an improvement/action plan. Despite all the issues highlighted to the team, which are detailed below, the specials met appeared very positive and were able to detail good working relationships with sector officers with some examples of bonus payments. The officer's spoke of good equipment – personal issue body armour and their own office. Issues raised were:

- Lack of numbers, and a lack of co-ordinated BCU recruitment drive.
- It is apparent that the specials have no regular meeting. The new DO spoke of a wish to have a six monthly meeting but given the challenges the specials face it may be more appropriate to have them more regular – perhaps tied in with the regular provision of training?
- Specials at Sheldon have to collect radios from Stechford. Often a lack of vehicles means that they cannot collect them and regular officers are often ‘too busy’ to do it on their behalf. There have been occasions when specials have got fed up of waiting and gone home.
- The new DO spoke of specials being deployable in teams at the request of sectors via the tasking and co-ordination meeting. Specials would like to do more to help yet there was no bid made at the tasking meeting attended by the inspection team and no mention made of them. Specials interviewed spoke, very enviously of specials in other BCUs ‘allowed to do pub raids’. It is probable that due to numbers that they are currently a ‘forgotten force’.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1**

It is recommended that the BCU carries out work on the recruitment and retention of the Special Constabulary to make it a viable unit able to support all areas of the BCU.

## **Leadership**

### **BCU Management team**

49. The chief superintendent (BCU commander) has 24 years police service and took up his current position in June 2002. His previous experience includes postings as superintendent operations and as detective chief inspector. He attended the High Potential Development Scheme in 1989 and has an honours degree in politics. Amongst other roles he leads the Force in policy development with Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Trust.
50. The superintendent (operations) also has 24 years service and has spent the majority of his service investigating serious crime. Between July 2001 and November 2004 he was the head of the specialist operations unit of the Force. He is a trained negotiator and leads the Force in this area.
51. The detective chief inspector (crime manager) has 19 years police service and transferred to West Midlands Police in August 2002 having served in both West Mercia and Warwickshire police forces. He has a varied background including prisoner handling, roads policing and latterly CID. He holds a Masters degree in community safety.

52. The business manager is a member of police staff and has been employed by West Midlands Police since 1976. She started her varied career in the recruitment department and has been in her current role since 2004. She is a First Contact Adviser offering support to colleagues and an executive member of the Black and Asian Police Association.
53. The personnel manager is also a member of police staff and she has over 20 years police service. She has been in her current role since 2000.
54. The SMT is seen in a positive light by BCU staff. There were also positive views from partner agency representatives and staff (detailed earlier). BCU staff representatives met during inspection were extremely positive regarding access to the SMT and spoke of a true 'open door' policy. There were no issues regarding representatives' ability time wise to represent their people. It is clear that diversity issues have come a long way under the current SMT. There used to be regular diversity meetings but these are now not required on a structured basis because of lack of issues to discuss. There is a consultative meeting quarterly. Representatives detailed some staff concerns regarding the BCU working on two separate talk groups or channels and some health and safety implications of the communications room not telling other officers on the other channel what is going on. It would appear that the SMT already has these issues in hand for resolution. Representatives believed that generally morale was high, which was supported by BCU staff interviewed.
55. Both the business and personnel managers feel part of the senior management team and valued for their role. Generally this aspect and managers' morale had improved under the present commander. Other managers described him as supportive and visible for them. However it is easy to believe that the chief superintendent, superintendent operations and DCI make most SMT decisions with personnel and business managers as advisors. This is a sizable BCU with over 400 police officers and over 100 police staff. To its credit what may be seen as a relatively small SMT has received praise from partner agencies and BCU staff on how it operates. The SMT and this report identify ways or plans to further develop performance and these issues clearly require additional management action or directorship. (For example there will be more work for sector inspectors in taking forward BCU intelligence plans). Coupled to these aspects are that sector inspectors perceive that they already have 'big' jobs with large numbers of staff, little administrative support, full responsibility and accountability and are abstracted at least 50% of their time for the duty inspector role. All inspectors feel under pressure with, in their view, no one on the SMT having the time to recognise their good work. As previously discussed, there was no evidence of inspectors being unable to manage the immediate demands of response policing within the 'duty inspector' role but it may be prudent for the commander to review the demands placed upon inspectors, in particular conduct some form of work-load analysis regarding their ability to 'chase performance', manage community expectations, PDRs, welfare issues and the like. The inspection team recommends that the SMT reviews how it is operating at senior and middle management level to even better direct and manage the BCU. A further example is that most BCUs the inspection team visits have personnel oriented units such as training directed by the personnel manager. In this BCU the training remit falls under the performance review inspector, this would at least free up some of the performance review inspector's time and this is coupled to comments later on how his role as performance review could

develop into a performance manager. In addition, personnel issues are dealt with at inspector level with the superintendent intervening if necessary. The ideal would be to have the four directors under the commander directing all units that fall within their remits and middle management responsibilities allocated to try and maximise sector inspector time on their sectors. In addition the BCU has high crime levels in key crime areas, stretching targets but a 'one size fits all' one DI situation. Ideally the SMT would want proactive and reactive DI posts. The inspection team recognises that these issues are difficult given the current management levels in the largest BCU in the Force but it is evident that the situation warrants an objective review of BCU senior and middle management.

## RECOMMENDATION 2

It is recommended that the BCU reviews and considers relevant changes in how the SMT and middle management of the BCU operate.

56. Internal communication generally appears good apart from a couple of issues detailed below. There are Internet briefings, e-mail for all staff and uniform SMT members attend briefings and meetings. There are sergeant 'away day meetings' which includes custody sergeants. There are regular meetings with representative groups such as the Federation and trade unions. One area that could be improved is that of SMT visibility. The BCU is relatively large geographically and hence personal visibility is difficult. There is no set plan for visibility of the SMT and physical visits appeared to be ad-hoc. The commander spends one day a month visiting BCU stations and all the SMT appear to get out occasionally and attend special events, but there were some comments from staff that the only communication that they get from the SMT is by e-mail. It may be worth consideration of a more formal visibility plan for the whole SMT. There was significant mention of 'informal' meetings occurring within the BCU. For example, detective sergeants told us they have regular meetings, but they are often cancelled due to overnight events.

### Self-review and learning

57. A comprehensive training strategy drives BCU training. The inspection team was impressed with the BCU trainers they met. The BCU has its own probationary development unit (PDU) headed by a sergeant with ten tutor constables. It is clear that they are fully utilised but would like further staff to enable the unit to take on non-probationary officers with identified developmental needs. The BCU has three trainers. Both the PDU and trainers are located at Bromford Lane under the management of an inspector (see earlier comments). Facilities are currently seen as good with two classrooms. Training attendance on courses was generally good and there is a process to inform staff managers of non-attendance. It was apparent that the BCU training plan is up-to-date. There was evidence that trainers are regularly assessing each other and force level assessors sit in on lectures. Some training issues raised during inspection were:

- Concern that when training migrates to Solihull, facilities may not be as good and may be shared. It is apparent that trainers presently feel ill informed and need to be kept in the loop of developments.
  - There were some concerns regarding communication with force level training. BCU trainers gave examples of short notice of lengthy courses to deliver and short notice of probationers to be assigned to the PDU (one case was nine days notice).
  - Evaluation of training does occur by means of feedback sheets completed by trainees, but there is little evaluation of these forms after completion.
  - There was some criticism of the training given to inspectors on how to deal with critical incidents.
  - Training for neighbourhood policing team officers is perceived as ad hoc.
  - There were some mixed messages about training availability. Some training was perceived as being delivered quickly yet others such as driver training was not so.
58. An inspector has recently been appointed to lead BCU performance review, which generally is audit focused and consequently has little capacity to answer the question of what makes the BCU perform. The commander may wish to consider the extra sophistication of more developed performance management, which the inspection team has seen in some other BCUs, such as Chase in Staffordshire. Such a facility could give the BCU the strategic assessment of what various units are contributing to overall performance and recommendations on how to shape the BCU for future performance requirements.
59. The BCU has a low level of grievances and it appears that this is because issues are resolved quickly and hence negated the need for formal grievance. Representative groups supported this view.

## HR and diversity issues

60. The inspection team met an enthusiastic and positive group of police support staff who described the BCU as having a family atmosphere with a really friendly environment with no 'us and them' attitude between police officers and police staff. They described a very positive approach to 'family friendly' policies which in turn promoted a very flexible approach by them to shift and even rest day changes. There was evidence of part time and job share officers plus the use of flexible hours to some staff. One group of police staff described team meetings and away days. The same group also talked about objectives being set for them in their PDR, which was not a common factor for them all. It is worth the BCU considering what is happening with this group (front desk/communications people) and try to disseminate it to other police staff members. Recruitment was perceived as a long drawn out process taking many months and staff referred to gaps in the structure causing difficulties in them providing the level of service they wanted to (see later). When asked what they would

change it was impressive that they asked for an enhanced prisoner handling team to support operational officers. They described work recognition as very good. One issue that was causing some concern was that of the provision of uniforms for police staff. They understand there may be a change and they need some feedback or update.

61. The BCU has little say in succession planning with headquarters. The commander has no influence on choosing members of the SMT and yet he has a PDR objective on building an appropriate and effective SMT. This is a force issue, but the commander may wish to look to other forces to be able to portray best practice to chief officers in this area (Staffordshire).
62. New recruits and members of staff new to the BCU are given a comprehensive induction pack.
63. The SMT gave the inspection team the scenario that the BCU almost constantly runs below establishment in terms of police officer and police staff (around 19 down at the time of inspection). The inspection team understands that it may give some flexibility in BCU budget, but would ask the commander to consider comments from many BCU staff that they notice the gaps around them. The SMT also highlighted some resource issues themselves. Examination of some figures from the Force revealed that on average it takes the BCU fourteen weeks to recruit a member of police staff (no figures to compare other BCUs of the Force were available). Also the percentage of vacancies against establishment are often high compared to other Force BCUs (15.09% in August 2005). It may be appropriate to consider if the BCU/Force could be more scientific in succession planning to replace leavers and what a full establishment could achieve for the BCU.
64. The BCU approach to health and safety is co-ordinated by a monthly meeting chaired by the commander. There is generally a positive attitude towards such issues and this has had a 'knock on' effect of creating further work for the personnel and business manager. Presently there is a discussion on the appointment of a BCU health and safety officer. Working hours of BCU managers are captured each month and are submitted to the personnel manager for examination.
65. It is clear that PDR (performance development review – appraisal) is driving performance and used to provide accountability of some staff to the achievement of performance targets. The personnel manager drives the BCU process, which follows the force process of PDR completion time-scales and then cascading of BCU objectives to staff. Completion compliance rates are monitored regularly by the BCU people development officer (PDO). Regular compliance information is provided to inspectors. The personnel manager on a dip check basis provides quality assessment of PDRs and there were appropriate links from PDR to provide training via the PDO. The inspection team examined several PDRs at random and found that generally the process was satisfactory. However, it was clear from the relatively small number reviewed that there are opportunities to better link individual performance to the policing plan objectives by the provision of 'smarter' objectives.
66. BCU staff regularly forward suggestions to the force suggestion scheme known as 'launchpad'.

## Equipment

67. The BCU estate is described as adequate and there is good support from headquarters on such issues. There are plans to move staff from Bromford Lane to Stechford and plans to extend accordingly (closure of club and bar). Custody facilities are good and valued (as previously discussed).
68. There were no major concerns regarding equipment.

## Attendance management and sickness statistics

Table 4 – BCU sickness data

	2003/04	2004/05	MSBCU average 04/05	Rank in MSBCU Family 04/05	% Change of hours lost per officer 03/04 to 04/05
Hours lost per Police Officer	N/A	36.54	67.21	1 out of 15	N/A
Hours lost per Police Staff	N/A	64.57	76.96	6 out of 15	N/A

Source – Home Office data

69. Table 4 above shows BCU sickness data for 2004/05. In 2004/05, D3 BCU had the lowest level of officer sickness (now recorded in hours) in the MSBCU group. Police officer sickness levels are excellent and are currently the lowest in the MSBCU group. Police staff sickness performance was also good and well below the MSBCU average.
70. Year to-date figures provided by the BCU indicate that current sickness rates for police officers are on target at 97% attendance rate but police staff rate is slightly below target (97%) at 96%. Overall, it was clear to the inspection team that the BCU was on top of sickness issues with co-ordination being provided by managing attendance meetings held on a quarterly basis. The BCU is considering moving towards a monthly meeting, which the inspection team would support.

## Complaints

Table 5 – BCU complaint data

	2003/04	2004/05	MSBCU Average 04/05	Rank in BCU Family 04/05	% Change from 03/04 to 04/05
Total Complaints	135				
Complaints Per 1000 Officer	341.95				
Complaints Substantiated	8				
% Complaints Substantiated	5.93%				

Source – Home Office data

71. Table 5 above shows complaint data from 2003/04. There is no current data available for the last full year that is comparable against MSBCU data due to the change over in

monitoring of complaint data from the Home Office to the IPCC (Independent Police Complaints Commission). 2003/04 figures shows D3 to be ranked 13<sup>th</sup> out of 14 in the MSBCU group for the level of complaints per 1000 officer, above the MSBCU average of 242.69. The proportion of complaints that were substantiated was the fourth highest in the MSBCU group at 5.93%, above the MSBCU average of 3.94%.

72. The BCU commander is involved in all complaints and grievances and consequently has a good overview of such issues. He is regularly supplied with complaint data and trends and this in turn informs BCU training (see comments regarding SMT responsibilities earlier).

## Conclusions and recommendations

The inspection team would like to thank the SMT for the warm welcome and provision of facilities to carry out the inspection. The inspection team would like to make particular mention of the liaison officer assigned by the BCU who did an excellent job of drawing together the necessary documentation and preparing the draft programme. This continued into the actual arrangements during inspection where he proved very flexible. It is of note that each interview session took place on time and with the relevant people. In summary, he carried out the liaison role in a way that makes him a credit to the BCU and Force.

Stechford BCU covers an area stretching from Birmingham City centre to Birmingham International Airport and the M6 motorway to the north and the A45 arterial road to the south form parts of its boundaries. The OCU has four sectors at Stechford, Shard End, Sheldon and Small Heath, serving a population of more than 152,000.

Year on year total crime has fallen by 6.23%. Trend analysis indicates that the fall in crime has been constant both in the short and long-term and D3 BCU is reducing crime at the same rate as the MSBCU average. For the year ending May 05 D3 BCU was ranked eighth in the MSBCU group. Reductions continue in year to date figures.

D3 has the lowest total crime detection rate in the MSBCU group and has seen this fall by 2.4% year on year. Key areas are that there has been a significant decline in the burglary detection rate year on year, although current performance is only slightly below the MSBCU average. Also year on year, the violent crime detection rate has fallen by almost 6.5% and is currently well below the MSBCU average, ranked 14<sup>th</sup> in the MSBCU group. The BCU and Force have recognised this issue and instigated plans to address the decline. Encouragingly BCU year to date detection figures indicate a rise.

Central to combating crime and anti social behaviour is the issue of intelligence and capability of staff to easily record and share information. The inspection team was pleased to see BCU plans to ensure all possible intelligence is being captured and is put to best use. It is clear that this is an area that needs development.

In order to enhance the level of available resources, the commander should consider implementing an overall strategy to enhance the Special Constabulary. Work is required on recruitment and retention to make it a viable unit able to support all areas of the BCU.

D3 is a sizable BCU with over 400 police officers and over 100 police staff. To its credit what may be seen as a relatively small SMT has received praise from partner agencies and BCU staff on how it operates. However one recommendation will hopefully increase BCU police numbers (specials) even further and there have been key indicators in this report for a review and relevant changes in how the SMT and middle management operate.

Overall, the inspection team was convinced that the BCU is able to provide an effective policing service and can go forward to improve its performance, given current proposed changes, if attention is paid to the two key areas outlined above.

## Summary of good practice

- The inspection team was impressed with the BCU approach to domestic violence. It has its own unit that focuses on such issues. Training sessions have been provided or are planned for all officers and appear effective. Referral to the unit appears to be at appropriate levels with unit staff making themselves available for callout if required. Repeat domestic violence incidents are prioritised and there are links that ensure the BCU offender management team becomes involved with the relevant individuals. The superintendent is the lead for a domestic violence project with the CPS and domestic violence courts, which is the first in region.
- There is a need for officers in support roles to cover two particular response shifts (Sunday early and Tuesday late duties). This appears to be working well and helps with retention of skill levels and develops the wider team ethos.
- There was evidence of good support from force level resources to the BCU. This support has been gleaned because of consistent and high quality bids to the Force. In particular surveillance support appeared excellent and there were many examples of their recent successful usage.
- The inspection team was impressed with the BCU roads policing unit (RPU) structure and officers they met. The inspector detailed impressive plans to increase staffing levels and provide more local accountability for RPU issues. He is trying to encourage regular attachments (three months) of sector staff to firstly enable the provision of a second double crewed car 24/7 but also to achieve local objectives with the attached officer being set specific objectives to achieve for the sector (for example, speeding and parking issues). The current structure is clearly allowing RPU officers to become integrated into BCU policing.

## Issues for management consideration

- There was evidence of duplication of effort in working in partnership without co-terminosity. Some specifics for consideration include:
  - ❖ Dealing with funding aspects. A variety of people are involved. Some are more proficient than others.
  - ❖ There are a large number of meetings. Sector inspectors have to prioritise meetings, as they are unable to attend them all. There was substantial evidence that BCU community safety specialist staff are having to attend numerous meetings that overlap with staff from other BCUs.
- The inspection team noted that SMT meetings used to be held weekly but are now more ad hoc due to other commitments. This needs consideration. It is now the norm for the inspection team to encounter regular SMT meetings where action points are noted and placed on the Internet (maybe excluding some confidential items).
- There is little doubt that there is much work to do in the intelligence arena (specific findings are detailed in the report). As such the inspection team advocates that the SMT ensures a proper project management methodology is around the proposals and the many

areas of concern about intelligence/CSB raised during inspection are considered along with the plan.

- DNA storage facilities were examined and appeared appropriate. There is a regular collection of DNA samples (twice a week). Continuity of the sample is provided by manual entries in a lever arch folder. However at the time of audit there was only one sample in the freezer and when this was checked against the folder no record had been made. This is an issue to consider.
- Some training issues raised during inspection were:
  - ❖ Concern that when training migrates to Solihull, facilities may not be as good and may be shared. It is apparent that trainers presently feel ill informed and need to be kept in the loop of developments.
  - ❖ There were some concerns regarding communication with force level training. BCU trainers gave examples of short notice of lengthy courses to deliver and short notice of probationers to be assigned to the PDU (one case was nine days notice).
  - ❖ Evaluation of training does occur by means of feedback sheets completed by trainees, but there is little evaluation of these forms after completion.
  - ❖ There was some criticism of the training given to inspectors on how to deal with critical incidents.
  - ❖ Training for neighbourhood policing team officers is perceived as ad hoc.
  - ❖ There were some mixed messages about training availability. Some training was perceived as being delivered quickly yet others such as driver training was not so.
- An inspector has recently been appointed to lead BCU performance review, which generally is audit focused and has little mechanism to answer the question of what makes the BCU perform. The commander may wish to consider the extra sophistication of more developed performance management, which the inspection team has seen in some other BCUs. Such a facility could give the BCU the strategic assessment of what various units are contributing to overall performance and recommendations on how to shape the BCU for future performance requirements.

## **Recommendations**

The BCU Commander is recommended:

- To carry out work on the recruitment and retention of the BCU Special Constabulary to make it a viable unit able to support all areas of the BCU.  
(Paragraph 48)
- To review and consider relevant changes in how the SMT and middle management of the BCU operate.  
(Paragraph 55)