

**Inspection of
Wolverhampton East (G2) BCU
West Midlands Police
June 2005**

**Mr Stephen Griffiths
HMIC Wales and Central England Region**

1. The inspection of Wolverhampton East Basic Command Unit (BCU), known as G2, 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 6 and 10 June 2005.

Force and BCU Overview

2. West Midlands Police is one of the largest police forces in the country, covering an area of 348 sq. miles and serving a population of approximately 2.6 million. The region sits at the very heart of England 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.
3. 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 - each headed by an inspector. These sectors are responsible for local policing in the community.
4. Wolverhampton East (G2) BCU is split into three sectors.
 - **A Sector**
A Sector is the north section of the BCU, covering the Low Hill and Bushbury areas of Wolverhampton. The M54 is to the top of the sector where it borders with Staffordshire Police. To the west is the A449 Stafford Road, which divides the sector with the G1 BCU and to the south and east is C sector, Wednesfield. The sector mainly falls between two major routes both leading to and from Wolverhampton city centre. The sector is mainly residential, is the smallest sector in size and has lower crime and incident levels than the other sectors of the BCU. It has a total population of 33,827 (2001 census) and 13,175 households. 88% of the residents are white, with the remaining 12% being made up with a variety of minority groups. 28% are aged less than 17; this is higher than the West Midlands average and far higher than the national average.
 - **C Sector**
C sector (Wednesfield) covers a geographical area stretching between Wolverhampton, Ring Road, Wellington Road, Cannock Road and almost to the A462 Essington Road. It is surrounded by G1 BCU to the west, A sector (G2) to the north, E sector (G2) to the south and H1 and H2 BCUs to the east. It is divided into 15 police beats and five electoral wards. Within its borders the sector houses Sun Street Sorting Office which employs approximately 1500 and is one of the largest sorting offices in the Midlands. It also houses New Cross hospital site covering approximately 26 acres, employing approximately 5,000 staff and attracting 750,000 to 800,000 visitors per year. The sector covers four large senior schools and a larger number of junior and infant schools. The sector also houses two large Sikh temples, a flourishing Seventh Day Adventist community and a number of Church of England and Roman Catholic churches.
The sector has a population of approximately 44,000 (2001 census) containing a hugely diverse community of people made up of White, Asian/ British, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black/ British Caribbean, African, mixed ethnicity and Chinese persons. Recently there has been a substantial rise of Eastern European persons taking up accommodation in the area.

- **E Sector**

Bilston is an historic Black Country town with a strong tradition of industry. The town grew substantially in the 19th century as it came to form a key centre of the coal and iron industry within the Black Country. Since 1966 Bilston has formed part of Wolverhampton. As the city's second commercial centre, the town has a vital role as a local shopping centre and through its markets which attract people from the wider region. The decline of traditional industry in the region, and particularly around the town centre over recent years has had an effect upon the town's vitality. In response to the continued economic problems and to ensure its successful future, a number of regeneration initiatives are being undertaken, aimed at creating the necessary conditions to attract private investment.

The area has the following educational establishments: Bilston College of Further Education, two large comprehensive schools Moseley Park and Parkfields High and 15 junior/infant schools. The area also has many religious establishments, which cater for all faiths. The sector has a population of 46,725, who reside in 19,083 households containing a diverse community of people made up of White, Asian/ British, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Black/ British Caribbean, African, mixed ethnicity and Chinese persons.

5. The BCU has an establishment of 322 police officers, 105 members of police staff and 41 special constables. The senior management team (SMT) consists of a chief superintendent, superintendent, crime manager (DCI), human resource manager and business manager all of whom are located at the BCU headquarters at Wednesfield. The BCU has an annual revenue budget of £14.4m

Performance

Crime and disorder reduction partnerships

6. In accordance with the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, the local authority, police, health and fire service supported by other key agencies and voluntary groups have joined together to form a crime and disorder reduction partnership (CDRP). Wolverhampton CDRP covers both this BCU and the neighbouring BCU (G1). The partnership conducted audits to identify issues of concern to the local population and as a consequence has produced strategies to deal with the issues identified. The latest of these strategies covers the period 2005/08. Its main aims are:

- To reduce all crime by 20%
- To reassure the public, reduce the fear of crime and anti-social behaviour, build confidence in communities and ensure that Wolverhampton is a city where people will be safer and feel safer.

The partnership has consequently identified several priorities to achieve its aims and these are:

- ***To target prolific and priority offenders*** – by a multi agency intensive programme, and identify 40 prolific offenders per year.
- ***To increase the people of Wolverhampton's satisfaction with their neighbourhood as a place to live and work*** – Target 88% of households subject to survey.
- ***To reduce incidences of violent and gang related gun crime*** – Pilot initiatives that are held as good practice from other areas.

- ***Improvement to partnership working and responses*** – Creation of a dedicated team to ensure resources available city wide are co-ordinated to achieve the most effective outcome and achieve the objectives set by the partnership and government. Greater linkage between targets and funding, greater communication with local communities and partners to increase reassurance and safety.
- ***To stop street sex in Wolverhampton*** – Stop the demand, prevent vulnerable people becoming involved in street sex, support existing street workers to exit, support the communities affected by street sex work.
- ***To raise the awareness, and reduce the level and impact of domestic violence*** – Arrest rate of 70% in all domestic violence incidents where there is a power. 30% rate for repeat victims. Prevent initial incidents through education/training, positive action reference action taken through both civil and criminal courts, develop more effective support mechanisms for victims and their families via multi agency working.
- ***To tackle racial harassment and racial incidents through multi agency working*** – 30% increase in reports, increase opportunity for victims to report incidents, increase satisfaction, increase numbers of offenders brought to justice.
- ***To minimise the risk of being involved in a criminal incident while travelling or waiting to travel, by public transport*** – Improve the whole travel experience of those using public transport in Wolverhampton.
- ***To reduce youth offending and re-offending*** – Ensure all areas have access to youth inclusion and support panels, effective targeting of youths most at risk of offending, reduce the rate of re-offending, greater participation in formal and informal education programmes, structured youth activities, greater access to support schemes for young victims.
- ***To reduce the harm caused by illegal drugs and alcohol*** – Tackle the supply of drugs in communities, bring 120 offenders to justice for supply of ‘class A’ drugs. Increase the number of users retained in drug treatment programmes for more than 12 weeks by 60%.
- ***To reduce crime against businesses in Wolverhampton*** – Work with local businesses to prevent them becoming victims if crime, target those businesses in Wolverhampton suffering arson.

7. The inspection team found that partnership working was effective and it was clear that as a consequence the BCU commander has the faith to invest BCU finance towards partnership objectives. Overall the commander is satisfied with the progress and direction of the CDRP, but believes that it is still evolving with examples being the need to develop a more robust performance framework, evaluation capability and a communication officer is to be appointed soon. The BCU has appropriate strategic links with the partnership provided by the commander and crime manager. The latter currently sits on the ‘Safer Communities Group’ of the CDRP and there are ongoing discussions for the BCU superintendent to provide this link. The superintendent currently sits on a number of CDRP implementation groups (Children and Young Persons strategic partnership, chair of the Local Criminal Justice group, Domestic Violence Executive forum, and Domestic Violence forum) and is also lead on all youth issues for Wolverhampton city. The business manager and personnel manager both sit on the Local Strategic Partner groups. As a consequence, it would appear that the BCU has a great strategic influence within the CDRP. Tactical working appears

very good with links in the form of partnership agency attendance at the BCU tasking and co-ordination meeting.

8. There was consistent and impressive praise for the BCU from representatives of partner agencies met by the inspection team. Some quotes were “very open”; “having a wide view of policing rather than enforcement”; “genuine desire to integrate partners”; “they go the extra mile”; “impressed with problem solving abilities of officers” and “put their resources where others would have shirked”. Many officers were mentioned specifically by name. The BCU was praised for its stance on the provision of radios for the street crime wardens despite some barriers created by contractual restrictions. One of the more interesting impacts the BCU has had on partner agencies is the friendly atmosphere created for them in its police stations. There were many comments from representatives regarding the support and welcome that BCU staff have provided them.
9. Some issues of concern raised by partner agencies were common themes in other BCUs for the inspection team. The issue of a lack of continuity in key posts, which meant that agency representatives felt that relationships and knowledge reach optimum and the individuals are moved from post (usually for promotion) meaning that relationships and working practices had to ‘start again’. They also mentioned difficulties in contacting officers via the central switchboard of the West Midlands Police. This issue was also raised by BCU staff and is discussed later in the report. There were positive comments regarding working with the Crown Prosecution Service and the recently introduced pre-charge advice scheme (where the CPS is responsible for decision making regarding charging suspects). Such positive comments are unusual and it was clear that the CPS and police had a very close and productive relationship.
10. The BCU shares a police inspector with a neighbouring BCU who is located within the local authority buildings. The local authority liaison officer (LALO) received many positive comments from partner agencies regarding his work to focus the direction of partnership working, partnership direction and resources. They believed that he was particularly influential at the strategic level of local government and other agencies such as the Primary Care Trust with whom he is also co-located.
11. The inspection team met a very positive group of BCU community safety staff. It is clear that they have developed extensive and productive working relationships with BCU partners. They believe that things had got much better for them over the last 12 months and credited this to the drive from the SMT. It was impressive that a probation officer is actually working in the police station alongside BCU offender management officers. Many positive youth diversion initiatives were detailed such as - the use of drug dogs in secondary schools and the ‘Dying to Drive scheme’ (detailed later). There was evidence that they had effectively marketed themselves and what they can do for BCU staff. This was particularly true of the anti-social behaviour co-ordinator. Community staff were happy with their resource levels and current structure although there was comment that the current multiple office situation is hampering the overall team efficiency (community team is located presently in five separate offices). Information sharing is clearly good and staff were (unusually so) able to detail good information provision regarding prison releases from local prisons. They believed that presently front line staff are overwhelmed with intelligence information (logs) sent

out by themselves as per procedures. They believed that the way forward is to rationalise what intelligence is disseminated and the inspection team concurs.

12. Community safety staff had concerns regarding an increase in workload created by other agency streamlining. One example highlighted was that the local authority used to employ staff that would investigate damage at council houses and instigate repairs. If appropriate the matter would be reported to police and then investigated as criminal damage. The streamlining has meant that all such reports now come to police for investigation and liaison with the housing authority.
13. It was interesting that partner agency representatives and BCU staff felt that joint working had developed so well in this area, that the only barriers identified were the contradictory targets of agencies and the performance management regime that are strategically set by government. Overall it was clear that the BCU has started a huge partnership and community style of policing rolling that would be now difficult to slow down or even stop given the commitment and desire from all those involved.
14. There were some good examples of partnership initiatives highlighted during the inspection. Some are listed below:
 - Prolific and Priority Offender programme (Wolverhampton Offender Management Partnership) – The Safer Wolverhampton Partnership (SWP merged CDRP and Drugs and alcohol action team) has created a Prolific and Priority Offender task group chaired by the superintendent of a neighbouring BCU. The group co-ordinates offender management and varies from youth activity programmes to MAPPA (multi agency meeting to deal with priority prolific offenders).
 - Risk Register – A working group under the chair of the Primary Care Trust (PCT) and comprised of representatives from the City Council, City Primary care trust, police and Royal Wolverhampton hospital are establishing a data base to identify levels of risk to partnership staff attending locations within the city. Presently there are a large number of mobile workers who are required to visit or receive individuals or attend addresses as part of their work. For some such workers the nature of their visit may create an enhanced level of risk of physical or verbal violence. The creation of the shared database will identify such risks and lead to a greater sharing of information.
 - Community Safety Regeneration Project – There exists within the city a number of technical and people based approaches to crime reduction and community safety, for example alarms in public buildings, public area surveillance systems, wardens, retail radio links, etc. However, in common with many other areas, there is no single facility that can both monitor or action those approaches to better manage partner resources and effectively deliver crime reduction. This project is currently examining such issues and is working towards better co-ordination of resources through many actions for example - all the city-wide publicly owned electronic systems, alarms / CCTV / communications are to be monitored in a new facility located within the police station.

- Joint Analytical Resource – It has been identified that there is a need to develop a joint performance management framework with partners. Central to that is the need for data, intelligence and analysis. The City Council, PCT and other partners all have data and intelligence, employ analysts and have taken the step to co-locate a central core team of analysts. They are located within the Performance Directorate of the City Council, who not just sit together, but jointly work on analytical products. Police have funded the analysts to access a system known as ‘COSMOS’. COSMOS is a web-based system that provides standard reports and easy to use mapping and scanning tools. The analyst manager is currently working with police and examining how the National Intelligence Model can be the methodology for the inter-agency team.
- Joint Fraud Unit – The partnership identified that many frauds committed upon them crossed other agency boundaries and as such have created a joint fraud unit. The unit’s remit is to investigate cases of fraud that concerns significant financial loss for more than two agencies; organisation involving two or more individuals working together; individuals profiting from and living off fraudulent criminal activity or individuals acquiring significant assets through fraudulent criminal activity. The City Council has funded a police officers post within the unit.

Performance against operational targets

15. 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.
16. Table1, below, shows crime reduction performance for April 2004 to March 2005 compared with the same period the previous year.

Table 1 – Crime Reduction Performance (April 2004 to March 2005 compared with same period previous year)

Crime Type	Number of offences	Offence per 1000 pop/h’hold	MSBCU family average	Rank in MSBCU family	% Change
Total Crime	15,190	120.60	111.59	11 out of 15	-9.6%
Domestic Burglary	1004	19.47	17.75	10 out of 15	-19.6%
Robbery	350	2.78	2.11	9 out of 15	-0.3%
Vehicle Crime	2033	16.14	15.27	9 out of 15	-30.9%
Violent Crime	3355	26.64	22.86	13 out of 15	-7.1%

Source – Home Office data

- **Total Crime**

Year on year total crime has fallen by just under 10%. Trend analysis indicates that the fall in crime has been constant both in the short and long-term and G2 is reducing crime at around the same rate as the MSBCU average. At the end of 2004/05 G2 was ranked 11th in the MSBCU group.

- **Domestic Burglary**

Domestic burglary has fallen by 20% year on year. The reduction in domestic burglary has been consistent throughout the last 12 months and the BCU has been improving at the same rate as the MSBCU average, although performance in the last quarter suggests that the rate of improvement may have slowed slightly. G2's level of domestic burglary is just above the MSBCU average and for the full year 2004/05 G2 was ranked 10th out of 15 in the MSBCU group.

- **Robbery**

Robbery levels are relatively unchanged from the previous year and are above the MSBCU average. The BCU had made significant reductions throughout 2002/03 and 2003/04 but performance in 2004/05 has been stable whilst the MSBCU average has continued to fall. G2 is currently ranked 9th in the MSBCU group. Robbery is generally high throughout the West Midlands BCUs and the Force is part of the Street Crime Initiative. Robbery remains one of G2's key priorities.

- **Vehicle Crime**

Vehicle crime in G2 has fallen by over 30% year on year and current trends indicate that the rate of improvement has actually accelerated in recent months. G2 is reducing vehicle crime at a faster rate than the MSBCU average. At the end of 2004/05 G2 was ranked 9th in the MSBCU group.

- **Violent Crime**

Violent crime levels in G2 are above the MSBCU average but are currently falling after a sustained period of increase. Year on year violent crime in G2 is down 7% and is reducing at a faster rate than in the MSBCU average. At the end of 2004/05 G2 was ranked 13 out of 15 in the MSBCU group.

17. Table 2, below shows BCU crime detection performance for the year 2004/05 compared with the previous year.

Table 2 – Crime Investigation Performance (April 2004 to March 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	2961	19.49%	25.21%	13 out of 15	-3.54% pts
Domestic Burglary	131	13.05%	13.3%	9 out of 15	-2.72% pts
Robbery	82	23.43%	20.19%	3 out of 15	-2.78% pts
Vehicle Crime	166	8.17%	10.61%	10 out of 15	-2.85% pts
Violent Crime	1365	40.69%	49.80%	13 out of 15	-8.3% pts

Source – Home Office data

- **Total Crime**

Year on year the total crime detection rate has fallen by over 3.5% points and is below the MSBCU average. Both long and short-term trends suggest that the detection rate has been in a sustained decline and shows little sign of recent improvement.

- **Domestic Burglary**

The domestic burglary detection rate has fallen year on year by 2.7% points and is just below the MSBCU average. Whilst the long-term trend suggests deteriorating performance, there has been a recent improvement in the domestic burglary detection rate which overall is now levelling out.

- **Robbery**

The robbery detection rate has fallen slightly over the last 12 months, although most notably in the last 6 months. Despite the year on year decline the robbery detection rate remains comparatively high. For the full year 2004/05 G2 was ranked 3rd out of 15 in the MSBCU group.

- **Vehicle Crime**

The vehicle crime detection rate has fallen by almost 3% year on year and is below the MSBCU average. This has been a sustained decline. G2 is currently detecting 8% of all vehicle crimes whilst the MSBCU average is over 10%.

- **Violent Crime**

Year on year, the violent crime detection rate has fallen by over 8% points and is currently below the MSBCU average, third lowest in the MSBCU group. The trend of the violent crime detection rate suggests that the rate of deterioration has actually accelerated in recent months.

18. In summary, overall crime reduction performance is very good. It is clear that last year (April 2004 to March 2005) saw some significant and sustained reductions and consequently it will be challenging to maintain the reduction rate this year. The commander rightly identified during inspection, that the SMT would need to continue to drive performance to achieve similar results. Detections are not good overall. It is clear that the Force and BCU focus has been on reductions in the immediate past and consequently detections have deteriorated. The Force and BCU have now identified that remedial action needs to be taken and produced a crime detection checklist that the crime manager is using to introduce tactics for improvement within the BCU. The BCU will also introduce individual detection targets for all operational staff in this 'round' of PDR (performance development review) appraisals.
19. Table 3, below shows BCU performance for the last full year of available data (2003/04) compared against MSBCU and national averages.

Table 3 – BCU performance for 2003/04 compared against MSBCU and national averages

Best Value Performance Indicator West Midlands G2 BCU	BCU performance 2003/04	BCU family average 2003/04	England and Wales average 2003/04
Complaints per 1000 officers	218.98	262.43	192.24
% of police strength from minority ethnic communities	6.02 %	4.52 %	3.28 %
Work days lost sick/police officer	7.07	8.71	9.39
Work days lost sick/police staff	9.55	9.41	10.84
Recorded crimes per 1000 population	139.06	134.29	113.08
Recorded crime % detected	23.04 %	24.80 %	23.49 %
Domestic burglaries per 1000 households	24.22	27.46	18.20
Domestic burglaries % detected	15.77 %	15.77 %	15.01 %
Violent crimes per 1000 population	28.67	24.75	21.13
Violent crimes % detected	48.99 %	53.48 %	46.76 %
Robberies per 1000 population	2.79	2.88	1.93
Robberies % detected	26.21 %	22.18 %	18.37 %
Vehicle crimes per 1000 population	23.35	21.88	16.94
Vehicle crimes % detected	11.02 %	10.70 %	8.97 %
Traffic collisions death/serious injury per 1000 population	0.42	0.38	0.46
Racially aggravated crimes % detected	32.29 %	34.86 %	33.50 %

Origin – HMIC matrix of performance 2003/04

Accountability mechanisms and performance management

20. The inspection team found good accountability of the BCU to Force with the BCU commander clearly and regularly held to account by chief officers at several venues. These include the monthly force performance meeting and bi-monthly cluster meeting with the ACC that uses Iquanta (Home Office comparative) data for comparison against MSBCU and ‘Feeling the difference information’ (West Midlands community consultation data). It is also clear that the commander feels very accountable to the

CDRP and local public. PDR (staff appraisal and objective setting) is also playing its part in accountability with the commander having specific BCU performance targets set by the ACC.

21. Internal to the BCU, accountability is also positive and a number of areas have their parts to play – an SMT meeting once per week – with action points noted, daily performance information available in almost ‘real time’ and daily tasking. There are monthly meetings with the superintendent and sector inspectors to discuss performance. The superintendent has just seen all sergeants at a “front end of year series of meetings” (April/May/June – just after the publishing of the local policing plan) to set expectations and discuss team performance. This has been a ‘one off’ and there has positive feedback. The National Intelligence Model (NIM) also plays a large part in providing accountability.
22. There were positive comments regarding the support of the Police Authority and it was clear to the inspection team that their role as ‘critical friend’ is also providing further accountability. There are two police authority members aligned to the BCU and relationships were described by both sides as ‘healthy’.
23. The inspection team was impressed with the leadership and positive stance shown by the superintendent regarding the BCU stop and search figures. Stop searches had been identified as low in comparison with similar BCUs and the superintendent conducted analytical work to establish if stop/searches mirrored crime hotspots. As a consequence the profile of this valuable tactic has been raised on the BCU and training instigated. As a consequence stop/searches have increased in hotspot areas although the BCU acknowledges that performance is still poor in comparison with some other BCUs.
24. The BCU commander spoke positively of the force performance review department at headquarters and the support that it provides to the BCU. There was clear evidence of a mature performance culture with the sharing of resources from one BCU to the next being common place. The BCU was able to demonstrate a strategic assessment, results analysis of operations and tactics with strong support from the force performance review department. However, the inspection team was not convinced that the BCU could evidence the next strategic steps nor have a ‘radar scanning’ performance management analysis capability. An example of its absence is the steady decline in detection rates that until recently had gone relatively unchallenged. The BCU performance review department appeared more about audit than scanning and the commander and the inspection team felt that the BCU would benefit from a mechanism to identify and give strategic long-term recommendations to the SMT on the question - “Where are you leaking performance”? The SMT was provided with examples of performance managers operating within BCUs close by and were also asked to consider the Home Office guide to Performance Management.

Reassurance

25. Each of the three sectors is headed by an inspector and supported by a number of sergeants and constables. It is apparent that the Force and BCU place great importance on community policing and contact with local people to deliver services

responsive to their needs. This philosophy was a strong theme during inspection and it was clear that the BCU had made great strides with the development of a neighbourhood policing style (teams of officers, support staff and extended police family located on sectors that work closely with and are accountable to the local population). This style has been easier to implement within this BCU because of the extensive knowledge of such issues that members of the SMT have gained from the force project 'Spectrum' (sophisticated mechanism that maps crime and reassurance needs of the community and allows for informed resource usage). The BCU commander was project manager and the DCI was also part of the project team. There is little doubt that this knowledge has strongly influenced the BCU approach to neighbourhood policing and has assisted the communication of such issues to partners and the local community. The neighbourhood policing style was implemented in August 2004 and to-date the feedback from both partner agencies and the public has been encouraging.

26. In terms of neighbourhood policing, the inspection team was impressed by the resource commitment to the strategy and the positive attitude of staff to the style of policing. Having good-sized dedicated teams in specific areas, with other beat areas covered by nominated beat managers and officers appeared appropriate. The inspection team would ask the BCU commander to consider an aspect found during this and other recent inspections. BCU sector inspectors described their priority neighbourhood teams, yet there was only mention of regular police officers. Specials, neighbourhood wardens and street crime wardens for example were not mentioned until prompted and this indicated that a larger team ethos has yet to be fully developed. In some BCUs, the inspection team has seen positive aspects to the integration of several agency resources, wearing logoed, agency appropriate, high visibility clothing and the team's direction was contributed to by a steering group involving community representatives (Chesterfield).
27. The BCU has an excellent array of volunteers/members of extended police family. These include:
 - Volunteers (five) – work 'front office' duties at a local police station and assist the BCU community safety bureau and neighbourhood watch co-ordinator.
 - Street crime wardens (seven) – line managed and tasked by the BCU.
 - Neighbourhood wardens – paid for by the local authority and based at the police station.
 - Park rangers – deployed throughout the city. Used at hotspot locations for robbery reduction patrols and similar deployments for reassurance.
 - Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators.
 - Neighbourhood safety managers.
28. Overall, both the wide variety and use of the extended police family impressed the inspection team. The BCU and its partners are to be congratulated. There was one obvious potential resource missing - police community support officers (PCSOs). The inspection team was surprised that, in a BCU that has developed the concept and reality of neighbourhood policing so well in a short space of time, no such staff have been deployed as yet. The inspection team understands that this situation is under review and it is likely that PCSOs will be integrated into the teams shortly.

29. The inspection team interviewed a group of community safety officers that included neighbourhood, reassurance, crime scene attendees and school beat officers. They impressed in the way they described what they do and their apparent commitment to the role. Some apparently do not have a job description and they were unsure how they were being measured. These are areas that the BCU commander may wish to examine. They were all passionate about community policing and delivering a quality of service/problem solving style. They detailed some excellent networks and relationships they had developed with their communities over a short space of time. Internal staff and external agencies alike praised dedicated schools liaison officers. Quotes from the community staff included “we are making a difference; we see things working now”. They have police provided mobile phones, which are used by members of the public to contact them. However they are concerned about communication for the public. Quote - “We encourage them to use the 0845 number to have the incident properly logged despite us having phones and then they moan to us that they cannot get through”. The officers were concerned that response/relief officers do not appreciate their role and some comments were “Unfortunately it is more than friendly banter”. “Get more respect from the community than our fellow officers”. The officers made suggestions on developing closer relationships that included the provision of more attachments from shifts and the further provision of marketing themselves and Spectrom. They detailed good relations with wardens, praised their results and would welcome police community support officers (PCSOs). They detailed some problems with transport and having to rely on lifts from reliefs to conduct enquiries.
30. The inspection team met an impressive and enthusiastic team of street crime wardens. They are appropriately tasked, well integrated into the BCU and their good work is recognised. There were also positive views from BCU officers regarding street wardens. The wardens are clearly effective and were able to detail many reassurance initiatives that they had been involved in together with some 93 arrests that they have initiated. There were a few issues raised by the wardens themselves that the BCU commander may wish to consider:
- There is a lack of an appropriate channel on their Airwave radio. They were full of praise for the efforts to overturn the issue by the BCU. BCU staff met raised this as an aspect they would change if they were able. They had access to the police channel when it was analogue, some of them are special constables and they no longer receive calls to attend from the call centre.
 - Quality of their uniform, which is local authority supplied and often leads to confusion of street crime wardens and neighbourhood wardens (but see earlier comments regarding possibility of corporate uniform for larger neighbourhood teams).
 - Uncertainty of fixed term contract.

Intelligence-led policing

31. The National Intelligence Model (NIM) appears well developed within the BCU with all meetings and structures in place. Documents examined during inspection such as the tactical assessment appeared professionally produced and covered most requisite areas (except the monitoring of forensic packages – see later). Relief inspectors chair

the daily tasking meeting and use a 24-hr summary of incidents of note as a template. The inspection team attended a confidently chaired, professionally run tasking and co-ordination meeting and was impressed with the direction and focus provided by the meeting. Impressively, partners attended, such as Trading Standards and Environmental Services along with the tenants and residents association. The BCU was able to effectively demonstrate that it conducts results analysis of tasking and operations emanating from the tasking meeting. The inspection team noted that the BCU had started to plan an 'action week' to place as many resources as they could at making arrests from ongoing current crime enquiries. There is little doubt that this will impact on current detection rates.

32. The inspection team attended a very impressive shift briefing. There was a de-brief of the previous day and a comprehensive briefing of incidents of note followed by tasking of officers. The briefing used very impressive IT (Smartboard-with ability to call up photographs of persons discussed). There was a good linkage of actions allocated from the tasking and co-ordination meeting attended by the team the previous day to 'front line' activity of officers briefed. Specials were deployed to assist reactive demand.
33. The BCU correctly identifies that intelligence is its 'life blood' but the inspection team found that BCU officers submit little intelligence. The SMT has identified that intelligence inputs need improvement and some recent work identified that one 'blockage' to intelligence submission is the electronic intelligence system itself (IMS). IMS is seen as complicated by BCU officers and often therefore they are not submitting intelligence or use a colleague who is IT literate to submit it for them. The BCU will soon pilot a new 'scratch-pad' type system with intelligence staff sanitising submissions. The inspection team liked the simplicity of the new system and this coupled with a further drive from the SMT to highlight the importance of intelligence should provide positive results. The inspection team was impressed with a specific anti-social behaviour meeting (similar to the two weekly tasking and co-ordination meeting) that also meets on a two-weekly cycle on alternate weeks. This meeting specifically examines anti-social behaviour hotspots and offenders and is attended by partner agencies. Staff and partners interviewed were positive regarding this meeting and its outcomes.
34. There is little doubt that briefings have significantly improved recently with better IT to deliver them and all sergeants trained in delivery to the National Briefing Model. Briefings are delivered 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The inspection team however found that there is no formal 'hand over' period between shifts in the operations room (control room) and therefore consistent briefing and de-briefing does not occur. This is an issue that may have serious operational consequences and the BCU commander may wish to consider a review of this issue.

Crime Investigation and recording practices

35. The criminal investigation department (CID) is centrally located with staff aligned to specific sectors. This centralisation was borne of constant abstractions from sector bases to deal with BCU or force level serious crime investigations leaving little resilience on sectors. It is clear that the current centralised structure has created a

greater critical mass of CID officers able to provide greater resilience of CID cover to the BCU. CID staff interviewed liked the current structure and were able to detail the benefits outlined above. However it is clear that as a consequence of centralisation, relationships with other departments (particularly reliefs) have suffered. Although not critical at present (and some relief staff stated that CID were approachable and helpful) this is an area that the BCU commander may wish to monitor as sector sergeants interviewed confirmed that relationships had deteriorated.

36. It was apparent that there were not enough CID tutor officers to cater for all the trainee investigators and as a consequence some trainees felt that the mentoring and advice that they were able to receive regarding enquiries was not as good as they had expected. This was balanced however, by the fact that detective sergeants were usually available if urgent advice was required.
37. The BCU has a small prisoner handling team (two officers). It has been recently established to ensure that hand-over packages are of good quality and is a pilot site for the Force. Evaluation is ongoing regarding the integration of case handling and file building into the one team.
38. Many BCU staff such as relief inspectors, detective inspectors and other CID staff highlighted that not all robberies are investigated as quickly as they could be due to other work ongoing in the CID taking priority such as a rape enquiries. It was clear that staff interviewed favoured a team approach to robbery investigation and there was generally a lack of proactive capacity on the BCU at the time of inspection. What is clear is that the BCU needs to ensure that such investigations are dealt with as soon as possible due to forensic, identification and recovery of property issues. This is an area that needs examination despite the recent excellent detection levels of robbery (60% year to-date).
39. Some BCU CID officers do not have personal issue stab resistant vests and are expected to use 'pool vests' located in a store area. It was apparent that no suitable vests are left in the store and this is an issue that the BCU commander may wish to examine.

Use of forensic, DNA and scientific techniques

40. 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 Wolverhampton East 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.
41. The inspection team examined the custody process to ensure that every opportunity to take DNA samples from prisoners is being taken. A DNA sample is currently taken from all persons arrested for a recordable offence unless a DNA sample has been previously obtained. When a prisoner is presented to the custody sergeant their details are logged onto the custody computer system known as ICS (integrated custody

system). ICS has a direct link to the Police National Computer (PNC) that identifies if a DNA sample has been previously taken. If a sample is not required to be taken (for example a sample is already confirmed) then the custody sergeant records the reason why a sample is not required on ICS. The system will not allow the user to progress through it without answering the DNA question and hence there is little room for error. An audit of 50 custody records where DNA was not taken upon arrest was conducted for January 2005. The records were cross checked against PNC to ensure that the decision not to take a sample was correct. The BCU made two errors and whilst this may not appear to highlight a big problem, the BCU commander may wish to instigate a further audit in the near future to ensure that ALL opportunities to take DNA are being taken.

42. Security and the continuity of DNA samples from persons in custody were also examined during the forensic audit. Security was found to be adequate and samples are collected daily from the BCU. There was a register that adequately maintained the integrity of continuity of samples from one officer to the next.
43. The inspection team examined the process for dealing with DNA and fingerprint identifications. An identification of a suspect is notified to a forensic analyst located at headquarters (each BCU has a nominated analyst). The analyst then completes a basic identification 'Flints package' that is sent to the BCU CSB via internal mail. The BCU has the ability to examine what identifications are 'in the pipeline' by a proactive review of the Flints system. Such early awareness gives the CSB staff extra time to conduct initial enquiries and prepare statements prior to the package arriving at the BCU. Once the package is received by the BCU a more comprehensive package is developed. Several of these packages were examined at random and found to be comprehensive. Once the package is ready it is forwarded to sector inspectors or the most appropriate officer for arrest of the suspect. Details are entered on a spreadsheet, on the system known as 'docutrack' and in a book maintained by CSB. Outstanding packages are reviewed currently once every month. The inspection team found that generally the system was adequate but is of the opinion that the monitoring of such packages and the prioritisation of them could be improved. Other BCUs inspected prioritise arrests according to the offence (for example a target to arrest a burglary dwelling suspect within three/seven days whilst other offences such as criminal damage are given longer target dates). The inspection team has also seen such package progress monitored by the tasking and co-ordination process or even a weekly review by the CSB of outstanding packages followed by a robust and intrusive chasing up of progress. This is an area that the BCU commander may wish to consider.
44. Scenes of crime (SOCO) support is seen as good across the BCU. Five out of six SOCO are trained as crime scene managers. They are linked to tasking and co-ordination by the senior SOCO for the BCU who regularly attends. They also regularly submit intelligence logs. The inspection team was only able to interview one SOCO officer but he was able to detail his and colleague concerns regarding a potential force policy to place SOCO in uniform shortly. SOCOs believe it will increase potential for conflict and prevent them talking to victims and witnesses of crime as freely as they do currently. The SMT was unaware of this potential policy and the BCU may wish to examine this aspect and address the perception or reality with SOCO staff. SOCO officers are also frustrated regarding incidents being added

to their deployment list without their knowledge by the help desk. This means that when they return to the police station and view their list of incidents to attend they often find jobs added that they have driven past and could have attended earlier. This is clearly not efficient.

45. The inspection team examined performance data of BCU SOCO compared with other force BCUs. It was apparent that generally the BCU is performing well, for example Sicar (footprint impressions) submissions is consistently one of the highest in the Force as is the total number of crime scenes examined.
46. There was evidence of good co-operation between different BCU crime scene examiners who are able to negotiate attendance at rota garages to prevent a duplication of effort by several different SOCO attending the same location. Despite forensic awareness inputs, SOCOs believe that forensic awareness of front line officers is patchy but made positive comments regarding the consistency that burglary attendees are bringing to burglary dwelling attendance and advice that they are able to give to victims of crime.

Managing demand

47. BCU staff consider that there are insufficient resources on the BCU to deal with reassurance, visibility and reactive requirements. There is a perception (that was partially evidenced by the inspection team) that reliefs are going from incident to incident. The BCU is currently examining shift patterns in an attempt to better match resources to demand. The current shift patterns does not match demand in the view of BCU staff – particularly relief inspectors who observed “can’t get on the car park 7am to 3pm – deserted after and little resources to deal with incidents”. The current shift pattern means that for Friday early and Sunday late shifts, cover for response teams has to be provided from sector neighbourhood teams. Some officers are encouraged to slip shifts but sergeants stated that the opportunity does not exist that often because of maintaining minimum staffing levels. The potential change of shift pattern is an emotive subject and it was clear that most BCU staff like the current rota. The BCU commander may wish to look wider than just this one aspect and consider the issues detailed below identified either by BCU staff themselves or the inspection team:
 - There was evidence that more appropriate call handling may reduce officers attending incidents. There were comments appended to incidents such as “caller would appreciate contact from a local officer” when clearly the incident could have been resolved on the initial call.
 - Officers raised an issue that they have to complete all fingerprints, photographs, antecedents and DNA samples from prisoners. There are opportunities for custody staff to complete these tasks.
 - Sergeants stated that the BCU single crewing policy is generally adhered to but accepted there are opportunities, particularly with prisoner handling to separate officers more.
 - There was a belief from sergeants that armed ANPR requests could be managed better as presently they have to find staff at very short notice.

- Whilst there was evidence of many different deployments of the Special Constabulary, there may be further opportunities to maximise their use to reduce reactive demands.
 - Relief staff felt that restricted officers could be used more productively in that they could be utilised in a team to prisoner handle/call handle/take statements etc. The inspection team provided the BCU with details of a ‘same day service’ scheme currently operating in Staffordshire.
48. Relief inspectors feel they have a manageable workload, are not working excessive hours and there was evidence that their hours are being monitored under the working time directive. Relief inspectors were positive about their training to conduct the role. They have firearm awareness training and felt able to deal with critical incidents. They detailed good support from the dog section and armed response vehicle officers.
49. The BCU Special Constabulary has gone through great change in the last two years. From an establishment of 41 with 8 active providing 150 hours per month to 50, all active, producing about 1400 hours per month (BCU target to increase to 60). Despite the comments at paragraph 26 where it is clear that specials are still to be fully integrated into neighbourhood teams they are clearly valued within the BCU. BCU ‘rank and file’ staff described them as a valuable resource and being used more and more to reduce demand on front line officers. It was clear that relationships were good. The group the inspection team met was very enthusiastic and committed and impressed the team. Specials raised an issue regarding the lack of personal issue stab proof vests (inspection team understands that the BCU is in the process of purchase) and the lack of police mobile phones to co-ordinate special resources.
50. The inspection team found that the BCU is well supported by its roads policing unit (RPU). There is a sergeant and 12 constables. BCU officers spoke highly of its role and staff and the inspection team was impressed with the staff that they interviewed. They were able to detail several positive initiatives that were clearly impacting upon road safety issues within the BCU. Some of these were:
- ‘Bikesafe’ – It has been identified that many motorcyclists are ‘seasonal’ and store their machines in the winter period and then start to use them in early summer. It was also identified that many of the bikes were not thoroughly checked over prior to their use leading to an increase in accidents. The Force runs a campaign to raise rider awareness to these issues and the BCU enhances this by specifically organising local events targeting local riders and accident ‘hotspots’.
 - Traffic Offenders Group – When a suitable youth offender (first time offender under 17 years) is convicted of motoring offences (ranges from driving under age without a licence to travelling in a stolen car) they are given the option of undertaking the scheme as a means of resolution rather than punishment. The scheme consists of presentations and law inputs by police officers, youth offending team, probation and the driving standards agency.
 - ‘Dying to Drive’ – A national campaign designed to educate young persons of the dangers of driving underage or in stolen vehicles. The scheme uses a local

fire station for a local theatre group to re-enact the scene of a road crash to groups of up to 80 children at a time to highlight the dangers of taking vehicles and road safety issues.

51. There were positive views regarding the creation of the force major investigations unit (MIU) to avoid the abstraction of BCU officers to major force level investigations. The BCU has currently given up 10 posts towards the creation of the unit which appeared to be appropriate. The BCU is now in a position to plan long term on staffing levels with some degree of certainty.
52. Other support to the BCU was described as very good. It is clear that the BCU receives extra financial support from the Force via several sources such as 'safer homes' (burglary strategy); 'safer motors' (vehicle crime strategy) and the 'robbery initiative'. The BCU fund is being used to finance operations and positive press releases. Level 2 demands (the targeting of offenders who cross BCU and force boundaries to commit crime) is high within the BCU and there was ample evidence of good support from the Force relative to these issues. It was apparent during inspection that there is a lot of BCU activity in relation to combating gun crime. There was evidence of good support particularly from armed response vehicles (ARVs) and there is an ability to put on extra ARVs dependent on intelligence. It was apparent that there are many major incidents within the BCU that need extra support and consequently there is much force level activity in the form of use of surveillance teams; firearms support and operational support units. In summary, the inspection team found a great deal of positive work ongoing that for operational reasons will not be detailed in this report.
53. The inspection team was impressed with demand reduction/problem-solving ability of the operations room (control room) through the use of problem orientated policing packages (POPs). The supervisor identifies persistent callers or problem locations and produces a brief package detailing the issue that is then allocated to operational staff for resolution.

Leadership

BCU Management team

54. The BCU commander (chief superintendent) has 29 years police service and has been in his current role since May 2004. His background is varied and has mainly served in the 'Black country' BCUs of the Force. He was project manager for the force project 'Spectrum'. He holds various professional qualifications including a Bachelor of Law LLB Honours.
55. The superintendent (operations) has 24 years police service and has been in his current role since January 2004. He has a service background of both uniformed and CID duties. He was superintendent immediately before his current posting in charge of the proactive arm of the Force's professional standards department. He holds various professional qualifications that include an HNC in Business Studies.

56. The chief inspector crime (DCI) has 10 years police service and has been in his current role since September 2004. He has conducted a variety of roles in his service that have included staff officer to assistant chief constable and was part of the project team for project 'Spectrum'. He holds various professional qualifications including a BSc (Honours) in Chemistry.
57. The human resources manager is a member of police staff and has three years police service, all in his current post. He has a history of public sector working with the Royal Mail and holds various professional qualifications including a degree in People Management.
58. The divisional support manager is also a member of police staff, has nine years police service and has been in his current post for four years. He previously worked for 28 years with Barclays Bank PLC. He is an Associate of the Chartered Institute of Bankers.
59. Throughout inspection, the SMT was described as approachable and supportive operating a "true open door policy". Inspectors were confident that they could express their views and were listened to. Communication structures were praised with a couple of quotes being. "There are plenty of forums where we can have our say". "Never come away feeling I've been ignored. Maybe I haven't liked the decision, but never felt I've been ignored." Proposals for a succession planning meeting chaired by the personnel manager were seen as positive. Currently there is a monthly personnel meeting chaired by the superintendent with the personnel manager present.
60. There is evidently a strong SMT with a good mixture of experience and skills. Some officers who had worked at the BCU previously, left and now returned, spoke highly of the current command team. One quote was "A lot happier here now. People are focused, directed and are keen because of it". There were positive comments regarding the SMT's decision to ensure all second in command sergeants on sectors are qualified, are authorised to act up and take part in the relief inspector rota.
61. Federation representatives praised the "genuine commitment and open door policy" of the SMT. There appears, however no set meeting that occurs on a regular basis and includes the attendance of all representatives on the BCU (such as Federation/Unison/Black Police Association etc) and meetings (one this year) appear ad-hoc. Representatives believe that the BCU deals well with grievances and complaints with examples of complaints being appropriately resolved in quick time on the BCU.
62. The business manager gives an introduction to all new staff and holds police staff meetings. Some sectors question the value of these meetings but he was able to rationalise the benefits.
63. External communication appeared good with an extensive meeting structure with the CDRP and public. The BCU has its own external website and the BCU commander is currently looking at an 'on-line' facility for the public to ask questions directly.
64. Presently there is no formal media link. There used to be a shared press officer with the G1 BCU (neighbouring BCU) but the post was reorganised to headquarters. The

Force dictates that each BCU is to have a communications officer and currently posts are advertised. There is little doubt that the BCU needs the role however it is possible that the post could be a shared one with the CDRP who are also looking at recruiting a similar role. The BCU has recognised this and is currently in negotiation with the CDRP. There was a good use of community representatives (Key Individual Networks – KIN) acting as critical friends to the BCU. The inspection team found some examples of their effective use and also proposals for sector working groups. Both of these consultative methods are viewed positively by BCU staff.

65. The BCU commander believes that more could be done by the SMT to visit sectors and staff more and he may wish to consider a formal visibility plan that encompasses the whole SMT.
66. There was not a comprehensive overview of personnel issues under the control of the HR manager. For example he does not take account of complaint issues in devising BCU training and therefore the inspection team was not certain that complaint issues presently informs BCU training needs.
67. The BCU (along with other West Midlands BCUs) does not have a great deal of flexibility to shape resources. The commander is unable to use financial variances or greatly influence succession planning. He can move staff internally but such moves are difficult when more than one BCU is involved. It was very clear that there is generally a ‘can do’ attitude within the BCU and the BCU commander believes that if he really needed a post or key member of staff he would get it. “It’s up to us to make things happen”. HMIC believes it may be desirable to make flexibility with resources a little more formal than the current situation.

Self-review and learning

68. There is an impressive resource commitment to training and the professional development unit (PDU). The BCU currently has three training officers. It is apparent that the BCU has the capacity of providing the mandatory training and BCU desirable training with accommodation and equipment (with the exception of IT) that is in training staff words “just sufficient”. There is a very positive view of the PDU on the BCU, which has been established exactly as per the force model. It and the training unit is line managed by a sergeant and is a pilot unit for the Force. The unit will provide accredited tutors drawn from sectors to develop mainly probationers but will also be used to develop people absent from reactive policing for some time. The training needs analysis appears appropriate although the inspection team noted that there did not appear to be any training that strategically pulled together the skills requirements to be a community officer considering the strong reassurance ethos within this BCU. Training is provided for outside agencies and is a source of income for the BCU. For example training of nursing staff in conflict resolution. This has had a knock on effect with fewer calls to the hospital and therefore is an efficiency gain. There are training half days every eight weeks and BCU staff can influence training inputs at short notice. There were positive views from staff regarding training overall and specifically about the recent approach that the superintendent had taken regarding training for stop/search. Instructions were issued that all officers should read ‘hand outs’ in their own time and if they passed an exam were given two hours time off.

Most officers passed. The commander gives inputs to training courses on community policing.

69. There was some evidence of small amounts of sponsorship such as bikes used for canal towpaths but generally the inspection team believes that this could be enhanced.

HR and diversity issues

70. The BCU PDR system has recently started to follow force guidelines following a BCU pilot last year. PDRs are completed on a cascading basis in that the SMT complete theirs first in April each year followed by middle managers and staff (at the time of inspection this process was still ongoing). This is assisting the cascading of BCU objectives. The BCU presently has 100% compliance rate and there are plans to roll out 'team PDRs' in August 2005. The inspection team examined several PDRs at random and found that there were appropriate links to a training needs analysis and the delivery of training itself. Objectives were examined and found to be generally adequate but there are opportunities to link more specific individual targets to the local policing plan. The BCU has recognised this and is currently in the process of making PDR objectives 'smarter', for example all operational officers will be set a detection rate objective in the hope that this will raise the profile of detections and therefore assist in its achievement.
71. There was strong support for the BCU's stance on flexible working and rewarding of people. Staff are clearly happy working on the BCU and applaud the friendly atmosphere which emanates from the SMT. BCU staff appreciate support they have if necessary in terms of family friendly policies.
72. The rewards and recognition systems appear comprehensive and follow several force schemes. There are awards ceremonies two or three times per year. Chief Constable commendations; area commander commendations; Quality Achievers awards; Royal Humane society awards; police officer of the year; bonus scheme; competency related threshold payments and 'Always there' awards (certificates for good attendance rates). The commander sees all officers personally (or sends an acknowledgement) who receive a thank you letter from the public.

Equipment

73. The BCU police estate appears generally adequate. Bilston is the oldest station in the Force and is not fit for purpose. The BCU has recently secured £1m for re-build due to commence soon. There are plans to upgrade the BCU sexual offences suite.
74. Equipment also appeared adequate (apart from IT). There were impressive briefing boards recently installed at each sector. Some of the BCU IT was described as "abysmal". Systems are slow, multiple passwords are required to access different systems or packages on the same machine and there were many examples where systems without apparent reason locked officers out. It may be appropriate in light of these comments for the BCU commander to ensure that improvement plans exist in this area.

Attendance management and sickness statistics

Table 4 – 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	10.50	7.07	8.71	3 out of 12	-32.7%
Police Staff	8.64	9.55	9.41	7 out of 12	10.5%

Source – Home Office data

75. Table 4, above, shows levels of police officer and police staff sickness for the last full year of data available (2003/04) compared with the previous year. Between 2002/03 and 2003/04 police officer sickness fell by 33% and was the 3rd lowest level in the MSBCU group. In contrast, the police staff sickness levels rose by 10.5% year on year and were in line with the MSBCU average.
76. It was apparent that there has been and continues to be a robust application of the force sickness policy driven by the HR manager. Recently a dedicated resource was employed to act as focal point in the BCU drive to reduce sickness. This has without question led to the recent improvements in sickness figures, although some long-term police staff sickness has impacted upon recent figures which are obviously beyond any management intervention. Some BCU staff consider that there are too many officers classed as ‘restricted’ and believe it warrants review. They believe that it is presently too easy to be classed as ‘restrictive duty’ and that such officers tend to be placed within the operations room without much creative thought. The inspection team has seen a multitude of role given to such officers in other BCUs, which has tended to negate this perception (also see comments under heading of demand management).

Complaints

Table 5 – BCU 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	67	72			7.5%
Complaints Per 1000 Officer	205.93	218.98	262.43	4 out of 12	6.3%
Complaints Substantiated	1	3			
% Complaints Substantiated	1.49%	4.17%	3.89%	6 out of 12	2.68% points

Source – Home Office data

77. Table 5, above shows that between 2002/03 and 2003/04 there was a 7.5% rise in the number of complaints recorded in the BCU. The number of complaints per 1000 officers is well below the MSBCU average. In 2003/04, 4.17% of complaints were substantiated, above the MSBCU average and a rise of 2.68% points from the previous year. There is no complaints data currently available for 2004/05.

Conclusions and recommendations

There is no doubt that the BCU is facing policing problems in that it had to deal with over 15,000 crimes in 2004/2005 and still faces the potential of serious crime involving illegal drugs and guns. The inspection team has been given extensive evidence of what the BCU is doing in relation to the latter issues, which are not appropriate for publication.

Overall, year on year, total crime has fallen by 10%. Trend analysis indicates that the fall in crime has been constant both in the short and long term and the BCU is reducing crime at around the same rate as the MSBCU average. At the end of 2004/05 G2 was ranked 11th in the MSBCU group. In terms of crime detection, the rate has fallen by over 3.5% points and is below the MSBCU average. Both long and short-term trends suggest that the detection rate has been in a sustained decline. However, the BCU has given evidence of plans to improve detections, which the inspection team supports and latest figures indicate an improvement.

The BCU has impressed the inspection team and a few examples why are:

- The unanimous and glowing praise the SMT receives from all staff and members of other organisations on how it communicates and its accessibility.
- An atmosphere of almost total commitment and job satisfaction, which, it is evident, has arisen in no small part from the style of the senior management team.
- The SMT has placed faith in a style of policing that is greatly appreciated by members of the public and their representatives. This faith is maintained despite other pressures such as having to resource high levels of immediate response style policing.
- Where developments are required, BCU staff generally raised the detail with the inspection team and suggested the relevant development possibilities.

Overall, the inspection team was convinced that this BCU is providing a highly effective policing service and can go forward to achieve its ambitions of improving even that level of service by attention to various important issues. The SMT as the directors must therefore constantly look to improve and develop resource capability and the BCU infrastructure. The inspection team considers that the SMT has the vision and confidence to improve productivity by taking account of development issues that they or their staff have already highlighted and those raised by this report without the need for any specific recommendations.

Summary of good practice

- The inspection team was impressed with the demand reduction/problem-solving ability of the operations room through the use of problem orientated policing packages (POPs). The supervisor identifies persistent callers or problem locations and produces a brief package detailing the issue that is then allocated to operational staff for resolution.
- There was a good use of community representatives (Key Individual Networks – KIN) acting as critical friends to the BCU. The inspection team found some examples of their effective use and also proposals for sector working groups.

- There is a very positive view of the PDU on the BCU, which has been established exactly as per the force model. It and the training unit is line managed by a sergeant and is a pilot unit for the Force. The unit will provide accredited tutors drawn from sectors to develop mainly probationers but will also be used to develop people absent from reactive policing for some time.
- Training is provided for outside agencies and is a source of income for the BCU. For example training nursing staff in conflict resolution. This has also had a knock on effect with fewer calls to the hospital and therefore is an efficiency gain.

Issues for management consideration

- The BCU commander spoke positively of the force performance review department at headquarters and the support that it provides to the BCU. There was clear evidence of a mature performance culture with the sharing of resources from one BCU to the next common place. The BCU was able to demonstrate a strategic assessment, results analysis of operations and tactics with strong support from the force performance review department. However, the inspection team was not convinced that the BCU could evidence the next strategic steps nor have a ‘radar scanning’ performance management analysis capability. An example of its absence is the steady decline in detection rates that until recently had gone relatively unchallenged. The BCU performance review department appeared more about audit than scanning and the commander and the inspection team felt that the BCU would benefit from a mechanism to identify and give strategic long-term recommendations to the SMT on the question - “Where are you leaking performance”? The SMT was provided with examples of performance managers operating within BCUs close by and were also asked to consider the Home Office guide to Performance Management.
- Some community officers do not have a job description and they were unsure how they were being measured and this is an area that the BCU commander may wish to examine.
- BCU sector inspectors described their priority neighbourhood teams, yet there was only mention of regular police officers. Specials, neighbourhood wardens and street crime wardens for example were not mentioned until prompted and this indicated that a larger team ethos has yet to be fully developed. In some BCUs, the inspection team has seen positive aspects to the integration of several agency resources, wearing logoed, agency appropriate, high visibility clothing and the team’s direction was contributed to by a steering group involving community representatives (Chesterfield).
- The inspection team found that there is no formal ‘hand over’ period between shifts in the operations room (control room) and therefore consistent briefing and de-briefing does not occur. This is an issue that may have serious operational consequences and the BCU commander may wish to consider a review of this issue.
- The SMT may wish to ensure that all robbery investigations are dealt with as soon as possible due to forensic, identification and recovery of property issues. This is an area

that needs examination despite the recent excellent detection levels of robbery (60% year to-date).

- Some BCU CID officers do not have personal issue stab resistant vests and are expected to use 'pool vests' located in a store area. It was apparent that no suitable vests are left in the store.
- An audit of 50 custody records where DNA was not taken upon arrest was conducted for January 2005. The records were cross checked against PNC to ensure that the decision not to take a sample was correct. The BCU made two errors and whilst this may not appear to highlight a big problem the BCU commander may wish to instigate a further audit in the near future to ensure that ALL opportunities to take DNA are being taken.
- The BCU could better prioritise identification arrest packages. Other BCUs inspected prioritise arrests according to the offence (for example a target to arrest a burglary dwelling suspect within three/seven days whilst other offences such as criminal damage are given longer target dates). The inspection team has also seen such package progress monitored by the tasking and co-ordination process or even a weekly review by the CSB of outstanding packages followed by a robust and intrusive chasing up of progress.
- The BCU is currently examining shift patterns in an attempt to better match resources to demand. The current shift pattern does not match demand in the view of BCU staff – particularly relief inspectors who observed “can't get on the car park 7am to 3pm – deserted after and little resources to deal with incidents”. The current shift pattern means that for Friday early and Sunday late shifts, cover for response teams has to be provided from sector neighbourhood teams. Some officers are encouraged to slip shifts but sergeants stated that the opportunity does not exist that often because of maintaining minimum staffing levels. The potential change of shift pattern is an emotive subject and it was clear that most BCU staff like the current rota. The BCU commander may wish to look wider than just this one aspect and consider the issues detailed below identified either by BCU staff themselves or the inspection team:
 - ❖ There was evidence that more appropriate call handling may reduce officers attending incidents. There were comments appended to incidents such as “caller would appreciate contact from a local officer” when clearly the incident could have been resolved on the initial call.
 - ❖ Officers raised an issue that they have to complete all fingerprints, photographs, antecedents and DNA samples from prisoners. There are opportunities for custody staff to complete these tasks.
 - ❖ Sergeants stated that the BCU single crewing policy is generally adhered to but accepted there are opportunities, particularly with prisoner handling to separate officers more.
 - ❖ There was a belief from sergeants that armed ANPR requests could be managed better as presently they have to find staff at very short notice.
 - ❖ Whilst there was evidence of many different deployments of the Special Constabulary, there may be further opportunities to maximise their use to reduce reactive demands.

- ❖ Relief staff felt that restricted officers could be used more productively in that they could be utilised in a team to prisoner handle/call handle/take statements etc. The inspection team provided the BCU with details of a ‘same day service’ scheme currently operating in Staffordshire.
- There is no set meeting that occurs on a regular basis and includes the attendance of all representatives on the BCU (such as Federation/Unison/Black Police Association etc) and meetings (one this year) appear ad-hoc.
- Some of the BCU IT was described as “abysmal”. Systems are slow, multiple passwords are required to access different systems or packages on the same machine and there were many examples where systems without apparent reason locked officers out.

Recommendations

No recommendations are made.