

Metropolitan Police Service

Service Improvement Review of Operational Support Policing

December 2004



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



Best Value Review Inspection Report

Contents

1. Executive Summary

2. Contextual Background

3. Judgement 1: How good is the Service?

- Are the service aims clear and challenging?
- Does the service meet the aims?
- How does the service compare?

4. Judgement 2: What are the prospects for Improvement?

- Does the best value review (BVR) drive improvement?
- How good is the improvement plan?
- Will the force deliver the improvements?

5. Recommendations

6. Good Practice

1. Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 By virtue of Section 1(1)(d) of the Local Government Act 1999, all police authorities in England and Wales are required to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which the function of policing is exercised within their force area, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.
- 1.1.2 Police authorities must prepare a Best Value performance plan (BVPP) for each financial year in accordance with orders and guidance issued under the Act. In particular, the authority must conduct reviews of its functions and publish a programme of the BVRs.
- 1.1.3 The Metropolitan Police Authority (MPA) has legal accountability for Best Value, whilst the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) is constitutionally personally responsible for operational service delivery. Consequently, the Commissioner and the MPA need to work together to ensure that BVRs make a significant improvement to service delivery.
- 1.1.4 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) is charged with the responsibility for inspecting all BVRs within the police service. The resulting reports are 'public' documents, and in every case a copy will be forwarded to the Secretary of State, the chair of the police authority and the chief constable or commissioner of the force concerned.
- 1.1.5 Reviewing authorities must demonstrate that they have challenged why and how a service is being provided; compared their performance with others; embraced fair competition to secure efficient and effective services; and consulted with local people, customers and stakeholders.
- 1.1.6 The purpose of independent inspection, and thus of this report, is to:
- Enable the public to see whether best value is being delivered;
 - Enable the inspected body to see how well it is doing;
 - Enable the Home Secretary to see how well best value is working;
 - Identify failing services where remedial action may be necessary; and
 - Identify and disseminate good practice.

1.2 Judgement 1: How good is the service?

- 1.2.1 The MPA conducted a service improvement review (SIR) of operational support policing during 2003 publishing the final report in November of that year. At the time of the Inspection in December 2004, HM Inspector judged the service as **Good**. Strengths included the following:

- There are some excellent examples of operational support policing within the MPS.
- The use of an independent challenge panel (ICP) – acting as a ‘critical friend’ to the review team, and the responsiveness of the review team to the ICP members.
- Active MPA and independent advisory group (IAG) engagement throughout the process providing appropriate levels of challenge when required.
- The detailed, thorough and cross-cutting nature of the review and final report.

1.2.2 The Inspection, however, highlighted some important areas for development:

- The lack of Management Board engagement in the process and the fact that Best Value does not appear mainstreamed with the Management Board’s strategic development.
- Future reviews should accentuate the positive aspects of the service as well as the negative.

1.3 Judgement 2: What are the prospects for improvement?

1.3.1 At the time of the Inspection, HM Inspector judged the prospects for improvement as **Promising**. Strengths included:

- The quality and professionalism of individual members of the project team, each with areas of expertise, and the way they worked together as a team to ensure the delivery of an excellent final report.
- The continuity of staff involved in previous reviews provided valuable knowledge and experience.
- The ‘4Cs’ (challenge, consult, compete, compare) were exercised in a rigorous way.
- Recommendations produced were appropriate and challenging.
- There was ample evidence of recommendations being implemented.
- The format of the final implementation plan emanating from the review.

1.3.2 However, some important aspects require further attention:

- There was evidence of slippage with regards to some relevant recommendations.
- Future reviews should contain costings of the various aspects of the service being examined.

1.4 Best Value Arrangements of the MPA

- 1.4.1 The MPA has overall responsibility for the Best Value programme. It has 23 members, with one member having specific responsibilities for Best Value.
- 1.4.2 The planning performance and review committee (PPRC) selects and approves all BVRs (now known as SIRs), the final reports and their implementation plans. Each year the MPA approves two SIRs.
- 1.4.3 Within the MPS, the Management Board, chaired by the Commissioner, sanctions the Best Value programme, its terms of reference, improvement plans and all completed SIRs before submission to the MPA.
- 1.4.4 For this SIR, one MPA member (the chair of PPRC) was appointed to the SIR Project Board, which met monthly during the review phase.

1.5 Acknowledgements

- 1.5.1 HMIC wishes to thank the members of the MPS and the MPA who facilitated the Inspection and who generously set aside time to speak to Inspectorate staff. The Inspection would not have been possible without their assistance and contribution.

2. Contextual Background

2.1 Force Structure

- 2.1.1 The MPS is the largest and most complex police force in the UK. The Metropolitan area comprises 32 borough operational command units (BOCUs or BCUs) sharing coterminosity with the 32 London boroughs.
- 2.1.2 The MPS is responsible for policing a resident population of just over 7m, with an additional daily influx of approximately 5.5m visitors and workers. The size of the MPS, its contribution to service delivery, organisational and operational complexity makes it a unique police organisation.
- 2.1.3 In addition to providing local policing services for those who live, work and visit the capital, it discharges a range of international, national and capital city policing functions, including counter-terrorism.
- 2.1.4 Budgeted workforce strength of the MPS at the time of the Inspection was 30,763 full-time equivalent police officers. The MPS has 13,128 police staff members. There are 437 traffic wardens, 1907 police community support officers and around 700 special constables. Net revenue expenditure for 2004/05 was £2,567.6m.
- 2.1.5 London is a growing, increasingly diverse city. Maintaining and improving public confidence in policing amongst ever more diverse communities is a major challenge.
- 2.1.6 The MPS is routinely required to respond to a range of major and critical incidents/events, notable examples being the annual Notting Hill Carnival and the visit of many high profile dignitaries. These events serve to highlight the unparalleled demands on the organisation and the significant resource commitments necessary.

2.2 Service under Review

- 2.2.1 The review initially formed part of an earlier BVR approved by the MPA to examine both managing demand and operational support policing within the MPS. A decision, however, was subsequently made to split these two business areas with managing demand dealt with in phase one. This piece of work has been completed and was inspected by HMIC in January 2004.
- 2.2.2 Operational support policing was reviewed in phase two during 2003, culminating in the finished report being published in November of that year.
- 2.2.3 Uniformed police officers, based at BOCU response teams, provide the first wave of response to calls for assistance from members of the public.

They are able to resolve successfully the vast majority of spontaneous incidents but, from time to time, they require support from either locally based units (eg, CID) or pan-London units (eg, Territorial Support Group (TSG)) to deal with the matter. BOCUs also rely on centrally-based staff to support their pre-planned operations (eg, surveillance units) or take on reactive investigations (eg, murder investigation teams).

- 2.2.4 Whilst some units solely provide a support function to BOCUs, others interface directly with the public. For the public the primary desire is for a consistent and seamless policing service regardless of who responds.
- 2.2.5 The Operational Support Policing SIR sought to secure improvements in the overall performance of the MPS by focusing on functions that support the delivery of policing services to the public by BOCUs.
- 2.2.6 The recommendations from the review were intended to ensure continuous improvement in the management of operational support resources by the MPS, having regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness. In particular, they were designed to ensure boroughs are provided with the right level of support at the right time and at the right cost to meet the policing needs of Londoners in accordance with corporate priorities.

2.3 Review Methodology

- 2.3.1 The MPA conducted its review of operational support policing between April - November 2003.
- 2.3.2 Within the MPS, the internal consultancy group (ICG) has responsibility for co-ordinating and progressing Best Value. One member of staff within the department was appointed project consultant, along with one other police staff member who provided an administrative support function.
- 2.3.3 In addition, the MPS appointed a project manager (chief superintendent) with previous experience of the role, one detective chief inspector and three police staff members, each allocated areas of responsibility within the review. Whilst not employed as full-time specialists in the area of Best Value, the officers were seconded to the ICG for the life of the SIR and were responsible for the final report.
- 2.3.4 The SIR was based on the application of the '4Cs' as outlined previously. This ensured that the review was carried out with due regard to comparison with other service providers, was opened up to competition, challenged whether and how the service should be provided and consulted with stakeholders.

- 2.3.5 The SIR was directed and controlled by the Best Value project board (BVPB), chaired by an MPS commander with considerable experience in the Best Value process.
- 2.3.6 One MPA member was appointed onto the BVPB. Again, this individual had considerable experience of this role, which was evident to the Inspection team in the way he involved himself in the process. The project board had responsibility for overseeing and managing the SIR and met regularly throughout the review period.
- 2.3.7 As with previous BVRs/SIRs undertaken by the MPA, the process was given significant support in the form of an ICP. The panel – which met regularly during the SIR – acted as ‘critical friend’ to the review team.

2.4 Inspection Methodology

- 2.4.1 The purpose of BVR Inspections (BVRIs) is to make two judgements: ‘How good is the service being inspected?’ and ‘What are the prospects for improvement?’ HMIC has been given the statutory responsibility for conducting BVRIs within the police service.
- 2.4.2 This Inspection was conducted between 29 November - 3 December 2004 on behalf of HM Inspector Sir Ronnie Flanagan GBE, MA. Prior to the report’s publication, both the MPA and the MPS had the opportunity to comment on its factual contents and challenge the findings.
- 2.4.3 In the course of the Inspection a wide range of documents were examined, including the BVRs and supporting papers, and other related information that provided a greater understanding of the service.
- 2.4.4 A number of structured interviews were conducted, gathering evidence from principal members of the review team, members of staff leading on the implementation of recommendations, key partners and stakeholders.
- 2.4.5 HMIC also examined and considered:
- The manner in which the review was conducted;
 - How the service had developed since the review; and
 - The likelihood of improvements flowing from it.

3. Judgement 1: How good is the Service?

3.1 Are the aims clear and challenging?

- 3.1.1 The Operational Support Policing SIR was a logical next step in the broader view of service delivery. As previously mentioned it was described within the review report as phase 2 of the overall examination of the service provision being provided by the MPS.
- 3.1.2 The review first of all conducted systematic research to determine a baseline position and from this flowed the four strands the review project board agreed upon:
- **Roles and responsibilities** – how the roles and responsibilities of non-BOCU operational support functions should be defined
 - **Accountability** – how to achieve the accountability of non-BOCU operational support functions to the communities in which they operate.
 - **Resources** – how the level of resources allocated to operational support functions is determined
 - **Level 2 (cross-border issues)** – how the response to Level 2 (cross-BOCU border demand) can be best satisfied.
- 3.1.3 The Inspection found that the review team had conducted a comprehensive scoping exercise as part of the review into operational support policing and that this process had benefited from consideration being given to the amount of time and resources available as well as the likely quality of the final product.
- 3.1.4 In consequence of this the scope of the review was to a certain extent narrow in focus but with the caveat that it was an ‘organic’ review, reliant on emergent findings to ultimately shape the final product.
- 3.1.5 The Inspection team, however, came across an alternative view expressed within some quarters that the review would have benefited from a more holistic examination of the issues. One interviewee commented: ‘blue sky thinking should be at least in the report even if they are commented upon and subsequently written off’.
- 3.1.6 HMIC fully recognises the difficulties in arriving at the optimum remit for such a cross-cutting piece of work. Some earlier SIRs within the MPS had extremely broad remits and these reviews took considerably longer to complete, with events overtaking them to the point that their recommendations became less relevant by the time that they came to be implemented. There is a need to take a proportionate response to problems and address areas that provide either the most serious challenge or the biggest opportunity for improvement. However, there is a balance

to be struck and if SIRs are to be the fundamental reviews required by legislation, then broader terms of reference may be needed, to deliver step change improvements from holistic reviews.

3.2 Does the service meet the aims?

- 3.2.1 The PPRC reviewed its approach to Best Value in light of revised government guidance in Section 5 of the Local Government Act 1999.
- 3.2.2 The Inspection team believes that the MPA has made informed choices in relation to the business areas to review, linking them with overall strategic development. The MPA has engaged significantly with the project and in monitoring the implementation plan. It was also evident that the MPA, through the chair of the PPRC, actively challenged the process in an appropriate manner.
- 3.2.3 Utilising staff with previous experience in Best Value was an important contributor to the review's success. The Inspection team was in no doubt that this factor together with the personal styles of both the project board chair and review manager assisted in the inclusivity and ownership of the final product.
- 3.2.4 Consultants and analytical expertise ably supported the project board.
- 3.2.5 There was, however, an apparent lack of Management Board engagement in the review, which militated against the project team's ability to fundamentally challenge the current MPS working practices. It was obvious from the work conducted by the Inspection team that Best Value is currently not mainstreamed with Management Board's strategic development.
- 3.2.6 HM Inspector therefore recommends that the MPA secures the full engagement of Management Board within the BVR programme.

Recommendation 1
HM Inspector recommends that the MPA secures the full engagement of Management Board within the BVR programme.

- 3.2.7 Borough-based policing is increasingly successful within the MPS but performance management breeds parochialism in some operational units.
- 3.2.8 The review highlighted several issues relating to the service being provided by the non-BOCU resources. For example, the quality of service provided by the Specialist Crime Directorate (SCD) was perceived by respondents to be better than the service provided by other non-BOCU resources due to terms of reference being in place, to which they adhere. BOCUs are also not always aware of SCD and pan-London unit activity, which takes place

in their area. Furthermore, the communities within the BOCUs also have little knowledge about the work of these units. The Inspection team believes this has obvious implications upon the reassurance and visibility agenda.

- 3.2.9 Without greater transparency or awareness of the work of specialist units within BOCUs, there is significant potential for 'blue on blue' situations.
- 3.2.10 At the time of the Inspection, in spite of a recommendation being in place to address those difficulties, the matter remains mostly unresolved. This raises significant health and safety issues and should be progressed in order to improve operational efficiency and reduce risks.
- 3.2.11 Operational support units, particularly within SCD, rely heavily on the provision of overtime in order to function, raising issues about work/life balance and how the MPS will achieve its Home Office targets to reduce overtime. If such overtime is actually required to fulfil its requirements, this must raise the question as to whether the units' budgets and finances are correct in the first place.
- 3.2.12 In relation to Level 2 there is a lack of data available on the scale of this type of criminality. This is a national problem common to most forces.
- 3.2.13 Few resources are dedicated to addressing Level 2 crime issues. Although the Territorial Policing (TP) crime squad is responsible for tackling Level 2 crime there is still a yawning gap in the MPS's proactive capability to respond to this issue. The absolute focus of Level 1 crime also skews activity from Level 2 cross-border issues. Furthermore, it acts as a disincentive to co-operation and collaboration.
- 3.2.14 The National Intelligence Model (NIM) provides a methodology that should overcome and transcend organisational barriers that currently impede collaboration and co-operation.
- 3.2.15 The new Commissioner plans to realign resources to resolve these issues and has a new strategy 'working together for a safer London', which encourages greater collaboration between operational units.
- 3.2.16 The work of the newly formed unit comprising SCD7 and HM Customs and Excise (HMC&E), whose aim is to disrupt the availability of class A drugs at the point of supply in boroughs, should also impact upon this problem.
- 3.2.17 In short, however, there is little cross border collaboration taking place in the MPS to address Level 2 crime.

- 3.2.18 HM Inspector believes that greater collaboration by BOCUs is the way to address the gap at Level 2. As such he recommends that BOCUs develop the capacity to collaborate more fully to deal with Level 2 criminality.

Recommendation 2

HM Inspector recommends that BOCUs develop the capacity to collaborate more fully to deal with Level 2 criminality.

3.3 How does the service compare?

- 3.3.1 As part of the review, the MPS was compared with its Home Office group of most similar forces: GMP, Merseyside and West Midlands Police. Two further metropolitan forces were also considered, namely South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire. 'Best in class' were also examined in the form of Hertfordshire and Kent Constabularies in relation to their application of the NIM.
- 3.3.2 Benchmarking was also undertaken with international police forces from the USA, New Zealand and Australia.
- 3.3.3 Although the review had considered a wide range of comparators both in the UK and further afield, the review team felt that the comparison element of the review could be further enhanced by greater use of external benchmarking. One possible avenue to follow could be making contact with commercial benchmarking associations to further enhance this aspect of the review.
- 3.3.4 HM Inspector therefore recommends that all future SIRs undertake further external benchmarking as part of the review process.

Recommendation 3

HM Inspector recommends that future reviews take advantage of external benchmarking opportunities where appropriate.
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- 3.3.5 Contained within the report together with the recommendations were various costings, including anticipated savings which would emanate from the implementation of those recommendations. However, the review was unable to answer fundamental questions such as 'what would be the effect of halving or doubling the resources attached to the service'. (see Recommendation 4 - paragraph 4.1.11)
- 3.3.6 There are many examples of excellent operational support policing taking place on a daily basis within the MPS. These include the work of the air support unit, the firearms teams, diversity directorate, murder investigation units, child protection to name but a few. Although the Inspection team is aware of these world-class services, it found little reference of these in the SIR report.

3.3.7 Future reviews should therefore accentuate the positive aspects of the service under review as well as the negative.

3.4 Overall Judgement

3.4.1 HM Inspector grades each service as either excellent, good, fair or poor, depending on the extent to which it meets criteria set out in the Inspection guidance. In light of the BVR's findings and the result of the Inspection, HM Inspector concludes that the service is **Good**.

4. Judgement 2: What are the prospects for Improvement?

4.1 Does the BVR drive improvement?

- 4.1.1 Best Value legislation requires forces to demonstrate that they have considered why they provide the service under review and the alternative ways in which it could be delivered.
- 4.1.2 It was clear to the Inspection team that the '4Cs' approach of consultation, comparison, challenge and competition had been applied. In particular, the consultation aspect of the review was rigorous; this ensured validity and reliability in both qualitative and quantitative terms.
- 4.1.3 This work was given strong support by the presence of the ICP. This group comprised a broad section of professionals with an interest/expertise in the subject matter and took the role of 'critical friend' to the review team.
- 4.1.4 During its visit, the Inspection team met an ICP member and heard comments from key individuals within the SIR process on their role, level of engagement and value throughout the lifetime of the SIR. At least one ICP member attended each of the project board meetings. There was a wealth of evidence to indicate the level of challenge ICP members provided throughout.
- 4.1.5 As in previous reviews within the MPS, HM Inspector recognises the benefits of an ICP within the SIR process and continues to identify the concept as good practice.
- 4.1.6 The involvement of the IAG and MPA members during consultation also offered varied perspectives and provided challenge on numerous occasions.
- 4.1.7 There was evidence that there was active participation throughout the review from the various stakeholders, including representatives from the trade unions, the Superintendents' Association and Human Resources Directorate.
- 4.1.8 A Police Foundation member who was on the ICP provided academic challenge and rigour to the process.
- 4.1.9 There was financial expertise involved in the review but accountants selected for project team work need to have time allotted for the task in order to be able to conduct the required costings and analysis.
- 4.1.10 Overall, the Inspection team found that the financial information accompanying the review was weak and future reviews would benefit from

strategic financial advice within the project board. That individual needs to be able to ask questions about cost benefit analysis and the cost of the service under review before and after the implementation of the recommendations.

- 4.1.11 HM Inspector therefore recommends that future reviews have a financial advisor on the project board engaged to provide relevant expertise in activity-based costing and linking potential savings with efficiency gains.

Recommendation 4
HM Inspector recommends that future reviews have a financial advisor on the project board engaged to provide relevant expertise in activity-based costing and linking potential savings with efficiency gains.

4.2 How good is the improvement plan?

- 4.2.1 BVRs should produce an improvement plan that sets out what needs to improve, why, how the improvement will be delivered and when. They should contain targets that are not only challenging but are also designed to ensure the continuous improvement necessary to raise the level of service delivered, in terms of both cost and quality.
- 4.2.2 Once the SIR was approved, the MPS commenced implementation board meetings. These meetings, held on a monthly basis, are chaired by the lead officer and updated by the leads responsible for recommendations in a similar manner to the PPRC meetings. ICP involvement concluded after the MPA approved the SIR, whilst involvement of the MPA member, originally assigned to the project board during the SIR, became limited to PPRC meetings.
- 4.2.3 Contrary to previous reviews conducted within the MPS, the Inspection team found evidence that the MPA was now holding key stakeholders to account for implementation.
- 4.2.4 There was evidence that some significant developments had occurred within the implementation phase of the review:
- Recommendation 3 – greater transparency within the TP tasking process.
 - Recommendation 5 – the implementation of METBATS.
 - Recommendation 10 – evidence that TDC attachments are working in practice (eg murder squads).
 - Recommendation 12 – analytical capacity has been increased to recommended levels.

4.2.5 The Inspection team also found evidence that a closer working relationship had developed between the TP and SCD units resulting in an improvement in the way they collectively do business.

4.2.6 Whilst there is movement on some recommendations, there is evidence of slippage occurring in relation to others.

4.3 Will improvements in service be delivered?

4.3.1 The Inspection team looked for evidence that the MPA will deliver what it set out in the improvement plan. The plan must have the necessary support from the MPA and the MPS in order for it to prove effective and for improvements in the business area of operational support policing to be realised.

4.3.2 There was evidence that the MPA has responded positively to feedback given to it in relation to previous reviews.

4.3.3 It was also apparent to the Inspection team that the MPA monitors and manages the implementation plan, providing significant challenge when needed.

4.3.4 There was good project management by the project team leader, including regular implementation meetings, to ensure the SIR is on track.

4.3.5 When implemented, some recommendations demonstrate promising prospects for improvement; however, other recommendations show some signs of slippage. A failure to implement recommendations means that BOCUs still do not value or appreciate the full extent and nature of the work conducted by the specialist units within OCUs.

4.3.6 The MPA needs to be sure that recommendations transferred to other committees for implementation (eg recommendation 11) are rigorously followed up.

4.3.7 The Inspection team believes that the MPA's scrutiny of recommendations would benefit from experiencing first hand the practical implementation in addition to receiving documentation.

4.3.8 During the visit, the Inspection team was introduced to a variety of individuals representing the Police Authority, police staff, ACPO and senior/middle managers. It was impressed with the quality and professionalism of staff and their commitment to this review.

4.4 Overall Judgement

- 4.4.1 In coming to a judgement on the prospects for improvement, HM Inspector has to assess the evidence within the review, its supporting documentation and that of the Inspection. The judgement will be one of the following: excellent, promising, uncertain or poor.
- 4.4.2 Having regard to the above, HM Inspector concludes that the prospects for improvement are **Promising**.

5. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: HM Inspector recommends that the MPA secures the full engagement of Management Board within the BVR programme (paragraph 3.2.6).

Recommendation 2: HM Inspector recommends that BOCUs develop the capacity to collaborate more fully to deal with Level 2 criminality (paragraph 3.2.18).

Recommendation 3: HM Inspector recommends that future reviews take advantage of external benchmarking opportunities where appropriate (paragraph 3.3.4).

Recommendation 4: HM Inspector recommends that future reviews have a financial advisor on the project board engaged to provide relevant expertise in activity-based costing and linking potential savings with efficiency gains (paragraph 4.1.11).

6. Good Practice

- 6.1 Good practice includes procedures, processes, and methods of operational policing or partnership working, or technological solutions that significantly improve efficiency, effectiveness or quality of service.
- 6.2 HM Inspector considers the arrangements for the use of an ICP is a strong critical tool for use within the SIR process.
- 6.3 HM Inspector believed that the consultation aspect of the review was extremely comprehensive. Consultation covered internal and external stakeholders, making excellent use of community police consultative groups, IAGs and crime and disorder reduction partnerships. Questionnaires were designed and used in an appropriate scientific way, which ensured validity and reliability in both qualitative and quantitative terms.