

**HM Inspectorate of Constabulary
London and the East Regional Office**

**Inspection of Tower Hamlets BCU
Metropolitan Police Service
July 2002**

Introduction

1. There are over 300 basic command units (BCUs) in England and Wales and no two are alike. They vary in size from over 1,000 officers to a little over 100; some serve densely populated, ethnically diverse inner cities, while others cover vast tracts of sparsely populated countryside. What they do share are some key aims and objectives, specifically to work with partner agencies in reducing crime and disorder in their areas, and to do so with integrity. Scrutiny of police performance is shifting from aggregate force outcomes to the performance of individual BCUs, recognising that policing is essentially a locally delivered service.
2. The focus on performance in reducing crime and disorder is likely to be relentless. Forces and police authorities, working with local authorities and other community safety partners, will need to raise their game year after year. Indeed, the statutory regime of Best Value demands 'continuous improvement' and an array of sanctions exist if authorities fail to deliver this.
3. In trying to make sense of the variations in operational performance which exist – to differing degrees – in every force, a key ingredient is *focus*. The best performers focus the efforts of their staff through timely, dynamic local briefings that are supported by a well managed intelligence system. They set targets and make sure that staff are aware of them, they communicate results and celebrate success, and they hold individuals to account for how they have used their time. Ministers have decided upon a nationwide rolling programme of BCU Inspections that focus on performance and leadership, intended to help enhance performance and spread good practice (Box A).

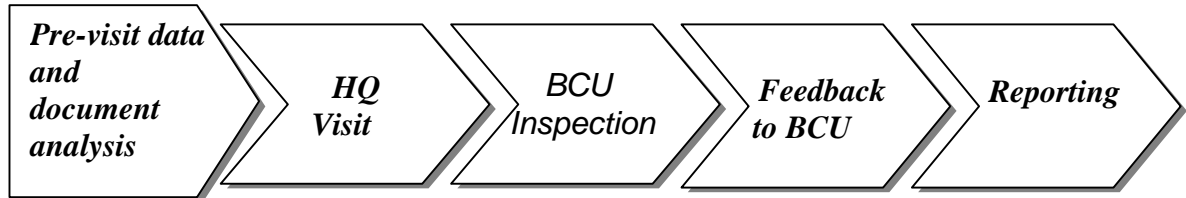
Box A – Aims of BCU Inspections

- **Promoting effective leadership.**
- **Disseminating good practice.**
- **Identifying inefficiencies.**
- **Providing pointers to enhance performance.**
- **Strengthening the capacity for self-improvement.**
- **Leaving behind a BCU management team that has learnt about itself and is even more committed to self-improvement.**

- An Inspection of the Tower Hamlets BCU in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) was conducted between 1 –5 July 2002 and was part of a wider Inspection of the MPS. This report sets out the BCU Inspection findings, highlighting areas of good practice and making recommendations for improvement where appropriate. Her Majesty's Inspector thanks the officers and staff of the MPS for the co-operation and assistance provided to members of the Inspection team.

Methodology

- The Inspection of Tower Hamlets BCU consisted of the following stages:



During the Inspection, a total of 35 structured interviews and focus groups were conducted, involving over 100 individuals as well as 10 visits to workplace settings. Partnership agency representatives and members of the local community were seen and there was also consultation with a representative from the Regional Crime Reduction Director's office. In addition, the Inspection team was pleased to be joined by a BCU commander from the City of London Police on short attachment to HMIC. Three audits were conducted: crime recording, the management of forensic science submissions and staff appraisals.

Force Overview

6. The MPS is the largest, most complex police organisation in England and Wales. It is made up of 32 borough-based operational command units, sharing coterminous boundaries with the 32 London boroughs. It is responsible for policing a resident population of around 7m, with an additional daily influx of approximately 5½m visitors and workers. The service comprises 27,650 police officers and 10,955 civil staff (planned number for 2002/03) and its net revenue budget is £2.128m for the current financial year; this represents around 24% of the total policing bill for England and Wales.
7. In addition to providing a local policing service for those who live, work and visit the capital, it also discharges a range of national and international functions, for instance in relation to counter-terrorism.

Tower Hamlets BCU

8. Tower Hamlets BCU is coterminous with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets and is home to a multi-cultural community with a population of 190,514 in 73,783 households (Borough Fact File). The area has a high visible minority ethnic population (44.2%) with 28.6% from Bangladesh. The area covers 7.6 square miles and out of the 19 wards that make up the borough, 17 are in the most deprived 5% in the country. Overall, Tower Hamlets is the 6th most deprived local authority in the country as listed in the 1998 Deprivation Index. The unemployment rate is 12.1% with 42.8% of the population receiving some form of income support.
9. The total number of people needing housing in Tower Hamlets is 14,382. However, the demand for housing far outstrips the supply. In 1999/2000, the Council housed some 14% of those needing housing. The mismatch between supply and demand is most acute in the need for larger properties (nearly 2,200 households need homes with more than four bedrooms).
10. The borough comprises the following areas: Aldgate, Whitechapel, Wapping, Shadwell, Bethnal Green, Bow, Poplar, Stepney and the Isle of Dogs. There is large-scale development in the area known as 'Docklands' with some 15 major sites being developed. The most famous of these is the Canary Wharf complex which is recognised as a significant terrorist target for both dissident Irish and international terrorists. The Tower of London is situated on the western boundary of the borough with the Petticoat Lane street market close by.
11. There are 197 schools within the borough speaking 78 different languages with 62% of pupils eligible for free school meals against the national average of 18%. 70% of pupils are from ethnic minority backgrounds against 13% nationally. There are three main hospitals: the Royal London Hospital, the Mile End Hospital and St Clements Hospital, which treats psychiatric disorders. The Royal London Hospital runs the sponsored Air Ambulance Service.

Tower Hamlets BCU Senior Management Team (SMT)

12. The BCU Commander is a chief superintendent. He is supported by two superintendents, one whom has responsibility for crime and operations (and also acts as the BCU deputy commander) and the other has responsibility for support. There are seven chief inspectors, five of whom have uniformed portfolio responsibilities - events, partnership, management of the response teams, criminal justice and borough liaison officer. There are two detective chief inspectors (DCIs) who manage the CID and split their responsibilities between proactive and reactive operations. The team is completed by a higher executive officer (HEO) who has responsibility for finance and resources and a second HEO who manages the personnel unit.

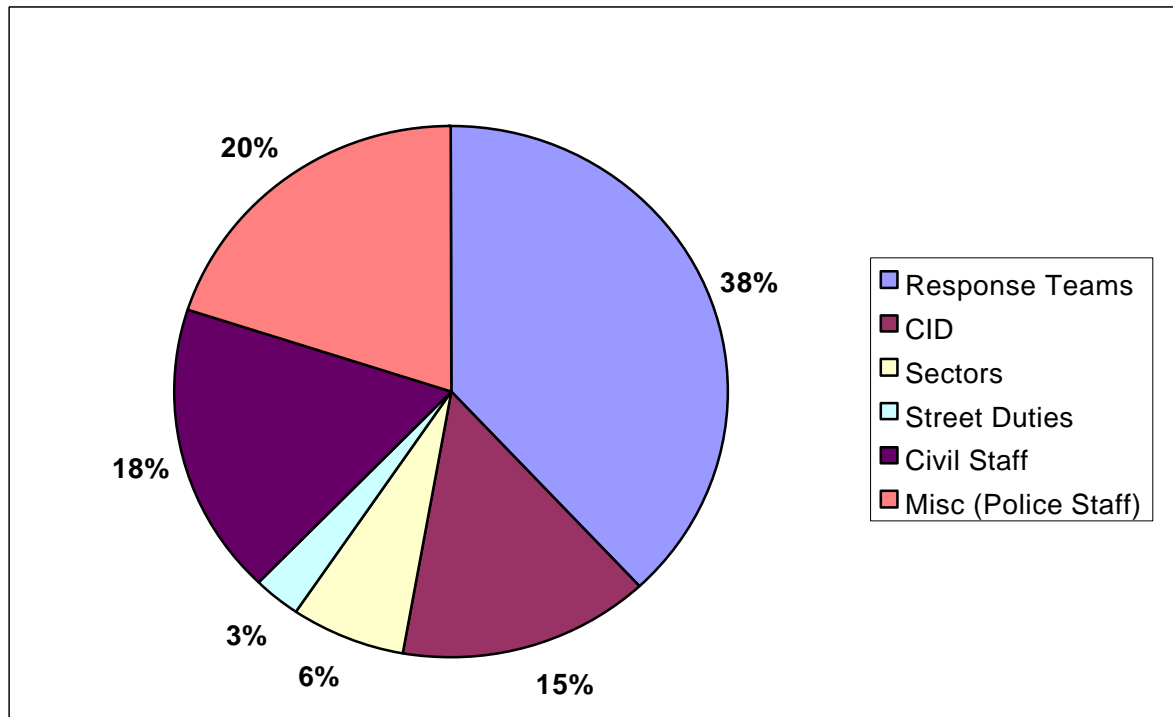
13. The BCU establishment of 693 police officers (as at July 2002) is under strength by 93 officers. The MPS resource allocation formula has increased the establishment of the BCU by more than 100 officers and these extra staff are still in the process of being recruited. It is predicted that the BCU will reach its establishment by July 2003. A general outline of staff deployment follows, although the functions units are discussed in more detail later in the report (see also Figure 1 below):
 - **Response Teams** - provide the 24-hour response to calls from the public, mobile patrol and play a significant part in providing high visibility policing.

 - **Sector Teams** – the four sector teams are each managed by an inspector and comprise a team of sergeants and constables with dedicated geographical beats. These teams are primarily involved in community-based partnership and problem-solving policing.

 - **CID** – investigate crime on a proactive and reactive basis.

 - **Street Duties** – operate the induction programme for new probationary constables.

Figure 1
The deployment of officers on Tower Hamlets BCU



Data Source: Tower Hamlets BCU

Financial Management

14. The budget allocation for Tower Hamlets in 2001/02 was £23,280,743; actual expenditure was £21,769,546, an underspend of £1,511,197 as a consequence of the shortfall in staff. This budget has yet to be fully devolved and is therefore not available to the BCU Commander. For this financial year the budget was increased by 19% to £27,937,437, although a large percentage of this increase results from the new establishment figure.
15. **The MPS is going through an overhaul of its budgetary processes, with the ultimate aim of devolving to BCUs a much greater proportion of its budgets. The first step in this process will be the devolution of staff budgets to six pilot sites in September 2002. At present the BCU Commander has limited financial flexibility and Her Majesty's Inspector supports this change. It will empower the BCU Commander to make decisions that better reflect local needs whilst fully considering the costs of decisions. A typical example would be the ability to contribute more fully to community and partnership work or to purchase much needed IT equipment.**

Performance

How successful is the BCU in tackling its principal crime and disorder problems – is performance improving?

Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs)

16. On 1 April 2002, the Borough published its new three year crime and disorder reduction strategy. It is pleasing to note that the Probation Service, British Transport Police and the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority have signed up to the new strategy along with the BCU Commander and the Chief Executive of the Tower Hamlets Local Authority. The strategy details a range of initiatives, which the partnership plans to develop over the next 3 years to tackle the major crime and disorder problems on the Borough.
17. The recent crime and disorder audit (a part of which included extensive consultation with local communities) agreed the following six areas as the priorities for the next three years:
 - Reducing acquisitive crime.
 - Tackling drug and alcohol misuse.
 - Making communities safer.
 - Protecting vulnerable people.
 - Building capability to tackle crime and disorder.
 - Supporting young people.
18. The partnership has created six crime and disorder reduction delivery groups - one for each of the six identified priorities. The groups meet regularly and work inclusively and in partnership with agencies to deliver agreed targets. They also co-ordinate applications for funding to tackle crime and disorder issues specific to their area of responsibility. This is a good structure and provides the basis for effective partnership work.
19. The BCU Commander chairs both the overarching executive body (the common plan action group, which is the responsible authority group) as well as the crime and disorder steering group. He is also involved in some of the steering groups. The Inspection team concluded that this may be excessive for one individual as well as giving the partnership the image of being overly police led. In many other BCUs across the country, the chief executive of the local authority would chair one of these groups and this is usually the responsible authority group.

20. There is also no specific mention of counter-terrorism in the CDRP, although Canary Wharf is without doubt a significant potential target for terrorist attack. There is great scope for meaningful partnership work with both the public and private sector in this area, not just in the fight against terrorism but in all categories of crime. As the financial sector expands in Canary Wharf, other businesses to support this environment will follow particularly in the entertainment and leisure industry - and now is the time for co-ordinated work between partners to ensure that crime and disorder issues are at the forefront of planning permission and licence applications. A further incentive for partnership activity in Canary Wharf should be the potential for sponsorship opportunities. Indeed, there was anecdotal evidence found during the Inspection that other MPS boroughs had already approached businesses in Canary Wharf to secure such sponsorship.

RECOMMENDATION 1

It is recommended that counter-terrorism work is included in CDRP activities in the future. It is also recommended that the BCU Commander reviews his role within the partnership with a view to sharing the chair of the strategy groups with other partners.

21. The Inspection team had the opportunity to meet representative from some of the statutory and voluntary agencies in Tower Hamlets (including the chief executive of the local authority) to discuss partnership working. The group made many positive comments about their work with the police and it was clear that there is a good working relationship developing with the various agencies. There was also an opportunity to meet a diverse focus group of representatives from local community groups, who, in addition to having a heightened awareness of the challenges facing the police, all voiced their support for the BCU.
22. In summary, the Inspection team was encouraged by all aspects of the partnership working arrangements and found numerous examples of effective partnership activity, some of which are outlined in Box B below.

Box B – Examples of Partnership Working in Tower Hamlets BCU

- **New Deal for Communities – a 10-year programme investing £100 million in the most deprived areas of Stepney. The local sector inspector sits on the board of directors and the work involves capacity building housing programmes and designing out crime.**
- **Bethnal Green Gateway Project – over the last 12 months the work of this project has resulted in improvements in Bethnal Green, including the introduction of a warden scheme, additional CCTV and improved lighting.**

- **Racially-Motivated Crime Project – Tower Hamlets is one of two London boroughs to be involved in this project. It is concentrated on two wards in the Isle of Dogs involving residential social links.**
- **Docklands Light Railway – a £2. 8 million project to upgrade the CCTV system concentrating on transport interchanges and crime hot spots. Many of the major businesses in Canary Wharf have contributed to this scheme.**

Data Source: Tower Hamlets BCU

Tower Hamlets Performance against Operational Targets

23. In comparing BCU performance, HMIC uses comparative analysis among BCUs. Tower Hamlets is a member of BCU family 2, which includes 16 other similar BCUs (see Appendix A). The statistics used in this section come both from the Annual Statistical Returns received from forces by HMIC and the Home Office Statistical Bulletin. The timing of this BCU Inspection was on the cusp of the collation of the data for 2001/02. The 2000/01 data is therefore presented in précis format. However, in order to see the general crime trends for the BCU it is important to compare that performance against the available crime data for the policing year 2001/02.
24. It should also be borne in mind when considering Tower Hamlets' recorded crime figures for 2000/01 that MPS did not fully adopt the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) until April 1 2002 (the aim of the NCRS is to ensure a common standard of crime recording amongst forces).

Total Recorded Crime

25. During 2001/02, the BCU recorded 37,769 notifiable offences, a 7.7% rise on the previous year. The detection rate also fell slightly to 12.5% from 13.9%. This was the 6th highest rise of the 17 BCUs in the family group and as such puts it in the 3rd quartile.

Street Crime

26. This category includes robbery from the person and theft snatch. Like many other BCUs across the MPS, street crime has risen sharply from 2170 to 3083 offences, representing an increase of 42% (the MPS recorded a rise of 38%). Of this number, 181 (6%) were detected.

Violent Crime

27. The BCU recorded 6,387 offences of violent crime, representing a 7.1% increase on the previous year. Again, there was a fall in the detection rate from 26% to 20.5%. This performance again puts Tower Hamlets in the 3rd quartile of its BCU family group.

Burglary Dwelling

28. A small increase of 1% places the BCU in the 2nd quartile of its family group. There was also a fall in the detection rate from 15% to 13%, although only two BCUs in the family group have a better detection rate, and Tower Hamlets remains in the top quartile.

Vehicle Crime

29. All categories of vehicle crime showed a rise of 7% on the previous year, with 476 more offences being reported. The detection rate also dropped to a disappointing 3.6% from the previous year when it stood at 6%. The BCU's performance both in terms of the number of offences and the detection rate in this category leaves it in the 4th quartile of its BCU family.

Performance to date this year

30. On a more promising note street crime is down for the first quarter of the new financial year (April to June) by 6.3%, which represents 44 fewer offences. The judicial disposal rate has also risen from 5.5% to 7.1%. There is also good news in the category of violent gun crime, where there has been a 25% reduction in the number of offences. However, in other areas the picture is somewhat different; total crime has risen by 16.8% although part of this increase may be explained by the introduction of the new NCRS. There has also been a 3.5% increase in burglary and a worrying 40% increase in vehicle crime (294 more offences).
31. In summary, BCU performance last year was disappointing against the key crime categories. The first three months of this year have shown an improvement in the important categories of street crime and gun-related violence. The SMT is acutely aware of the situation and the need to further improve performance

Accountability Mechanisms and Performance Management

32. A key feature of a successful BCU is a robust performance management system with clear roles and expectations and an awareness that individuals will be held to account for their contributions towards the achievement of goals and targets.
33. At MPS level, a number of mechanisms exist for holding the BCU Commander to account. There is a monthly meeting between the BCU Commander and the Cluster Commander (ACPO rank) where performance is a standing item on the agenda. There is also a monthly meeting chaired by the TP Crime Commander where the BCU Commander is held to account for performance within the Safer Streets initiative, an MPS initiative aimed at cutting street crime. Tower Hamlets' high volume of street crime has resulted in its designation as one of the 15 priority boroughs in the MPS. This means that the BCU receives extra support from TP Command by way of extra funding and specialist support.
34. At BCU level, the Borough Commander produced a strategic level document soon after his arrival outlining his vision of the way ahead for the BCU. Within this document he sets out the priorities for the BCU and an explanation of how staff will be held to account for the delivery of these priorities through a performance regime. This includes a monthly meeting with his SMT where performance is analysed. There is also a requirement for individual SMT members to meet team leaders within their command on a monthly basis and formally review

- performance. The tasking and co-ordination meeting examines the previous week's performance prior to planning for the future (discussed in more detail later).
35. Below SMT level the structure was less clear, although interviews and focus groups with officers of inspector rank and below confirmed the existence of an emerging performance culture in certain areas on the BCU. However, this was almost exclusively around the Safer Streets initiative and amongst the various specialist units of the BCU. Officers gave examples of other areas they believe are a problem for the BCU and the local community, such as drugs misuse and gang-related violence; however, they did not feel under pressure to focus on performance in these areas.
 36. An important element of an accountability structure is performance management information and in Tower Hamlets this is produced by the performance and review unit (P&RU). The Inspection team saw information produced by the P&RU, which was clearly relevant; however, there was limited evidence found of its meaningful use by middle managers and supervisors. The Inspection team also noted that there were limited overt displays of performance data around the stations, particularly at Limehouse where all the response teams are based.
 37. The BCU has the foundation for a performance management framework, especially at SMT level. However, there is still some way to go before it has established a strong performance culture at all levels. The SMT needs to focus on creating a vibrant day-to-day performance culture where every member of the BCU is aware of what is expected of them. It is the view of the Inspection team that the present structure may be inhibiting progress in this area, in particular the equitability of the roles and responsibilities of some SMT members and middle managers. Since performance against key crime categories during the last 12 months has been poor, there is good reason for the BCU to reconsider the structure of the performance management framework.

RECOMMENDATION 2

It is recommended that a more robust performance management structure is introduced, so that staff at all levels are clear about what is required of them and are held to account.

Visibility and Reassurance

38. There are a number of methods by which the BCU provides visibility and reassurance to the public. These include the uniformed response teams who provide a 24-hour patrol capability. When not attending response calls it was stated, by the BCU SMT, that they were utilised for directed patrol within the Safer Streets initiative or to gather intelligence on specified criminal targets. However, the Inspection team found limited evidence of this actually happening

due to the very high workloads of response officers and the lack of time to focus on anything else.

39. A vital source of reassurance is the public's ability to visit a police station for advice or to report incidents. In recent years a number of police stations on the BCU have either closed or reduced their opening hours to the public. Whilst the Inspection team understand the need to divert finite resources to other areas, the net result has been a greatly reduced capacity for members of the public to come to a police station. The focus group of community representatives expressed concern about this fact and suggested at the very least that the BCU reviews the hours that stations are open to the public. The Brick Lane opening hours were the subject of particular criticism. The Inspection team was also concerned about the increased workloads for the station reception staff in recent years. It is therefore suggested that the BCU reviews the way in which the public can access police stations within the BCU Command area.

40. Tower Hamlets BCU has 14 special constables. Although a relatively small number, they appeared dedicated and made many positive comments about working within the BCU. They described the working relationship with regular officers as good in that they are provided with the opportunity to perform a variety of duties. They stated that morale was good; they felt that their work was valued and in general that the level of training they receive was adequate. This is encouraging as the extended police family can have a positive impact on crime and disorder work and also provide genuine feedback about public attitudes and reassurance.

Intelligence-led Policing (ILP)

41. A principal focus of BCU Inspections is the application of ILP, looking in particular at the degree to which the National Intelligence Model (NIM) has been implemented. The Inspection team was pleased to find a commitment on the BCU to ILP and to the NIM, particularly at SMT level.

42. A fundamental element of the NIM is the need for an intelligence structure in the form of a well-resourced intelligence unit. This enables accurate definition of crime problems (e.g. prominent criminals and location of crime hot spots) which then facilitates deployment in a targeted way. It was clear to the Inspection team that the BCU has made creditable progress in this area, in particular the structure of the borough intelligence unit (BIU). Some of the credit for this progress should go to the TP "Strongbox" team that visited the BCU last year to give advice and support on ILP. However, credit should be given to the BCU, and in particular the intelligence manager and supervisors who have established the foundation of an effective intelligence structure.

43. At the time of the Inspection, however, the strategic assessment, control strategy and tactical assessment had not been formulated. These areas will need to be addressed in the near future to ensure the production of quality intelligence.

RECOMMENDATION 3

It is recommended that there is further development of the NIM on the BCU. This should involve a strategic assessment of the nature of the crime and disorder problems affecting the BCU, which should then be reflected in a written control strategy and a regularly produced tactical assessment.

44. The potential exists for more intelligence development work around prominent criminals; the SMT recognises this. Interviews with staff from the BIU also revealed that they were dealing with a great deal of non-core work, in particular the high number of requests they receive for the production of management information that has no apparent relevance with what they should be producing. It is also puzzling as to why the BCU has the task of maintaining the “stops” database, a function that should be carried out by another unit that can then feed “stops” intelligence into the BIU.
45. Although the Inspection team has made recommendations on ways in which the BIU can move forward, interviews and focus groups with staff did reveal an acceptable level of satisfaction with the quality of the service from the BIU. This is indicative of the progress the BCU has made in the past 12 months. The one common area of concern, particularly from the response teams, was the location of the BIU at Bethnal Green. The Inspection team has some sympathy with the SMT over this issue, as its location will disadvantage some staff members. However, all the response teams are located at Limehouse, along with the reactive CID officers, which makes them totally reliant on technology and quality briefings for up-to-date intelligence. The Inspection team found that ready access to intelligence at Limehouse was very poor with the response teams receiving a limited briefing from the BIU on a daily basis. In particular, it was interesting to note that the briefing room for response teams, albeit used as a temporary measure, was totally devoid of any intelligence-briefing product.

RECOMMENDATION 4

It is recommended that there is a review of the roles and responsibilities of the BIU with a view to removing the burden of non-core tasks. It would also be appropriate to review whether the unit is in the most appropriate location to ensure that relevant criminal intelligence is easily accessible to all staff on the BCU.

46. During the Inspection the team attended a tasking and co-ordination meeting (T&CG), although it was arguably more a briefing and was very much focused on street crime. However, it did serve as an accountability forum for performance within the Safer Streets initiative. There was a great deal of discussion around crime hot spots (micro beats) but limited discussion about target criminals. The meeting should be used as an opportunity to discuss and plan the BCU's response to all crime categories in the coming week as well as the wider operational issues affecting the BCU. Clearly, the production of a comprehensive tactical assessment each week and the introduction of a more robust prominent nominal system will go some way towards addressing these issues.
47. The T&CG meeting structure needs to be more sharply focused. The 40+ attendees made the meeting too unwieldy, thus turning it into a briefing rather than a tasking and co-ordination meeting. Ideally, membership should comprise middle-tier managers and a small number of relevant stakeholders (e.g. BIU supervisor and crime analyst).

RECOMMENDATION 5

It is recommended that a review is carried out of the tasking and co-ordination meeting with a view to including only key individuals and widening its focus to include all crime and operational matters.

48. Tower Hamlets is a busy diverse BCU with a variety of policing demands and a high volume of 'critical incidents'. It was unclear to the Inspection team how the SMT responded to these types of incidents on a fast-time daily basis in order to safeguard the integrity of the police response and to ensure public confidence. There did not appear to be any formal daily mechanism to review the events of the previous 24 hours or make short-term tasking decisions. It is therefore suggested that the BCU considers a focused daily meeting for fast-time tasking and co-ordination, the purpose being a review of critical-type incidents, community tensions and welfare matters requiring immediate and SMT intervention and action. The introduction of this process would strengthen accountability structures and the main point of this meeting should be communicated electronically as widely as possible on the BCU. It is also suggested that a résumé of this meeting is published daily and is accessible to all members of the BCU.

Crime Investigations and Recording Practices

49. The present CID has evolved from what previously were two very separate CID departments within the old divisions of Bethnal Green and Limehouse. Under the current structure there are two DCIs, one with responsibility for reactive operations and the other for intelligence and proactivity. The proactive DCI manages the robbery and burglary team, the proactive team, the BIU and the

DSU. This leaves the reactive DCI with the management of the crime desk and all other reactive crime investigations on the BCU.

50. The strength of this structure is the clear split between proactivity and reactivity. In addition, a number of the units such as the proactive team and the BIU are suited to having a BCU-wide remit. However, the case for some of the reactive teams having a BCU-wide remit is less convincing. Under the present structure, the CIP teams and the beat crimes desk are based at Limehouse and have a BCU-wide responsibility as do the robbery and burglary team, although they are based at Bethnal Green. Clearly, this would have not been the case prior to amalgamation when teams (albeit smaller ones) would have had geographical focus on smaller areas.
51. Interviews and focus groups with CID officers revealed a high degree of dissatisfaction with workloads and also working conditions, particularly the reactive CID whose accommodation was poor. The caseload for detectives on the CIP team averages between 15 to 20, which initially does not appear too high; however, this figure will include a high proportion of serious crime including rapes and serious assaults. This group also expressed dissatisfaction with the present structure, which was mainly to do with the increase in the size of their geographical remit. There was also widespread dissatisfaction with the standard of the accommodation, which the Inspection team agrees is less than satisfactory although it is difficult to see how the SMT can exert influence in this area without the assistance of the centre.
52. In summary, whilst there appears to be a number of positive elements to the present structure of the CID, particularly around the intelligence processes, it is an inescapable fact that performance against key crime categories in recent times has been less than satisfactory. This, coupled with the heavy workloads carried by detectives and dissatisfaction with the present structure and working environment, indicates a need for a fundamental review of the present CID structures; all avenues should be explored in an attempt to find ways to improve efficiency and effectiveness and with it performance.

RECOMMENDATION 6

It is recommended that a fundamental review is carried out of the present crime investigative structures and processes. This should include the reactive and proactive CID strengths, the number of squads, their location and the quality of the accommodation.

Use of Forensic, DNA and Other Scientific Techniques

53. One of the principal areas of the forensic audit is examining how the BCU manages its fingerprint and DNA 'hits'. On a positive note, the BCU does have a database for keeping a check on the progress of 'hits'. However, at the time of the Inspection there were in excess of 120 'hits' outstanding, indicative of the system lacking robustness, particularly in the way the supervisors and managers are holding individuals to account for the actioning of 'hits'.

RECOMMENDATION 7

It is recommended that the BCU reviews its management of forensic issues to ensure that all forensic hits are acted upon, backed up by a robust audit trail and management tracking processes.

Crime Audit

54. Ensuring integrity in crime recording practices, including compliance with Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR), is a priority for the police service. The Inspection addresses this issue by conducting an audit of crime recording systems and processes.
55. A dip sample of 128 incidents from two separate dates in May 2002 were extracted from the CAD system. These incidents were scrutinised to establish whether, using the NCRS, each incident appeared to constitute a crime. The crime recording system (CRIS) was then searched to establish whether a crime report had been created in each instance.
56. Of the 128 incidents examined, 28 appeared to contain sufficient detail to merit being recorded initially as an allegation of crime. Out of 28 incidents that appeared to constitute crimes within the HOCR, 8 (29%) had not been entered on the CRIS system.
57. In addition to this, a number of allegations of specific crimes were examined in order to establish whether there was any evidence of under-recording in particular categories. The findings were as follows:
- Rape –15 incidents were examined and all had been correctly recorded as a crime.
 - Racist incidents - 40 allegations were examined, 37 of which should have been recorded as a crime (all racist incidents should result in an entry on the CRIS system) but 6 (16%) had not been.
 - Criminal Damage - 40 allegations were examined, 33 of which should have been recorded as a crime; however, there was no trace of 6 on the CRIS system.

- Domestic Violence - 40 allegations were examined and 38 should have been recorded as a crime according to Force policy which states that *all* incidents of domestic violence (including verbal altercations) should result in a crime report. There was no trace of 9 of the incidents on the CRIS system.
- Robbery - 40 incident reports were examined of which 35 should have been and were correctly recorded as a crime.
- Assault - 40 incident reports were examined and of these 35 should have been recorded as a crime; however, there was no trace of 4 on CRIS.
- Theft of Motor Vehicle - 40 incident reports were examined of which 31 should have been recorded as a crime; however, there was no trace of 29.
- Theft from Motor Vehicle - 40 incidents examined and 38 should have been recorded as a crime; however, there was no trace of 4 reports.
- Burglaries of Dwellings - 40 incidents were examined, of which 32 should have been recorded as a crime. All but one of these were traced on CRIS.
- Burglary Non-dwelling - 40 incident reports were examined, 37 of which should have been recorded as a crime and all but one was found to be correctly recorded.

58. Although the BCU has experienced a substantial increase in recorded crime during the first three months of this financial year, this audit indicates that it is still under recording crime in certain categories. Like all other forces nationally, the MPS should have adopted the NCRS on 1 April 2002. It is therefore recommended that the BCU carries out a review of crime recording practices to establish systems and processes that ensure future compliance with the NCRS.

RECOMMENDATION 8

It is recommended that the BCU reviews the findings of the crime audit to establish systems and processes that ensure future compliance with the NCRS.

Managing Demand

59. During 2000/01, the BCU responded to 67% of all emergency calls within the target time, which is below the MPS average of 73%. However, the figure for the first five months of 2002 is more encouraging as it is now achieving 71%. One factor that may be inhibiting performance in this area is the location of the response teams at Limehouse Police Station, which is one of the furthest points away from the main crime hot spot on the BCU in the north-west area.
60. The BCU has made creditable progress in demand management, in particular around the areas of call handling and the introduction of a public service bureau. It is also looking at ways of improving effectiveness in detainee handling. However, it is suggested that the BCU would benefit from a more holistic approach, with the starting point being the production of a demand management strategy. Box C below suggests areas to be covered in this strategy. It is also suggested that portfolio responsibility for managing the strategy rests with a member of the SMT, who is then held to account for progress in this area.

Box C - Key Components of a Demand Management Strategy

- **Regular independent review of call grading and feedback loop.**
- **Introduction of prisoner handling teams.**
- **Daily tasking and co-ordinating, e.g. early identification of repeat locations, victims or offenders.**
- **Review police posts suitable for civilianisation.**
- **Enhance problem-solving capabilities, e.g. dealing with repeat calls.**
- **Co-ordinate and review partnership joint tasking activity.**
- **Assess income generation initiatives.**
- **Strict burglar alarms policy.**

Leadership

Does the BCU management team demonstrate effective leadership?

61. The SMT has only been together for a short period of time. The BCU Commander arrived in January of this year on promotion from Greenwich, where he gained three years experience as the Superintendent (Operations). He has a strong operational background and also has previous experience in the strategic planning unit at NSY. Two superintendents support him, one of whom has the crime and operations portfolio and has now been with the BCU for two years. He again has an extensive operational background with his last posting being Chief Inspector (Operations) at Hackney Division. The second superintendent has been with the BCU since April of this year, moving from NSY where he was the staff officer to one of the assistant commissioners. His previous experience includes six years with the Territorial Support Group.
62. The BCU has evolved from the two distinct divisions of Bethnal Green and Limehouse. The police station at Bethnal Green retains the SMT and the support functions of the BCU including the BIU and a number of the specialist squads. The response teams and the reactive CID are based at Limehouse. The highest-ranking officer at Limehouse is a chief inspector who manages the response teams.
63. The Inspection team discovered a number of tensions around this structure and some of the systems and processes of the BCU. Some of these issues have already been alluded to in the report (e.g. the location of all of the response teams and the sub-standard accommodation for the reactive CID). Another tension already mentioned is the roles and responsibilities of SMT members. In the Inspection team's view, this is a major issue for the BCU and needs revisiting, in particular the uneven workload of the two superintendents and chief inspector running the response teams. Other issues raised by focus groups included dissatisfaction with the location of the SMT, which in their view is restricting their visibility and accessibility to many of the front-line officers and creating a 'them and us' situation.
64. Another common theme among the focus groups was the view that aspects of the present structure had contributed to a decline in performance. In particular, the creation of BCU-wide units had resulted in the loss of geographical focus on smaller areas of the borough, specifically for the response teams and the CID.
65. In general, the SMT has a good mix of experience and seems to work well together. Although its members have only been together for a short period of time they have to their credit recognised the need to improve in a number of areas. To make themselves visible and accessible, they have been running weekly group meetings with response officers at Limehouse. However, the Inspection team found that these meetings were not always regularly attended by the relevant SMT

member and that the SMT member was more a participant at the meeting rather than chairing the meeting and using it as a vehicle to improve communication between staff.

66. It is therefore recommended that the BCU carries out a fundamental review of the policing strategy for the BCU - its systems, structures and processes - with the primary aim of improving performance outcomes against targets.

RECOMMENDATION 9

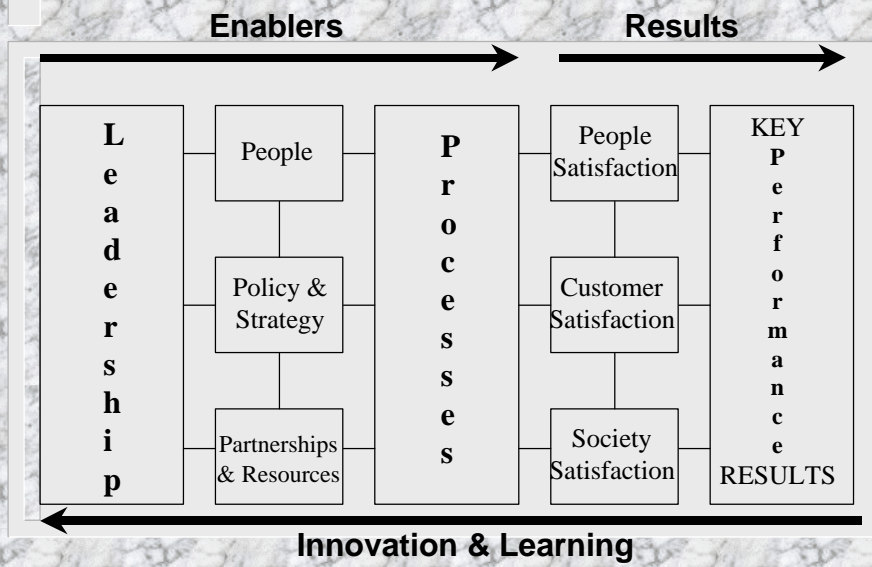
It is recommended that the BCU carries out a fundamental review of its policing strategy including all the existing systems, structures and processes. The primary aim should be to improve performance outcomes against targets with a suggested starting point being a review against the MPS Policing Model.

Self-review and Learning

67. The MPS has extensive experience in the use of the Business Excellence Model (BEM) (see below) to assist and manage sustainable excellence. However, the model's use on the Borough is very limited. It is suggested that the BCU fully adopts this or a similar model, as the resultant self-assessment will form the basis of a developmental action plan that will provide opportunities for benchmarking in the future.

The Business Excellence Model

The EFQM Excellence Model



Complaints

68. One useful source of information about the working culture and capacity for learning comes from complaints against officers. During 2001/02 there were 148 complaints made by the members of the public against officers on the BCU. This compares well with the previous year's figure of 188 and represents a reduction of 21% which is a creditable performance by the BCU.

Attendance Management and Sickness Statistics

69. During 2001/02, the BCU lost 5,436 police officer days through sickness; this is an increase of nearly 300 days on the previous year. This equates to an average of 10.2 days per officer on the BCU compared to 9.9 the previous year. However, on a positive note the BCU still compares well with the MPS average of 10.5 days per officer.
70. In relation to support staff, the situation is very encouraging in that the number of days lost in 2001/02 was 1491, a vast improvement on the previous year when the figure was 1884. This represents a 21% reduction and equates to an average of 12.5 days per person compared to the previous year, when the figure was 15.7. However, the BCU needs to continue this trend if it is to achieve the MPS average which stands at 11 days lost per person

Conclusions and Recommendations

71. The Inspection team found many positives during this Inspection, not least being the existence of a dedicated workforce committed to providing a high quality of service to the residents of Tower Hamlets. Of particular note were the strong agencies. A manifestation of this collaboration has been the creation of numerous effective partnerships that are working hard to tackle crime and disorder issues on the BCU.
72. Despite this it is an escapable fact that there has been a significant rise in crime during the last financial year. Although in recent months performance in the category of street crime has improved this has not been the case in other categories. However, the BCU Commander and the rest of the SMT have the general support of the majority of staff and, recognising the short time they have been together, more time is needed for them to formulate and implement appropriate strategies. The Inspection team was cognisant of the fact that they simply wanted to 'get things done' and were keen to make changes and improvements in a number of areas.
73. The recommendations in this report should assist the SMT in taking forward these changes as they point to those areas where a review of the structures, systems and processes should be carried out with the full co-operation of TP Command and based on the template of the MPS Policing Model.

Recommendations

74. It is recommended that:
 - i. Counter-terrorism work is included in CDRP activities in the future. It is also recommended that the BCU Commander reviews his role within the partnership with a view to sharing the chair of the strategy groups with other partners.
(paragraph 20)
 - ii. A more robust performance management structure is introduced, so that staff at all levels are clear about what is required of them and are held to account.
(paragraph 37)
 - iii. There is further development of the NIM on the BCU. This should involve a strategic assessment of the nature of the crime and disorder problems affecting the BCU, which should then be reflected in a written control strategy and a regularly produced tactical assessment.
(paragraph 43)

- iv. There is a review of the roles and responsibilities of the BIU with a view to removing the burden of non-core tasks. It would also be appropriate to review whether the unit is in the most appropriate location to ensure that relevant criminal intelligence is easily accessible to all staff on the BCU.

(paragraph 45)

- v. A review is carried out of the tasking and co-ordination meeting with a view to including only key individuals and widening its focus to include all crime and operational matters.
(paragraph 47)
- vi. A fundamental review is carried out of the present crime investigative structures and processes. This should include the reactive and proactive CID strengths, the number of squads, their location and the quality of the accommodation.
(paragraph 52)
- vii. The BCU reviews its management of forensic issues to ensure that all forensic hits are acted upon, backed up by a robust audit trail and management tracking processes.
(paragraph 53)
- viii. The BCU reviews the findings of the crime audit to establish systems and processes that ensure future compliance with the NCRS.
(paragraph 58)
- ix. The BCU carries out a fundamental review of its policing strategy including all the existing systems, structures and processes. The primary aim should be to improve performance outcomes against targets with a suggested starting point being a review against the MPS Policing Model.
(paragraph 66)

BCU Family Groups

In 1999 the Home Office commissioned a study by Leeds University to prepare two sets of 'families': one of crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs) and one of police basic command units (BCUs). In both cases the families were to be formed by grouping together areas with similar socio-economic and demographic characteristics. A project group composed of representatives from HMIC, RDS, ACPO, APA, Superintendents' Association, LGA, the Audit Commission and Leeds University guided the work.

The CDRP families were published in the PCRG Briefing Note 3/00 (July 2000) and used in the RDS Recorded Crime Statistics bulletin for 1999/2000 (July 2000). The approach has now been refined by Leeds University involving the development of a new set of BCU families that use the CDRP families as their basic structure where possible (the CDRPs are coterminous with local government areas and can therefore be created using the mid-1998 population estimates). Remaining BCUs that do not fit into this structure are then allocated to a family by the grouping method, as before.

Tower Hamlets is in BCU Family 2, which included the following BCUs during the 2000/01 accounting year:

Central Leicestershire - *Leicestershire Constabulary*

Brent - *Metropolitan Police Service*

Ealing - *Metropolitan Police Service*

Greenwich - *Metropolitan Police Service*

Hackney - *Metropolitan Police Service*

Haringey - *Metropolitan Police Service*

Islington - *Metropolitan Police Service*

Lambeth - *Metropolitan Police Service*

Lewisham - *Metropolitan Police Service*

Newham - *Metropolitan Police Service*

Southwark - *Metropolitan Police Service*

Tower Hamlets - *Metropolitan Police Service*

D1 (Erdington / Aston / Nechells / Saltley / Ward End) - *West Midlands Police*

E3 (Acocks Green / Sparkhill / Sparkbrook / Edgbaston / Balsall Heath / Selly Park / Moseley) - *West Midlands Police*

F1 (Birmingham City Centre / Digbeth) - *West Midlands Police*

F3 (Soho / Handsworth / Sandwell / Perry Barr / Aston (part)) - *West Midlands Police*

Bradford Central - *West Yorkshire Police*