



Service Improvement Review of Operational Support Policing

Final Report – Management Summary

November 2003



Working for a safer London

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Introduction

This is the final report of the Operational Support Policing Service Improvement Review, which was commissioned by the Metropolitan Police Authority as part of its Best Value Review Programme. This review has sought to secure improvements in the overall performance of the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) by focusing on the functions that support the delivery of policing services to the public by BOCUs.

In London, the primary unit of police service delivery is the Borough Operational Command Unit (BOCU or borough). These are able to handle the vast majority of calls for service but, from time to time, they require support from either locally based units (e.g. Criminal Investigation Department [CID]) or pan-London units (e.g. Territorial Support Group [TSG]) to deal with the matter. BOCUs also rely on centrally based staff to support their pre-planned operations (e.g. surveillance units) or take on reactive investigations (e.g. murder investigation teams). It is particularly appropriate when additional responsibilities are being given to boroughs to check that they are being provided with the right level of operational support to help them achieve the strategic aims of the MPS. For the purposes of this Review, 'operational support' is defined as those units that provide support to BOCUs and/or undertake work that BOCUs are unable to undertake, but are not part of the borough command structure.

It is the first review to use a new approach seeking to achieve an improvement in performance. The approach has adopted a more proportionate and flexible application of 4Cs (Consult, Compare, Challenge and Compete) principles.

Principal Benefits

The recommendations resulting from this review are intended to contribute to the goal of continuous improvement in the management of demand by the **MPS having regard to economy, effectiveness and efficiency**. In particular they are intended to ensure that boroughs are provided with the right level of support at the right time at the right cost to meet the policing needs of Londoners in accordance with corporate priorities.

The key anticipated benefits of the Operational Support Policing Service Improvement Review are:

1. Enhanced quality of MPS service to Londoners through improved efficiency of operational policing support functions
2. Increased public confidence by improving accountability of operational policing support functions

3. Enhanced MPS performance by clearly defining the contributions of operational policing support functions

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4. Increased public satisfaction by improving MPS response to Level 2 issues.

Scope of the Review and Methodology

The Operational Support Policing Review is a logical next step in a broader view of service delivery. The Managing Demand Best Value Review focused on uniform response policing. It did not encompass either BOCU based support units (e.g. Criminal Investigation Department [CID]) or pan-London units (e.g. SCD7 Serious and Organised Crime).

The Operational Support Policing Review began by conducting systematic research to determine the baseline or 'where are we now' position. This involved identifying policies, responsibilities and structures; conducting a stakeholders' analysis; and reviewing performance information.

HMIC, MPS Local Inspections or MPA Internal Audit have examined many of the specialist functions in the recent past. Actions and recommendations arising from these reviews either have or are in the process of being implemented. It was evident that little would, therefore, be gained by focusing on an individual unit or group of units.

It was agreed by the Review Project Board that the scope of the Review would comprise four strands:

1. **Roles and responsibilities** - How the roles and responsibilities of non-BOCU operational support functions should be defined
2. **Accountability** - How to achieve the accountability of non-BOCU operational support functions to the communities in which they operate
3. **Resources** - How the level of resources allocated to operational support functions is determined
4. **Level 2 (cross-border issues)** - How the response to Level 2 (cross BOCU border demand) can be best satisfied.

The Operational Support Policing Review Team initially conducted a series of focus groups with BOCU Commanders, pan-London Units and the Specialist Crime Directorate to identify the key issues impacting on their ability to deliver either a service directly to the public or to support BOCUs to do so. In addition, an analysis of HMIC Inspection of the MPS, the Damilola Taylor and Victoria Climbié inquiry reports also informed the development of the Review's scope.

This thematic approach encompassed all BOCUs and operational support functions. It was recognised that some work in this area was already

underway or had recently been completed. Where this was the case, the Review has sought to avoid duplicating this effort but drew on the results to inform its work. Those functions with specific national responsibilities (e.g. Special Branch) were not covered because it was considered that their work does not directly support boroughs on a day-to-day basis.

Consultation exercises were conducted to obtain the views of external and internal stakeholders about the service under review. Comparison was undertaken against large UK metropolitan and international police forces. An Independent Challenge Panel was established to provide a robust challenge and inject 'blue sky' thinking. The potential for competition and alternative forms of service delivery was also assessed. Diversity was considered throughout the review and the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), Greater London Action on Disability (GLAD) and GALOP (London's lesbian, gay and bisexual community safety charity) are being specifically consulted about the recommendations.

Overview of Results

The intent of the review team was to provide a description of how the MPS currently manages key aspects of operational support and sets these against a vision of what would be achieved if all the Review's recommendations were implemented.

Annual Assessments

We found that although all operational support units have terms of reference, some of these have been self-determined without reference to BOCUs or an organisational assessment of need. Strict application of terms of reference can, in some circumstances, create anomalies for BOCUs, e.g. the investigation of a violent crime in which the victim has been critically injured may be left with a borough unless death occurs although it still requires investigative expertise and a significant commitment of resources. The resources of the operational support unit frequently define the level of service that they provide.

The review team suggests that, given demands for resources outstrips their availability, some form of strategic prioritisation process is required to ensure that the MPS keeps pace with the changing nature and scale of policing demands in London. **The Review therefore proposes that the justification for and the terms of reference of operational support units should be assessed annually against MPS priorities as defined by the NIM framework and the annual planning process. (Recommendation 1)** This yearly check against the MPS control strategy will ensure that the most effective and efficient use is being made of resources. Further, it is proposed that special care is given to ensure that the operational support functions are properly focused on organisational priorities and that any overlaps of roles and responsibilities are eliminated.

24/7 Central Gateway

Tensions between BOCUs and operational support functions can manifest themselves during certain incidents (e.g. attempted murders) in identifying the most appropriate unit to resolve a demand. Currently boroughs retain responsibility for incidents until they are able to find an appropriate unit to assume ownership.

More importantly difficulties can also occur during ongoing critical incidents where life is at stake, e.g. when information is received about a possible shooting. During such incidents it is vital that boroughs have access to the appropriate support unit as quickly as possible and are not 'passed from pillar to post'. **The Review therefore proposes the establishment of a 24/7 joint central gateway for TP and SCD. (Recommendation 2)** This solution fits in with the strategic changes to MPS working practices being introduced by the C3i Programme. Furthermore it would directly join up SCD and TP and provide a single point of contact for boroughs requiring either fast or slow time advice or support.

TP Tasking

The tasking and co-ordinating processes for pan-London resources prioritises high crime and in particular Operation Safer Streets boroughs. It can therefore be difficult for lower crime boroughs to access operational support assets in support of their local priorities. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some non-Safer Street boroughs, after being consistently unsuccessful in the bidding process, are not asking for support for their local priorities even if it is a problem beyond their capacity to deal with. **The recommendation therefore proposes improving the transparency of the allocation and prioritisation process used in the TP tasking and co-ordinating group to encourage boroughs to bid for the services of TP pan-London units. (Recommendation 3)** Link Commanders would be responsible for championing the bids submitted by their respective boroughs. Where it is not possible to assign resources, the tasking and co-ordinating group could suggest alternative approaches such as collaboration between boroughs or referral to good practice elsewhere. Enhancing the role of the Link Commander in the process will increase the understanding of their respective boroughs and encourage them to bid for support when faced with problems that are beyond their capacity to address.

Operations Protocol

Boroughs are now firmly established as the primary source of policing service delivery across London. Borough Commanders have encouraged and successfully forged closer links with the communities they serve in recent years. However, signal events can very easily destroy equilibrium and ruin vast amounts of hard work. **The Review therefore proposes a protocol to ensure the Integrated Borough Operations Office is informed of operational support units operating proactively in their area, unless to do so would compromise that, or future operations. (Recommendation 4)** As well as avoiding 'blue on blue' situations by the co-ordination of geographical activity, implementation of this protocol will assist in ensuring

that the policing philosophy of the respective borough is acknowledged in the plans of the operational support units. Thus the diverse needs of different communities can be taken into account at the inception rather than on the conclusion of an operation.

Internal Awareness

Historically the intelligence flows from specialist units to boroughs have arguably not been as good as they could be. For example murder investigation teams sometimes do not properly debrief to the boroughs on which they have been operating. A previous paucity of management information regarding the deployment of support units has also led to a lack of transparency in resource allocation. Boroughs are beginning to receive better quality management information about how they have been supported by SCD and SO units but information about future planned operations could be improved. BOCUs also need ensure that there is effective debriefing for investigative teams operating in their area. **The Review team therefore proposes effective debriefing and the introduction of a standing agenda item about current operational support initiatives at borough weekly intelligence meetings (mandatory under NIM) and at the BOCU Tasking and Co-ordinating meeting. (Recommendation 5)** Appropriate, relevant and timely flows of information are vital to achieving the strategic aim of improving team working. Better-informed boroughs are likely to be more sympathetic to the needs of operational support units engendering greater team spirit than perhaps exists when one colleague does not properly understand or appreciate the difficulties being faced by another.

External Awareness

Much of the work of the MPS is invisible to the lay citizen – many layers are hidden underneath the surface like an iceberg. Increasing the visibility of the layers could potentially improve public reassurance about policing in their locality/borough. Residents could be made more aware of the fact that it goes deeper than the familiar local officers and their vehicles that they see. Even internally while a murder investigation is highly visible on a borough. Many other SCD investigations are less evident. **The Review therefore proposes that borough commanders should raise community awareness about the use of operational support resources by boroughs through their local media, local consultative group meetings and other channels of communication. (Recommendation 6)** It is inappropriate and inefficient for members of specialist and operational support units to regularly appear before the many consultative groups attended by the MPS in London. The local media and local consultative groups provide an efficient method of reaching two different segments; first the majority of people who are not members of community organisations; second community representatives who have an interest in policing.

Activity Measurement

The review team found there was tension between BOCUs and operational support unit resources. Arguably the former is short of experience and the latter is short of staff. A cause of the tension was a lack of transparency about

the level of resources allocated to specialist units. The Resource Allocation Formula (RAF) that is used to distribute resources to boroughs is currently being reviewed. The Review found little support for the application of a strict RAF to operational support functions given the diverse range of specialist and support functions in the MPS. However, there is a need to demonstrate the linkages between inputs – the investment in resources - and the outcomes in terms of what is achieved. **The Review therefore proposes that the activities and outcomes of operational support units should be measured in the most effective and efficient way in order to improve performance management and to influence decision-making about the staffing requirements. (Recommendation 7)** Specialist (SCD 7) and support units (TSG) are implementing two different approaches to the issue. Different approaches may be required because of the diverse operational circumstances of units. We accept that the result should, however, demonstrate the relationship between the activities, outcomes and resources thereby informing strategic decision-making about the resources required by an operational support function.

Staff Retention

The review team found that many parts of the MPS now use retired officers to complete specific tasks thereby obviating the need to abstract an experienced police officer from other duties. Hiring retired officers through employment agencies is not cheap. One charges the MPS 75% in addition to what they pay the individual per hour. Furthermore, police work is constantly changing and retired officers' knowledge of law; practice and procedures quickly become dated. Relying on retired staff only addresses the symptom and not the cause of the problem which is officers being financially disadvantaged by serving beyond thirty years. **The Review therefore proposes to seek to retain officers and police staff with relevant experience and skills past their normal retirement point and by further building on work in progress to establish an MPS bank of retired staff. (Recommendation 8)** Increased use of the 30+ Scheme may encourage more officers in key posts to remain after their normal retirement point helping to reduce the loss of experienced staff from both boroughs and SCD. Furthermore since the scheme is largely self-funding, it can be achieved at minimal additional cost to the MPS. The MPS people bank could include retired officers and police staff, reduce the expenditure to employment agencies and give greater flexibility in staffing support posts with individuals with the right knowledge and skills. Moreover by helping to reduce vacancies, it has the potential to reduce the dependency on overtime in a number of operational support areas.

Making Greater Use of Police Staff

There are many posts currently occupied by officers where their police experience is required, but their police powers are not. Converting some of these to police staff posts would help to reduce the need for officers to leave borough based policing. At the time of writing, HMIC is conducting a thematic inspection on civilianisation. **The Review therefore proposes that the potential benefits of increasing the use of non-sworn police staff in operational support functions should be assessed with reference to the**

recommendations of the ongoing HMIC thematic inspection of civilianisation and the MPS Civilianisation Plan. (Recommendation 9) It is recognised that police staff can sometimes be at least as expensive as officers in certain roles when their allowances and training costs are taken into consideration. Moreover the MPS may not be able to attract police staff recruits in sufficient numbers to meet its needs if the establishment is greatly increased. The HMIC thematic inspection is timely and will help to inform future action.

Trainees to SCD

In recruiting staff from boroughs, SCD recognise that not every post needs to be filled by an experienced officer. However, they are obliged to take the best applicant competing for a post and this is likely to be an experienced individual. A possible way forward is to identify and designate posts on the SCD establishment for trainee detectives. **The Review therefore seeks to balance the needs of TP and SCD by proposing to designate and fill suitable posts within the SCD BWT with selected Trainee Detective Constables on six-month attachments as part of the detective development programme. (Recommendation 10)** Selection of TDCs to be attached to SCD would be on the basis of individuals' development needs. The SCD budgeted workforce target (BWT) would not need to increase. The number of experienced detectives needing to be drawn from boroughs would therefore reduce with the creation of the trainee detective posts. This would increase cross-fertilisation of ideas and experience between TP and SCD. The disadvantage to boroughs would be the loss of their trainee detectives for the attachment period but the advantage would be that they would retain the more experienced staff they require for difficult investigations.

Directly Recruited Detectives

The profile of people joining the police service is changing. Some recruits do not intend to stay for thirty years. Others are joining later in life after earlier careers.

Over a two-year period of probation all recruits are required to demonstrate their competency as a police officer before they apply for a specialist role. Most recruits spend their probation working in uniform on a borough. Many police organisations already directly recruit investigators, e.g. in the US the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and very recently in the UK the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). **The Review therefore proposes to recruit into the MPS experienced and skilled investigators capable of being posted as Detective Constables direct from Training School to investigative units. (Recommendation 11)** Individuals selected would attend the initial police-training course at Hendon. They would then attend the Initial Investigator's Course at the Crime Faculty before being posted to an investigative unit where they would complete their probationary period. Recruiting investigators directly into SCD and other units would add to the other proposed initiatives to reduce the need to draw experienced staff away from boroughs. It may also encourage people from under-represented

groups to join the MPS who may be deterred by the present requirement of having to spend a minimum of two years in uniform.

Level 2 Analysis

The National Intelligence Model defines three levels of criminality: Level 1 relates to crime committed in a borough; Level 2 to crimes committed by criminals crossing borough borders; and Level 3 is national or international crime. MPS resources are focused at Levels 1 and 3. A gap exists at Level 2 criminality. The MPS and most other UK forces are meantime unable to quantify the volume of Level 2 criminality. However, some measure may be obtained from distraction burglaries (classified as burglary artifice) that are often committed by criminals that travel across-borders. In 2002-2003 nearly 5000 distraction burglaries were recorded in London – almost 14 a day.

Demand for TP resources (e.g. the TP Crime Squad and TSG) outstrips availability. Resources are prioritised at addressing Level 1 and 2 crimes in the eight boroughs that have the greatest impact on MPS performance. Collaboration between adjoining boroughs and with other forces to address Level 2 crimes does take place but is not widespread. **The Review therefore proposes to improve the analysis of and response to Level 2 crime through the inclusion of NIM problem profiles of cross-border crime issues in the tactical intelligence assessments considered by the TP Tasking and Co-ordinating Group. (Recommendation 12)** The TP pan-London assets do not have the capacity to assume total responsibility for the investigation of Level 2 crime. Therefore the proposal, linked to the earlier recommendation to increase the transparency of the TP Tasking and Co-ordinating Group, should result in greater attention to cross-border crime and as a consequence more collaboration between boroughs.

Drugs Initiative

London is at the centre of most of the trade in controlled drugs in the UK. The NCIS Threat Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime 2003 suggests that distribution of heroin at a national level continues to be dominated by groups based in London. Similarly the capital is an important hub for major cocaine traffickers. The threat assessment states that there is extensive evidence of the possession and use of firearms by individual criminals and organised criminal groups involved in the trade in Class A drugs.

But MPS enforcement activity is meantime concentrated at Level 1 (borough) and Level 3 (national and international). Some boroughs have their own local drugs units that tackle crack houses and street dealers. A joint SCD7/HMCE initiative is about to commence focusing on, *inter alia*, the enforcement gap in relation to Level 2 drugs crime. **The review therefore proposes to evaluate the effectiveness of the SCD7/HM Customs and Excise initiative in disrupting the availability of Class A drugs at the point of supply in boroughs. (Recommendation 13)** The key to successful drug enforcement at all levels is to ensure that all agencies work together in a strategic and co-ordinated way, exchanging information and using that information to make informed decisions about who, what and where to target the resources available. The SCD Tasking and Co-ordinating Group will therefore be critical to provide the necessary governance to ensure that the initiative focuses on Level 2 and is not allowed to become totally immersed in Level 3 issues. The

evaluation will reveal whether the initiative is having an impact at borough level. Lessons learnt could then be applied to other crime types at Level 2.

Implementation Arrangements

The Review has considered the practicability of its emerging recommendations and improvement plans from an early stage. A full implementation plan will be produced after the Review's recommendations have been considered by the MPA.

However, work is already in progress to develop a SCD/TP gateway, create a People Bank and improve the response to Level 2 crime. These pieces of work will be immediately informed by the findings of the Service Improvement Review.