



**BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE**

**31 JULY – 3 AUGUST 2006**

**POLICE NATIONAL COMPUTER  
COMPLIANCE REPORT**

## Table of Contents

1.	Executive Summary .....	1
1.1	Introduction .....	1
1.2	Background.....	1
1.3	Methodology .....	2
1.4	Current Performance.....	3
1.5	Conclusions .....	5
2.	Detailed Findings and Recommendations .....	6
2.1	Leadership .....	6
2.1.1	PNC Steering Group .....	6
2.1.2	Responsibility and Accountability .....	6
2.2	Policy & Strategy.....	7
2.2.1	PNC Policy and Strategy.....	7
2.2.2	PNC Security .....	7
2.3	People.....	10
2.3.1	Marketing and Awareness.....	10
2.3.2	PNC Training .....	10
2.4	Partnerships and Resources .....	11
2.4.1	Relationship with the courts .....	11
2.4.2	Relationship with Non Police Prosecuting Agencies (NPPAs) .....	12
2.5	Processes .....	12
2.5.1	Creation and update of Arrest/ Summons (A/S) reports .....	12
2.5.2	Updating of court results.....	14
2.5.3	Ad hoc intelligence updates .....	14
2.5.4	Data quality .....	15
2.6	Results.....	15
	APPENDIX A.....	17
	SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE.....	17
	APPENDIX B.....	19
	SUMMARY OF GOOD PRACTICES AT BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE .....	19
	APPENDIX C – ‘ON THE RECORD’ .....	20
	APPENDIX D – PRG REPORT .....	22
	APPENDIX E – 1 <sup>ST</sup> PNC REPORT.....	24
	APPENDIX F – 2 <sup>ND</sup> PNC REPORT.....	26

## 1. Executive Summary

### 1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) conducted a Police National Computer (PNC) Compliance Inspection of Bedfordshire Police between 31<sup>st</sup> July and 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2006
- 1.1.2 The Constabulary was subject to a PNC Compliance Audit using the July 2005 Protocols on PNC Compliance. Her Majesty's Inspector would like to acknowledge the enthusiasm of the Force and also to place on record her thanks to all members of staff who contributed to this report and provided assistance during the inspection.
- 1.1.3 This report is based on views and comments obtained from strategic, PNC and customer level management and users at Force Headquarters and at the 2 Divisions. These views have been supported by reality checks conducted by HMIC PNC Compliance Auditors (hereafter referred to as HMIC Auditors).

### 1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 Bedfordshire Police covers an area of 123,500 hectares with a population of over half a million. The county includes the urban areas of Bedford, Dunstable and Luton, with the smaller towns such as Ampthill, Biggleswade and Leighton Buzzard; and a large rural area. Local features and amenities include Woburn Abbey and Safari Park, Luton Town Football Club, Whipsnade Zoo and Luton International Airport. Bedfordshire comprises some of the busiest roads in Europe, including a stretch of the national motorway network.
- 1.2.2 As at 31 March 2006 there were 1249 police officers, 877 police staff and 181 special constables. Within the police staff numbers the Force has 59 Community Support Officers (CSOs).
- 1.2.3 The force headquarters (HQ) is based at Kempston in the north Bedfordshire area. At the time of the inspection the force was in the final stages of reducing the number of Basic Command Units (BCUs) (known locally as Divisions) from three to two, one in Luton and the amalgamation of Bedford and Dunstable making up the other Division. The Divisions are supported by several operational headquarters departments, including criminal investigation and communications.
- 1.2.4 The command team comprises the Chief Constable (appointed in July 2005), the deputy chief constable, an assistant chief constable (ACC) a director of finance, and a director of human resources
- 1.2.5 The creation of Arrest/Summons (A/S) reports at Bedfordshire Police is a semi- automatic process which requires the custody officer to update the custody system (CJS) with the details required to create a skeleton record on the PNC (the minimum amount of data required to create a new record). The CJS downloads the A/S skeleton information to PNC several times a day. This is followed by the arresting officer completing

a paper source input document (known locally as a “Phoenix Form or a 200C) which contains all the data required for a complete record on the PNC. This is sent to the divisional Criminal Justice Units who complete the record on the PNC.

- 1.2.6 The magistrates’ court results are electronically sent through to the three Phoenix Units based in Divisions via the Equis system. The validated registers are printed out and then manually input onto the PNC including Disqualified Driver records. Crown court results are sent via the Xhibit application, the electronic system, however, the system contains insufficient information to update the PNC so the force relies upon the results being sent in the mail.
- 1.2.7 Wanted/Missing updates, updates to vehicle information reports, property (including stolen firearms, plant equipment and animals) reports and warrants cancellations on the PNC are the responsibility of the PNC Bureau (PNCB) which operates 8am – 4pm Monday to Friday. Out of these hours the responsibility lies with the Call Handling Centre (CHC) providing the 24 hour resilience. The Bureau also supply telephone checks for officers and performs enhanced searches on the system, such as transaction enquiries, Vehicles On Line Descriptive Searches (VODS) and Queries Using Extended Search Techniques (QUEST).

### 1.3 Methodology

- 1.3.1 A full inspection against the 2005 PNC Protocols was carried out, covering the sections of Leadership, Policy and Strategy, People, Partnerships and Resources, Processes and Results.
- 1.3.2 The inspection was conducted over three stages with a final assessment being provided in line with the current HMIC Baseline Assessment grading structure of:
- **Excellent** – Comprehensive evidence of effective activity against all protocol areas.
  - **Good** – Evidence of effective activity in many areas, but not comprehensive.
  - **Fair** – Evidence of effective activity covering some areas, but concerns in others.
  - **Poor** – No or limited evidence of effective activity against the protocol areas, or serious concerns in one or more area of activity.

1.3.3 The first stage of the inspection involved the force providing HMIC Auditors with documentation to support its adherence to the protocols. This was followed up by a visit to the Force with HMIC Auditors conducting numerous interviews with key staff. The visit to the Force also incorporated the final stage of the inspection, which was based upon reality checks. The reality checks included reviewing PNC data against source documents and a review of PNC policy documentation.

1.3.4 Using the evidence gathered during each stage of the inspection, this report has been produced based upon the European Foundation of Quality Management (EFQM) format.

#### **1.4 Current Performance**

1.4.1 On 27<sup>th</sup> April 2000, ACPO Council endorsed the ACPO PNC Compliance Strategy. The strategy is based upon the following four aspects of data handling:

- Accuracy
- Timeliness
- Completeness
- Relevancy

1.4.2 The strategy is owned by ACPO but is also reliant on other partners taking responsibility for key actions within the strategy. The partners include Centrex, HMIC, Police Information Technology Organisation (PITO) and individual forces.

1.4.3 On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005, the performance indicators of the ACPO Compliance Strategy were replaced by the timeliness standards contained within the newly published Code of Practice for the PNC. The PNC Code of Practice, developed by the National Centre for Policing Excellence and endorsed by ACPO, is a statutory code made under s.39a of the Police Act 1996 (inserted by section 2 of the Police Reform Act 2002). It provides scope for the Home Secretary to invoke statutory intervention for forces failing to comply. With regards to individual forces, a number of performance indicators (PIs) specifically for PNC data standards were set. Each force has a responsibility to achieve the standards set within the Code of Practice. The timeliness standards within the Code are as follows:

- 90% of recordable offences entered onto PNC within 24 hours of the commencement of proceedings. The commencement of proceedings being defined as when a person is arrested reported or summonsed.
- 50% of all finalisations being entered onto PNC within 7 days of the information being received by the police. This target increased to 75% on 1 July 2005, six months after the commencement of the Code. (Courts have their own target of 3 days for delivery of data to

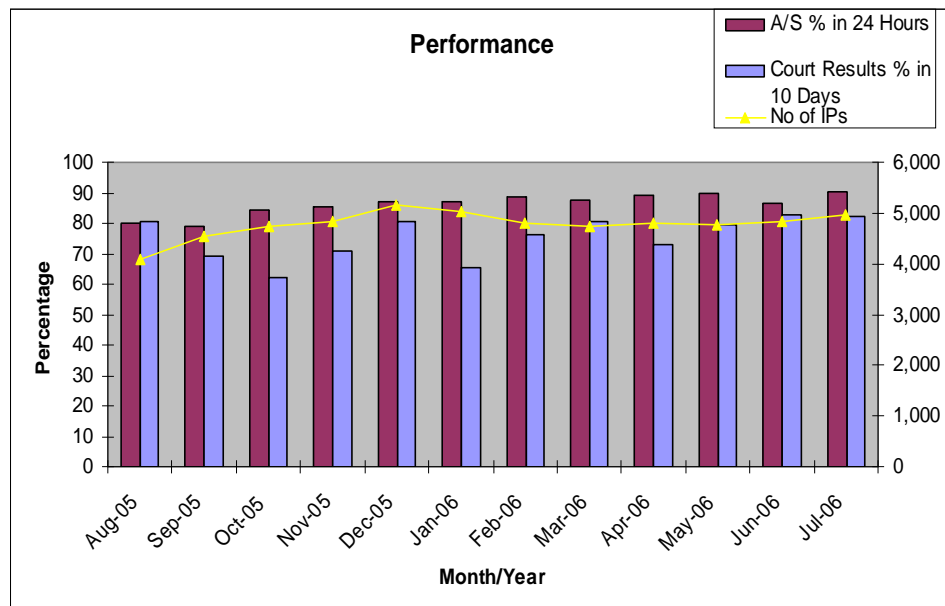
the police. Therefore, the police are measured against an overall target of 10 days.)

1.4.4 Bedfordshire's performance against the ACPO PNC Code of Practice target for arrest summons input has consistently improved over the previous 12 months. It is noted that the force has achieved the target of 90% only once in the previous 12 months which was in July 2006.

1.4.5 In terms of disposals, the force has consistently achieved the target of 75% within 10 days for each of the last three months. In July 2006, 82.2% of cases were input within 10 days. Performance has ranged from 61.9% to 82.7% with the target being achieved in 7 of the last twelve months

1.4.6 With regards to Impending Prosecutions (IPs) on the PNC, in the 12 months to July 2006 the Force has shown an overall increase of 31%. In April 2001, HMIC supported by the Home Secretary stated that all forces should be in a position to confirm that any outstanding case that is over twelve months old, is legitimately outstanding. In Bedfordshire, this accounts for only 9.3% of all their outstanding prosecutions and is within the profile established by HMIC in 2001.

1.4.7 A graph illustrating Bedfordshire's performance in the 12 months to July 2006 is shown below:<sup>1</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Key: Purple columns indicate A/S performance, blue show court results performance and the yellow line shows the increase/ decrease in Impending Prosecutions.

## 1.5 Conclusions

1.5.1 HMIC's assessment of PNC compliance within the Force has been assessed as:

**Fair** – Evidence of effective activity covering some areas, but concerns in others.

- The force inputs all information onto the PNC including bail conditions and adjournments.
- PNDs (Police Notices for Disorder) and all arrests under section 9 and 10 of the Criminal Justice Act are recorded onto the PNC.
- There are concerns that there has been no auditing of PNC and currently no audit plan as required by the ACPO Data Protection Audit Manual (DPAM).
- In addition, there is no transaction monitoring of PNC carried out which is also required by the ACPO DPAM.

1.5.2 The findings of this report should read in conjunction with the previous reports and recommendations relating to the PNC. The previous reports are:

- Police Research Group Report – 'Phoenix Data Quality', *published 1998*
- HMIC Thematic Inspection Report – 'On The Record', *published 2000*
- HMIC Report – 'PNC Data Quality and Timeliness, 1<sup>st</sup> Report', *published 2001*
- HMIC Report – 'PNC Data Quality and Timeliness, 2<sup>nd</sup> Report', *published 2002*

1.5.3 A summary of good practice points, along with recommendations for improvement can be found at Appendices A and B of this report.

## 2. Detailed Findings and Recommendations

### 2.1 Leadership

#### 2.1.1 PNC Steering Group

2.1.1.1 Bedfordshire has an established PNC Steering Group which meets on a monthly basis and historically is chaired by the Detective Chief Superintendent. HMIC Auditors were assured that there is a direct link between the Chair of the PNC Steering Group and the ACC. HMIC Auditors were provided with evidence in the previous three months of minutes that the Group deals with all aspects of PNC concerning the force and has an action plan that is regularly reviewed and updated.

2.1.1.2 A review of the terms of reference of the Group highlighted that they should include a specific item to on the roles and posts that should make up the membership. It was of concern that the key role of Force Security Manager is a member of the Group but does not attend meetings.

2.1.1.3 HMIC Auditors were pleased to note that the Group has reacted well to a letter from the Assistant HMI sent in November 2005 expressing concerns as to PNC performance. Subsequently, the PNC Steering Group meetings have been held monthly to ensure that the focus on the issues has been maintained.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the terms of reference of the PNC Steering Group are reviewed to ensure that they are specific and that the attendance is robust and relevant.**

#### 2.1.2 Responsibility and Accountability

2.1.2.2 The force produces a comprehensive range of management statistics on a monthly basis. This information is circulated to Divisional Commanders and other relevant staff. The information is capable of identifying individual officers who may be underperforming in the timely submission of Phoenix Source Document. The statistics are produced, on a corporate drive on the force network to enable staff to freely view them. This provides suitable access to all senior managers and Divisional Commanders to access the data.

2.1.2.3 HMIC Auditors believe that an area for improvement is to also focus on the quality of the data submitted on the Phoenix Source Documents (PSDs) especially with the imminent roll out of the NSPIS Case and

Custody systems where officers will be responsible for the direct input of data to the PNC.

#### **Recommendation 2**

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the force develops statistical information to target the quality of data that will be inputted onto the PNC.**

## **2.2 Policy & Strategy**

### 2.2.1 PNC Policy and Strategy

2.2.1.1 HMIC Auditors were pleased to note the existence of a comprehensive PNC Policy in Bedfordshire Police. The policy is stored on the force intranet that can be accessed by all staff. The PNC Manager regularly reviews the information held on the Intranet to ensure that the information is up to date; HMIC Auditors consider this to be good practice.

2.2.1.2 At the time of the inspection HMIC Auditors were shown a "Guidance and Procedures" document, which will link to the PNC policy and provide a reference document to staff. The document is in "draft" form; the force is therefore encouraged to receive approval of the document by the force Strategy Board as soon as possible.

2.2.1.3 With regards to the PNC Strategy, the Force has produced a documented Strategic Action Plan. The action plan covers topics such as marketing, training and operational use of PNC, however, HMIC Auditors encourage the Force to review and update the plan to include future issues that will have an impact on PNC functions. For example, the roll out of NSPIS Case and Custody, the introduction of Mobile Data Terminals (MDT's) and Schengen<sup>2</sup>. The action plan could then be used as a living document to evidence progress on work and to ensure that these issues are kept in focus.

#### **Recommendation 3**

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that Bedfordshire Police reviews and updates the PNC Strategy Action Plan and to include short, medium and long term issues that will affect the PNC function of the force.**

### 2.2.2 PNC Security

2.2.2.1 With regard to system security, HMIC Auditors reviewed five key areas. These are User Access, Transaction Monitoring, Data Protection

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<sup>2</sup> Schengen Information System is a Europe-wide database of Nominal, Vehicle and stolen property information which uses PNC as a platform to share similar data belonging to the United Kingdom.

Auditing, the Role of Professional Standards and Information Security, and Data Protection training. Some good practices and some areas of concern were identified during the review which are discussed further below.

- 2.2.2.2 Access to the PNC is gained either via Directly Connected Terminals (DCTs) or via an interface on the Operational Intelligence System (OIS). Some users have access to PNC via both systems, depending upon their roles and access levels.
- 2.2.2.3 Users who access the PNC via DCTs are set up on the system by the PNC Bureau (PNCB) Manager, in his absence the Call Handling Centre (CHC) Supervisor is mandated to carry this out to add resilience to this function. The force has a process in place where the trainers notify the PNCB Manager through an email of the users who have successfully completed the PNC course. They are then allocated the appropriate level of DCT access. Access via the OIS system is notified by the trainers to the IT Department.
- 2.2.2.4 The Call Handling Centre (CHC) has its own IT trainer who is accredited to deliver PNC training to CHC staff. They also have the ability to add and remove PNC access for the CHC staff
- 2.2.2.5 There are also processes in place where users who have not accessed PNC via the DCT connection for more than 6 months to have their access automatically deleted. HMIC Auditors were concerned to find that there is no such process for the PNC access via OIS. They were also concerned that there is no robust process to notify the PNCB Manager or the IT Department when staff either leave the force or move to a post where PNC was not required to fulfil the role.
- 2.2.2.6 In addition, whilst HMIC Auditors do not question the integrity of the work of the PNCB Manager, the IT Department or the CHC trainer there is some risk to the organisation in having individuals able to make such changes to system access with no independent auditing of the activity being carried out.

#### **Recommendation 4**

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that Bedfordshire :**

- **Introduces a process to ensure that officers and staff who leave the force or move to other non PNC posts are notified to the PNCB Manager and IT Department so PNC access can be robustly managed.**
- **Introduces an independent audit, at least annually, of all user access administration.**

- 2.2.2.7 Data Protection Audits of PNC are a requirement of the ACPO Data Protection Audit Manual (DPAM) and should be carried out in an audit cycle. HMIC were informed that no regular auditing has been carried out for over 1 year and there is no audit plan. The only auditing that has been carried out has been as a result of a reactive request by the PNC Manager.
- 2.2.2.8 HMIC Auditors were informed that regular audits had previously been carried out by two members of staff; however, they had been relocated to another Department over twelve months ago. Anecdotal information given to the HMIC Auditors was that since the move of these staff there was confusion as to who was now responsible for the auditing of PNC data. This has resulted in the position the force is in where there is no audit plan or cycle of auditing and the only auditing carried out is upon request from the PNC Manager.
- 2.2.2.9 Copies of the previous audits requested by the PNC Manager were shown to the HMIC auditors and were comprehensive reports following the guidelines as set out in the DPAM. One area of concern is the error classification for the audit, which could be too stringent and should be reviewed to be more realistic and fair.

**Recommendation 5**

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that as a matter of urgency Bedfordshire commences a cycle of PNC audits as set out in the ACPO Data Protection Audit Manual**

- 2.2.2.10 Transaction monitoring is a requirement of the ACPO Data Protection Audit Manual. It is a process where police officers and staff are asked to verify their reasons for performing transactions on the PNC and, as such, is an important activity in the prevention and detection of misuse or abuse of the PNC. At Bedfordshire there has been no transaction monitoring for over 12 months. During focus groups HMIC Auditors were concerned to learn that staff are aware that transaction monitoring has ceased. The force needs to urgently re-start transaction monitoring otherwise it has no effective method of detecting misuse or just as importantly having transaction monitoring as a deterrent from possible misuse of the PNC.

**Recommendation 6**

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that Bedfordshire urgently recommences transaction monitoring as set out in the ACPO Data Protection Audit Manual.**

- 2.2.2.11 HMIC Auditors also reviewed the role of the Professional Standards Department (PSD) with regard to PNC issues at Bedfordshire. The PSD does not have staff that are able to carry out investigative PNC enquiries and rely upon the PNC Manager to carry these out, when they have an investigation. Without these skills the PSD is also unable to

carry out any pro-active research on possible misuse. An area for improvement would be for the PSD to train some staff to a high level of PNC where they can have independence when investigating possible PNC misuse.

## 2.3 People

### 2.3.1 Marketing and Awareness

2.3.1.1 During meetings and focus groups, HMIC Auditors noted variable levels of awareness among officers and staff of the information contained on PNC and its functionality. In particular, knowledge of the driving licence, insurance information, and ViSOR<sup>3</sup> was very low.

2.3.1.2 The force has a PNC intranet site where officers and staff can access information, however, this places the reliance onto the officers and staff to find the information themselves. Newly appointed officers receive a PNC presentation supplied by the PNC Customer Services from Hendon and in the past similar presentations have been given to other officers and staff but this has been discontinued. In the view of the HMIC Auditors, a focused marketing campaign should be carried out to raise the level of awareness of the PNC, using a variety of communications methods. A starting point would be to conduct a survey, similar to the one carried out in 2003, to gauge the level of awareness and then use the results to target the areas of weakness identified.

2.3.1.3 HMIC Auditors were made aware that the current shift pattern on Divisions includes the provision for training days. These days are useful opportunities to improve the knowledge amongst operational staff of what PNC can do for them. PITO<sup>4</sup> Customer Services staff are available to deliver presentations outlining the benefits of PNC as an operational and investigative tool. This service is free of charge to the force and it is recommended to consider the use of the service. The presentations can be joint ventures with the PNC Manager in order that officers and staff are not only alerted to what PNC can do, but also to local force procedures and processes.

### **Recommendation 7**

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the Force publishes and implements a marketing strategy to raise awareness for the effective use of PNC across the Force.**

### 2.3.2 PNC Training

2.3.2.1 It was reported that Bedfordshire currently have seven accredited PNC trainers including the dedicated trainer for the CHC. All these trainers

<sup>3</sup> Violent and Sex Offenders Register

<sup>4</sup> Police Information Technology Organisation

have responsibilities for training other IT systems as well as the PNC. The PNC courses are provided on a modular basis, to the approved Centrex standard

- 2.3.2.2 It was reported that PNC courses are planned when there is enough staff waiting for a course, a minimum of six to the maximum of nine candidates; therefore, there is no planning of courses on an annual basis but on demand.
- 2.3.2.3 Prospective candidates have to apply for a PNC course through their Divisional Supervisor, it is then determined specifically to their role before being approved to the PNC Trainers. However, HMIC Auditors learned from focus groups that there was inconsistency as to who was approved to receive PNC training between Divisions. The force should consider reviewing its policy and criteria for approving places onto PNC course to ensure fairness across the force. Bedfordshire PNC courses have a written assessment at the end within a minimum pass mark of 70%. Candidates are then required to complete a post training evaluation in the form of a "happy sheet", whilst this is considered good practice a further evaluation a few weeks later once the candidate is in post and using PNC in a live environment would ensure that the level of training is appropriate to the individuals and the post.
- 2.3.2.4 Student constables on the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP) receive a PNC presentation from PITO Customer Service staff which is considered to be good practice. Information gleaned from focus groups has shown that this presentation is useful and the students remember the content of the presentation. HMIC Auditors encourage the force to continue with this awareness training.
- 2.3.2.5 In addition, the force has a very good relationship with Cambridgeshire Constabulary who offer the services of an accredited VODs and QUEST<sup>5</sup> trainer to the force. This allows Bedfordshire to train staff quickly in these important facilities; HMIC auditors encourage the force to continue with this relationship.

#### **Recommendation 8**

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the Force reviews the criteria and policy for assessing prospective candidates for PNC courses.**

## **2.4 Partnerships and Resources**

### **2.4.1 Relationship with the Courts**

- 2.4.1.1 The Force has a good liaison with its local courts through the Local Criminal Justice Board HMIC Auditors consider it to be good practice that a member of the PNC Steering Group also sits on the LCJB to provide a linkage between the police and the court. Anecdotal

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<sup>5</sup> VODS and QUEST are specialist searching tools for vehicle and names data respectively.

information received from Focus Groups also reported a good relationship between inputting staff and courts staff, where any queries are dealt with quickly and effectively.

#### 2.4.2 Relationship with Non Police Prosecuting Agencies (NPPAs)

2.4.2.1 With the introduction of the Code of Practice for PNC in January 2005, the target for the input of A/S records no longer includes those records which are updated as a result of an NPPA prosecution. However, there is still a need for forces to ensure that these records are updated in a timely manner to assist operational policing activity. This can only be achieved if forces encourage the NPPAs to provide complete, timely and accurate information for input to PNC. It was reported during the inspection that the Force does have Service Level Agreements with its NPPAs.

2.4.2.2 It was noted by HMIC Auditors that Bedfordshire does not input many NPPA cases, under the current procedures to ensure that these cases are not counted towards the force total when the PITO monthly statistics are produced. Whilst it is acknowledged that the force does not receive many cases from NPPA's there are procedures for the force to input specific cases when a Probation Order has been breached, to include it as an NPPA. The force should ensure that the guidelines for inputting Breach of Probation Orders are followed, as this may in consequence further improve their A/S performance.

#### **Recommendation 9**

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the force follows the national guidelines as published by PITO when updating Breach of Probation Orders to ensure they are recorded as a Non Police Prosecuting Agency (NPPA).**

## 2.5 Processes

### 2.5.1 Creation and update of Arrest/ Summons (A/S) reports

2.5.1.1 On 1<sup>st</sup> January 2005, the performance indicators of the ACPO Compliance Strategy were replaced by the timeliness standards contained within the newly published Code of Practice for the PNC. The PNC Code of Practice, developed by the National Centre for Policing Excellence (NCPE) and endorsed by ACPO, is a statutory code made under s.39a of the Police Act 1996 (inserted by section 2 of the Police Reform Act 2002). The Code stipulates that 90% of recordable offences be entered onto PNC within 24 hours of the commencement of proceedings. The commencement of proceedings is defined as when a person is arrested, reported or summonsed.

2.5.1.2 Bedfordshire Police create A/S summons reports on the PNC by sending a full record from their local Criminal Justice System (CJS) to

PNC via an interface. All offenders that are processed in the custody suites for recordable offences should have a record created on CJS so the information can be transmitted to PNC.

- 2.5.1.3 Offenders that are not taken to the Custody Suites have their details recorded on a PNC Source Input Document known locally as a "Phoenix Form" or a form 200C. This form is then sent via fax to the inputters based in Divisions or if out of normal office hours it is diverted to the Crime Recording Bureau at headquarters which provide a 24/7 capability.
- 2.5.1.4 Bedfordshire Police made a decision a few years ago to complete a full record onto the PNC at the earliest opportunity after the commencement of process of the person as opposed to creating a "skeleton" record then imputing the rest of the record at a later date HMIC Auditors consider this to be good practice.
- 2.5.1.5 The force has policing units located at Luton Airport and at a large shopping complex called the Arndale Centre, near to Luton. The majority of recordable offences processed at these two sites are dealt with at these locations and does not have access to the CJS; therefore, a Phoenix form is faxed to the Divisional inputters or Crime Recording Bureau to update PNC. HMIC Auditors were informed from focus groups that on occasions the faxed information was unreadable either caused by transmission or the officer's hand written was poor. Bedfordshire is in the process of rolling out NSPIS Case and Custody which would resolve the issue of having to send PNC updates via fax or email but it will not be installed at Luton Airport or the Arndale Centre, therefore, an alternative solution must be considered. The force is advised to consider an alternative to sending this information via fax and possibly consider an electronic Phoenix Form to be sent as an email attachment.

#### **Recommendation 10**

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the force develops a more efficient process of transmitting non custody A/S cases to the PNC inputters in particular from Luton Airport and the Arndale Shopping Complex.**

- 2.5.1.6 Another aspect of the process surrounding the creation of A/S reports is that of Penalty Notices for Disorder (PNDs) that are issued on the streets by operational officers. In contrast to PNDs that are issued within the custody suites, when the custody process is used, street issued PNDs result in a fixed penalty notice being produced and the offender does not have to attend the police station. During interviews and focus groups, HMIC auditors discovered that whilst officers were aware of the correct process for having records updated on the PNC, they were not aware that PNDs are subject to the same timeliness standards as all other PNC updates. The force is encouraged to remind

officers of the importance of the speedy completion and delivery of PNDs for timely entry onto the PNC.

2.5.1.7 HMIC Auditors were made aware that a roll out of hand held "Blackberry" terminals was underway and the force were informed that they should consider the possible opportunities in sending PND information via them.

## 2.5.2 Updating of Court Results

2.5.2.1 The Force currently updates all relevant data from the court registers onto the PNC, including disposals, remands, adjournments and bail conditions. HMIC auditors recognise this as good practice in ensuring that records are not only accurate but complete for the benefit of the Force and all other forces that may have reason to access the records that are updated by Bedfordshire.

2.5.2.2 Magistrates Courts data is received electronically from the courts via the Equis system and is printed out in each of the Divisional CJUs to enable operators to manually update the results on the PNC. HMIC Auditors were encouraged to note that following receipt of the information, the force does update the data in a timely manner and keeps records to evidence this.

2.5.2.3 The force has access to Crown Court results via the Xhibit system; however, there are difficulties with the quality of results that the system provides. This is a problem that several other forces are experiencing and not limited to Bedfordshire. The force has a very good liaison with the Crown Courts and agreement has been reached where a copy of the full disposal is still sent to the police. HMIC Auditors encourage the force to investigate the possibilities of having the results sent via secure email until the problems with Xhibit are resolved.

## 2.5.3 Ad hoc intelligence updates<sup>6</sup>

2.5.3.1 In Bedfordshire there is a process for inputting ad hoc intelligence onto the PNC. Some officers in focus groups reported that they were aware of the process and the intelligence form to be completed. However, HMIC Auditors were informed that the form was not routinely completed. It could be that vital intelligence is not being recorded onto the national system and is only being held on their local system, consequently, other forces do not have direct access to this information. The force is encouraged to remind officers and staff of the procedure for sending intelligence to the PNC.

### **Recommendation 11**

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the Force reminds officers and staff of the procedure for getting ad hoc intelligence updated onto the PNC.**

<sup>6</sup> Information applicable for update to PNC that originates from a source other than the creation of an Arrest/ Summons report.

#### 2.5.4 Data quality

2.5.4.1 HMIC Auditors conducted reality checks to determine the quality of data being supplied by officers and subsequently input to PNC. This was achieved by obtaining 30 source input documents (form 200C), reviewing their content and comparing the details submitted to the PNC record. HMIC Auditors were pleased to note that the Force updates all remand histories, adjournments and bail conditions on the system, which is accepted best practice.

2.5.4.2 However, some concerns were raised with regard to data quality. HMIC Auditors found a total of 32% of the records contained errors, albeit of a minor nature. Some simple monitoring and dip sampling of reports within the PNCR would help in reducing the error rate.

2.5.4.3 HMIC Auditors were pleased to note that the force is a good user of the Vehicle Information reports which is a good source of intelligence not just for Bedfordshire but for all other forces in the UK. The content of the reports that are owned by them comply with the National Standards as set out in the PNC Manual and are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that the information is current and meaningful. This is considered as good practice.

#### **Recommendation 12**

**Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the Force reviews its quality assurance processes to ensure the integrity of PNC updates.**

## 2.6 Results

2.6.1 In July 2006, Bedfordshire input 90.3% of Arrest/ Summons (A/S) updates onto the PNC within 24 hours. The force has shown steady and consistent improvement over the last 12 months and achieved the target for the first time in July 2006. The force has carried out extensive research to find deficiencies in their processes that have restricted them in achieving the target and has reviewed processes in an effort to improve. This has been borne out in their current performance and HMIC Auditors are reassured that this performance can be maintained.

2.6.2 In terms of court results, Bedfordshire has achieved the 75% target in 8 of the last 12 months. The force suffered a dip in performance in the latter part of 2005; however, the force has improved and has consistently hit the target for the last 4 months.

2.6.3 Finally, with regard to outstanding prosecutions on the PNC in the 12 months to July 2006 the Force has shown an overall increase of 27%. This rise in the numbers of outstanding IPs can be attributed to the increase in the number of AS reports due to the powers under Section 9 and 10 of the Criminal Justice Act 2003, where a person arrested for a recordable offence must be recorded on the PNC. In April 2001,

HMIC supported by the Home Secretary stated that all forces should be in a position to confirm that any outstanding case that is over twelve months old is legitimately outstanding. In Bedfordshire's case, this accounts for approximately 9.9% of all their outstanding prosecutions and is within profile established by HMIC in 2001. HMIC Auditors are therefore assured that the Force is able to provide such confirmation.

**APPENDIX A****SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE****Recommendation 1**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the terms of reference of the PNC Steering Group are reviewed to make them more specific and to ensure that the membership is robust and relevant.

**Recommendation 2**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the force develops statistical information to target the quality of data that will be inputted onto the PNC.

**Recommendation 3**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that Bedfordshire Police reviews and updates the PNC Strategy Action Plan and to include short, medium and long term issues that will affect the PNC function of the force.

**Recommendation 4**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that Bedfordshire :

- Introduces a process to ensure that officers and staff who leave the force or move to other non PNC posts, are notified to the PNCB Manager and IT Department so PNC access can be robustly managed.
- Introduces an independent audit, at least annually, of all user access administration.

**Recommendation 5**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that as a matter of urgency Bedfordshire commences a cycle of PNC audits as set out in the ACPO Data Protection Audit Manual.

**Recommendation 6**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that Bedfordshire Police urgently recommences Transaction Monitoring as set out in the ACPO Data Protection Audit Manual

**Recommendation 7**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the Force publishes and implements a marketing strategy to raise awareness for the effective use of PNC across the force.

**Recommendation 8**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the Force Reviews the criteria and policy for assessing prospective candidates for PNC courses.

**Recommendation 9**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the Force follows the national guidelines as published by PITO when updating Breach of Probation Orders to ensure that they are recorded as a Non Police Prosecuting Agency (NPPA).

**Recommendation 10**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary encourages the Force develops a more efficient process of transmitting non custody A/S cases to the PNC inputters in particular from Luton Airport and the Arndale Shopping Complex.

**Recommendation 11**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the Force reminds officers and staff of the procedure for getting ad hoc intelligence updated onto the PNC

**Recommendation 12**

Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary recommends that the Force reviews its quality assurance processes to ensure the integrity of PNC updates.

**APPENDIX B****SUMMARY OF GOOD PRACTICES AT BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE**

- The PNC Policy is stored on the force intranet that can be accessed by all staff. The PNC Manager regularly reviews the information to ensure it is upto date.
- The Force uses the services of PITO Customer Services to deliver presentations to IPLDP courses.
- The Force has a member of the PNC Steering Group sitting on the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB).
- The Force inputs a full record onto the PNC at the earliest opportunity.
- The Force updates all relevant information onto a record, including adjournments, Bail Conditions and Remands.
- The Force is a very high user of PNC Vehicle Reports and it manages and reviews the information regularly to ensure it is relevant and correct.
- Bedfordshire PNC courses have a written assessment at the end within a minimum pass mark of 70%. Candidates are then required to complete a post training evaluation in the form of a "happy sheet",

**APPENDIX C – ‘ON THE RECORD’****THEMATIC INSPECTION REPORT ON POLICE CRIME RECORDING, THE POLICE NATIONAL COMPUTER AND PHOENIX INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM DATA QUALITY - RECOMMENDATIONS****Recommendation 9** (Chapter 5 page 86)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that all Forces produce position statements in relation to the 1998 PRG report recommendations on Phoenix Data Quality and the ACPO Compliance Strategy for the Police National Computer. He further recommends that Forces produce a detailed action plan, with timescales, to implement their recommendations. The position statements and action plans together with progress updates should be available for audit and inspection during future HMIC PNC Compliance Audits and inspection of Forces. Forces should send copies of action plans to HMIC's PNC Compliance Audit Section by 1 February 2001.

**Recommendation 10** (Chapter 6 page 104)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that Forces urgently review their existing SCAS referral mechanisms in the light of the above findings. These reviews should include verification with SCAS that all Force offences fitting the SCAS criteria have been fully notified to them, and updated. This process should be managed by Forces through their in-Force SCAS Liaison Officers.

**Recommendation 11** (Chapter 7 page 111)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that the marketing, use and development of national police information systems is integrated into appropriate Force, local and departmental, strategic planning documents.

**Recommendation 12** (Chapter 7 page 112)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that where not already in place, Forces should establish a strategic PNC Steering Group. This group should develop and be responsible for a strategic plan covering the development, use and marketing of PNC and Phoenix.

**Recommendation 13** (Chapter 7 page 118)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that all Forces conduct an audit of their present in-Force PNC trainers to ensure they have received nationally accredited training. Any individuals who have not been accredited as PNC trainers by National Police Training should not conduct in-Force PNC training.

**Recommendation 14** (Chapter 8 page 145)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that Forces ensure that each Phoenix inputting department develops an audit trail to register the return of substandard PSDs, via line supervisors, to originating officers. The system developed should include a mechanism to ensure the prompt return of PSDs. Forces should also incorporate locally based audit trails, monitoring the passage of returned PSDs between line supervisors and originating officers.

**Recommendation 15** (Chapter 8 page 146)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that Forces develop clear guidelines to cover their expectations of officers on the return of incomplete or substandard PSDs. This guidance should be communicated to all staff and regular checks conducted to ensure compliance.

**Recommendation 16** (Chapter 8 page 148)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that Forces should develop a system to ensure that all ad-hoc descriptive and intelligence updates registered on local Force systems are automatically entered onto the Phoenix system. The policy should clearly outline whose responsibility it is to notify Phoenix inputters of any descriptive changes. Forces should also ensure that the policy is marketed to staff and that regular checks are conducted to ensure compliance.

**Recommendation 17** (Chapter 8 page 150)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that Forces develop a formal system to ensure that a proportion of each member of Phoenix inputting staff's work is regularly checked for accuracy. Forces should also consider the benefits of measuring other aspects of their work including speed of entry and compliance with policies. Performance outcomes should be evidenced in staff PDRs.

**Recommendation 18** (Chapter 9 page 164)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends, where not already present, that Forces develop risk assessed Force Data Protection Officer audit programmes.

**Recommendation 19** (Chapter 9 page 164)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that Forces integrate PNC and Phoenix data quality compliance into their performance review and inspectorate programmes for BCUs and specialist departments.

**Recommendation 20** (Chapter 9 page 165)

Her Majesty's Inspector recommends that PSD performance statistics should be incorporated in routine Force performance information. The statistics should identify omissions and errors in individual fields, in particular, descriptive information. Appropriate accountability measures should be established to ensure that any performance shortfalls identified are addressed.

**APPENDIX D – PRG REPORT****“PHOENIX DATA QUALITY” RECOMMENDATIONS**

- National performance indicators and standards for timeliness of input, data fields to be completed, quality assurance requirements and the provision of training should be agreed by ACPO and promulgated to all Forces.
- Achievement against and compliance with these indicators should be audited after a period of 12 months, perhaps through the inclusion in the scope of HMIC audits.
- Senior officers take an active and visible role in policing compliance with agreed standards within their own Force.
  - ACPO performance indicators should be reflected in Force policy or standing orders (or the Force equivalent). Guidance should include the responsibilities of officers at each stage of the process e.g. for the provision of source documentation, for approval, time taken to pass to input bureaux, and the bureaux' responsibilities for data entry and quality control.
  - Line and divisional managers, as well as chief officers, should be held accountable for compliance with these standards. This could be achieved through inclusion in divisional efficiency assessments, and through the publication and dissemination of performance statistics throughout individual Forces and nationally.
- Source documentation should be common across all Forces, if not in design, in the information requested. A national format, stipulating a hierarchy of fields to be populated, should be developed.
- Programme(s) geared to raising awareness amongst operational officers and line managers of the potential benefits of Phoenix in a practical sense and their responsibilities of the provision of data should be developed. To ensure all officers have an opportunity to benefit from these programmes, consideration should be given to inclusion of a 'Phoenix awareness' module in probationer training, promotion courses and divisional training days.
- Best practice in administrative arrangements and organisational structures should be widely distributed. Internal working practices and organisational structures should be streamlined to remove any redundancies.

- Greater computerisation of the transfer of results from courts direct to Phoenix should continue to be developed. In the shorter term, the Police Service is likely to retain responsibility of the input of court information. To minimise the resource burden on the Police Service in this interim period, the police and courts should work to ensure recognition of each other's requirements and to minimise any inconsistencies in their respective working practices.
  - In the first instance, this might be achieved by ACPO highlighting to Magistrates' Courts and to the Crown Court, perhaps through the Trials Issue Group, the importance of Phoenix records to the integrity of the criminal justice system as a whole. Liaison meetings could usefully be established to introduce greater consistency in working and recording practices between the courts and police Forces e.g. for recording data. In the first instance, this could be pursued locally, perhaps through the court user group. Issues considered by such meetings might include supplying additional information (such as Arrest / Summons numbers) to the Magistrates' Court system and to automated transfer of court registers.
  - Consistent practice and performance is also required from the courts. Recommendations referring to performance indicators and standards, audits and monitoring, senior level commitment, common recording practices, awareness of system customers and administrative 'best practice' could equally apply to the courts. Mirroring the responsibilities of Chief Constables for their Force, the Court Service and the Magistrates' Court Committee should be accountable for the performance of courts.
  - Consistent practice in advising custody details, including transfers and releases, is required. This includes consistency in advising CRO numbers to maximise the number of complete records. The police and prison services should liaise to encourage greater understanding and acknowledgement of each other's requirements.

**APPENDIX E – 1<sup>ST</sup> PNC REPORT****POLICE NATIONAL COMPUTER DATA QUALITY AND TIMELINESS –  
RECOMMENDATIONS****Recommendation One (Paragraph 5.2)**

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector recommends that ACPO nationally review the position and priority of PNC within the structure of portfolio holders to reflect both the technical and operational importance of PNC.

**Recommendation Two (Paragraph 5.11)**

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector draws renewed attention to Recommendations 11 to 20 of *'On the Record' (2000)*, and recommends that all forces develop appropriate systems, overseen at a senior level, to ensure that they are implemented.

**Recommendation Three (Paragraph 5.19)**

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector recommends that PITO review, as a matter of urgency, the supplier/customer relationship between PNC and forces, particularly in relation to the marketing of PNC functionality, and the type, frequency and validity of management information reports produced.

**Recommendation Four (Paragraph 5.29)**

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector recommends that Her Majesty's Inspector (Training), in consultation with PITO and National Police Training, conducts a review of the quality and availability of accreditation training for PNC trainers and the extent to which they are subsequently employed in forces.

**Recommendation Five (Paragraph 5.31)**

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector recommends that discussions take place between ACPO, PITO and other relevant stakeholders to examine what opportunities exist for a short term 'technology solution' for the inputting of Court Results, either involving NSPIS applications currently in development, or an interim solution.

**Recommendation Six (Paragraph 5.34)**

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector recommends that renewed and re-invigorated discussions should take place between relevant stakeholders to, (a) Ensure that local systems are in place to maximise co-operation with the courts to achieve their respective 72 hours targets and, (b) Work towards Magistrates' Courts and Crown Courts assuming full responsibility for inputting all case results directly onto PNC.

**Recommendation Seven (Paragraph 6.10)**

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector recommends that following appropriate consultation with relevant stakeholders, a national inspection protocol for PNC data quality and timeliness be introduced.

**Recommendation Eight (Paragraph 6.12)**

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector recommends that following appropriate consultation with relevant stakeholders, the Secretary of State should consider using his powers under Section 5 of the Local Government Act 1999, to require all police authorities to institute a Best Value Review of processes to ensure PNC data quality and timeliness. Such review should be conducted against a common template and terms of reference.

**Recommendation Nine (Paragraph 6.14)**

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector recommends, that in consultation with the Standards Unit and other stakeholders, HM Inspectorate should urgently review their current PNC audit responsibilities in the light of the findings of this report, with a view to adopting a more proactive stance in relation to force performance, data quality and timeliness.

**Recommendation Ten (Paragraph 6.16)**

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector recommends, that in consultation with other stakeholders, ACPO IM Committee initiate research with a view to encouraging mutual support between forces for out of hours PNC data entry purposes.

**POLICE NATIONAL COMPUTER DATA QUALITY AND TIMELINESS –  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Recommendation 1**

The Home Office should lead and co-ordinate an urgent re-examination of the current PNC strategy and standards with a view to producing national binding performance and compliance criteria to which all relevant stakeholders and partners are agreed and committed.

**Recommendation 2**

ACPO nationally and Chief Constables locally must ensure that the national standards for PNC operation, resourcing and training are fully integrated into local Information Management Strategies and recognised as an important part of operational service delivery. This area must receive sustained high-level support through a 'champion' at chief officer level.

**Recommendation 3**

PITO should be tasked to consolidate the force 'profiling' approach as used in the inspection into the routine statistical returns provided to forces. PNC statistics should then be integrated into the mainstream suite of management information/indicators that inform decisions at force and BCU levels.

**Recommendation 4**

HMIC should be tasked to establish a risk-assessed programme of monitoring and inspection that is able to respond quickly and effectively to deviations from accepted standards. This programme should include;

- remote monitoring of performance (PITO profile statistics)
- regular collaboration and contact with force PNC Managers
- proportionate programme of visits and inspections
- targeted interventions to respond to identified problems

**Recommendation 5**

The Home Office should establish a structured process for addressing and remedying any significant and persisting deviation from the agreed national standards (see Recommendation 1). This process should identify the respective roles of HMIC, Police Standards Unit and police authorities. It should set out the escalation of responses, which might include an agreed action plan, re-inspection, Intervention, and ultimately withdrawal of facility.