



HMIC Inspection Report

Sussex Police

October 2007



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Introduction to HMIC Inspections

For a century and a half, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has been charged with examining and improving the efficiency of the police service in England and Wales, with the first HM Inspectors (HMIs) being appointed under the provisions of the County and Borough Police Act 1856. In 1962, the Royal Commission on the Police formally acknowledged HMIC's contribution to policing.

HMIs are appointed by the Crown on the recommendation of the Home Secretary and report to HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, who is the Home Secretary's principal professional policing adviser and is independent both of the Home Office and of the police service. HMIC's principal statutory duties are set out in the Police Act 1996. For more information, please visit HMIC's website at <http://inspectorates.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/>.

In 2006, HMIC conducted a broad assessment of all 43 Home Office police forces in England and Wales, examining 23 areas of activity. This baseline assessment had followed a similar process in 2005 and has thus created a rich evidence base of strengths and weaknesses across the country. However, it is now necessary for HMIC to focus its inspection effort on those areas of policing that are not data-rich and where qualitative assessment is the only feasible way of judging both current performance and the prospects for improvement. This, together with the critical factor that HMIC should concentrate its scrutiny on high-risk areas of policing – in terms of risk both to the public and to the service's reputation – pointed inexorably to a focus on what are known collectively as 'protective services'. In addition, there is a need to apply professional judgement to some key aspects of leadership and governance, where some quantitative measures exist but a more rounded assessment is appropriate.

Having reached this view internally, HMIC then consulted key stakeholders, including the Home Office, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the Association of Police Authorities (APA). A consensus emerged that HMIC could add greater value by undertaking fewer but more probing inspections. Stakeholders concurred with the emphasis on protective services but requested that Neighbourhood Policing remain a priority for inspection until there is evidence that it has been embedded in everyday police work.

HMIC uses a rigorous and transparent methodology to conduct its inspections and reach conclusions and judgements. All evidence will be gathered, verified and then assessed against an agreed set of national standards, in the form of specific grading criteria (SGC). However, the main purpose of inspection is not to make judgements but to drive improvements in policing. Both professional and lay readers are urged, therefore, to focus not on the headline grades but on the opportunities for improvement identified within the text of this report.

Programmed frameworks

This report contains assessments of the first three key areas of policing to be inspected under HMIC's new programme of work:

1. Neighbourhood Policing;
2. performance management; and
3. protecting vulnerable people.

Neighbourhood Policing has been inspected not only because it is a key government priority but also, and more importantly, because it addresses a fundamental need for a style of policing that is rooted in and responds to local concerns. The police service must, of course, offer protection from high-level threats such as terrorism and organised criminality, but it

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also has a key role in tackling the unacceptable behaviour of the minority of people who threaten the quality of life of law-abiding citizens.

Performance management is an activity largely hidden from public view, although members of the public are directly affected by poor performance on the part of their local force. This inspection has focused on the need for forces to maximise the opportunities for performance improvement. It also posed questions as to whether forces have an accurate picture of how they are doing and the capability to respond to changing priorities. This area was selected for inspection because it is a key factor in delivering good performance across the board.

Protecting vulnerable people covers four related areas – child abuse, domestic violence, public protection and missing persons – that address the critically important role of the police in protecting the public from potentially serious harm. In the 2006 baseline assessment this was the worst performing area and raised the most serious concerns for HMIC and others. As a result, this area was prioritised for scrutiny in 2007.

Risk-based frameworks

In addition to its programmed inspection work, HMIC continues to monitor performance across a range of policing activity, notably those areas listed in the table below.

HMIC risk-based frameworks
Fairness and equality in service delivery
Volume crime reduction
Volume crime investigation
Improving forensic performance
Criminal justice processes
Reducing anti-social behaviour
Contact management
Training, development and organisational learning

While these activities will not be subject to routine inspection, evidence of a significant decline in performance would prompt consideration of inspection. For 150 years, HMIC has maintained an ongoing relationship with every force. This allows it to identify and support forces when specific issues of concern arise. On a more formal basis, HMIC participates in the Home Office Police Performance Steering Group and Joint Performance Review Group, which have a role in monitoring and supporting police performance in crime reduction, crime investigation and public confidence.

HMIC conducts inspections of basic command units (BCUs), also on a risk-assessed basis, using the Going Local 3 methodology. Combining these various strands of inspection evidence allows HMIC to form a comprehensive picture of both individual force performance and the wider national picture.

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The grading process

Grades awarded by HMIC are a reflection of the performance delivered by the force over the assessment period April 2006 to July 2007. One of four grades can be awarded, according to performance assessed against the SGC (for the full list of SGC, see <http://inspectors.homeoffice.gov.uk/hmic/methodologies/baseline-introduction/ba-methodology-06/?version=1>).

Excellent

This grade describes the highest level of performance in service delivery and achieving full compliance with codes of practice or national guidance. It is expected that few forces will achieve this very high standard for a given activity. To achieve Excellent, forces are expected to meet **all** of the criteria set out in the Fair SGC and the vast majority of those set out in Good. In addition, two other factors will attract consideration of an Excellent grade:

- The force should be recognised, or be able to act, as a 'beacon' to others, and be accepted within the service as a source of leading-edge practice. Evidence that other forces have successfully imported practices would demonstrate this.
- HMIC is committed to supporting innovation and we would expect Excellent forces to have introduced and evaluated new ways of delivering or improving performance.

Good

Good is defined in the Collins English Dictionary as 'of a high quality or level' and denotes performance above the minimum standard. To reach this level, forces have to meet in full the criteria set out in Fair and most of the criteria set out in Good.

Fair

Fair is the delivery of an acceptable level of service, which meets national threshold standards where these exist. To achieve a Fair grading, forces must meet all of the significant criteria set out in the Fair SGC. HMIC would expect that, across most activities, the largest number of grades will be awarded at this level.

Poor

A Poor grade represents an unacceptably low level of service. To attract this very critical grade, a force will have fallen well short of a significant number of criteria set out in the SGC for Fair. In some cases, failure to achieve a single critical criterion may alone warrant a Poor grade. Such dominant criteria will always be flagged in the SGC but may also reflect a degree of professional judgement on the level of risk being carried by the force.

Developing practice

In addition to assessing force performance, one of HMIC's key roles is to identify and share good practice across the police service. Much good practice is identified as HMIC conducts its assessments and is reflected as a strength in the body of the report. In addition, each force is given the opportunity to submit examples of its good practice. HMIC has selected three or more of these examples to publish in this report. The key criteria for each example are that the work has been evaluated by the force and the good practice is easily transferable to other forces (each force has provided a contact name and telephone number or email address, should further information be required). HMIC has not conducted any independent evaluation of the examples of good practice provided.

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Future HMIC inspection activity

Although HMIC will continue to maintain a watching brief on all performance areas, its future inspection activity (see provisional timescales below) will be determined by a risk assessment process. Protective services will be at the core of inspection programmes, tailored to capacity, capability and the likelihood of exposure to threats from organised criminality, terrorism and so on. Until its full implementation in April 2008, Neighbourhood Policing will also demand attention. Conversely, those areas (such as volume crime) where performance is captured by statutory performance indicators (SPIs), iQuanta and other objective evidence will receive scrutiny only where performance is deteriorating, as described above.

The Government has announced that, in real terms, there will be little or no growth in police authority/force budgets over the next three years. Forces will therefore have to maintain, and in some areas improve, performance without additional central support or funding. This in itself creates a risk to police delivery and HMIC has therefore included a strategic resource management assessment for all forces in its future inspection programme.

Planned Inspection areas
Serious and organised crime
Major crime
Neighbourhood Policing
Strategic resource management
Customer service and accessibility
Critical incident management
Professional standards
Public order
Civil contingencies
Information management
Strategic roads policing
Leadership

Force Overview and Context

Geographical description of force area

Sussex Police is responsible for policing the two counties of East and West Sussex, including Gatwick Airport, and the unitary authority of Brighton and Hove, an area of 4,779 square kilometres. Gatwick Airport Limited pays for the policing operation on its property, one of the UK's busiest international airports. There are sea ports at Littlehampton, Newhaven, Shoreham, Eastbourne, Brighton Marina and Rye. The counties are demographically diverse, covering both urban conurbations and sparsely populated rural communities.

Demographic profile of force area

The force area has a resident population (based on the 2001 census) of approximately 1.5 million, which is significantly supplemented by the seasonal influx of visitors to the south coast holiday resorts, particularly Brighton and Eastbourne; and more than 30 million passengers pass through Gatwick Airport each year.

Strategic priorities

Sussex Police is concentrating on three main strategic priorities for 2007/08.

1. Neighbourhood Policing

The force aims to deliver permanent and dedicated teams with specific responsibilities for each of the force's defined neighbourhoods by April 2008 and to ensure that the activities of the teams will be intelligence led and focus on the issues that matter most to local communities. The force also intends that neighbourhood teams develop and work closely with local authorities, voluntary groups, businesses, criminal justice agencies and other partners to tackle identified community issues.

The force has published an eight-point quality of service commitment which is intended to support the Neighbourhood Policing strategy:

1. Ensure ease of contact for members of the public;
2. Provide a professional and high-quality service;
3. Deal promptly and efficiently with initial enquiries;
4. Ensure that members of the public are kept informed;
5. Ensure that individual and community concerns are properly considered;
6. Comply with national codes of practice in relation to victim care;
7. Respond efficiently to requests for information;
8. Listen to and respond to concerns and complaints.

2. Keeping the public safe

The force seeks to reduce the risk of harm within Sussex by focusing on six key themes:

1. **Tackling serious and organised crime:** the force is developing formal collaborative arrangements with Surrey Police to combat serious and organised crime. Additionally, Sussex Police seeks to improve intelligence flow between specialist teams and neighbourhood specialist teams (NSTs) to improve the force's response

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to this threat and to proactively target offenders by seizing assets gained from criminal activity where appropriate.

2. **Protecting vulnerable people:** the force seeks to become more responsive to the needs of vulnerable people, including members of groups that have a high risk of victimisation as a result of hate crime.
3. **Protecting the public from the most high-risk offenders:**
4. **Tackling terrorism and animal rights extremists:** the force is committed to ensuring that all staff treat these concerns as an operational priority. The force intends to publicise the role that local communities can play in defeating both terrorism and extremism and to maximise the opportunities afforded by developing community intelligence at a local level.
5. **Reducing road casualties:** Sussex Police intends to focus on a strategy of education and enforcement to make Sussex roads safer. The force seeks to increase the numbers of officers engaged in roads policing activity each day.
6. **Managing information assets:** the force is currently reviewing IT products and is seeking to improve its operational information-sharing capability with other UK forces.

3. Making best use of resources

During 2007/08 Sussex Police intends to maximise opportunities afforded by the recruitment of police community support officers (PCSOs) and special constables in the delivery of local and visible policing within identified neighbourhoods. The force has reached its capacity of 354 Home Office-funded PCSOs and seeks to increase the number of Special Constabulary officers beyond the current 185, with a target set to double recruitment of specials by 2009.

The force also intends to improve its commitment to recognising diversity both internally and externally. Specifically, the force intends to build on its confidence and equalities strategy by publishing two new equality schemes (disability and gender) and by seeking to ensure that the workforce reflects the diverse communities who live and work within Sussex.

Additionally, the force plans to improve its management of human resources (HR). The HR strategy for 2007/08 includes plans to develop HR structures and policies to support force performance, equalities and fairness within HR procedures and ensuring that all employees have the opportunity to develop and progress.

Force developments since 2006

The force has a long tradition of community policing which has been enhanced by the national Neighbourhood Policing agenda. With the full support of Sussex Police Authority (SPA), in 2006/07 the force introduced 53 NSTs, building on the district structure introduced in 2003. Sussex Police has ensured that each neighbourhood has a dedicated, visible, accessible and responsive local team, intelligence led and focusing on those problems that communities identify as the most important.

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This significant investment in Neighbourhood Policing has delivered sustained improvements in performance. In 2006/07 Sussex Police delivered its highest sanction detection rate since records began in the early 1990s. Overall crime was also reduced by 1.4% and domestic burglary cut by 19.9% year on year (and by 59% in the last decade). Domestic burglary detection performance was identified as a risk to which the force responded by surpassing its policing plan target with its best performance since May 1998. Sussex was the safest area in the South East for both domestic burglary and vehicle crime in 2006/07.

Injury violent crime fell by 8.9% in 2006/07, with life-threatening crime (homicide, attempted murder and the most serious woundings) down 21.5% (from 214 to 168 offences). Sussex had the lowest level of life-threatening crime of any of its most similar forces (MSF) and in the South East, and homicide itself fell from 17 to 11 offences year on year, with a 100% detection rate.

The force has increased the risk to serious, organised criminals through proven investigation capability. Seventeen people have been charged following one operation by Sussex Police's serious and organised crime unit (SOCU) which included what is believed to be the biggest-ever seizure of methamphetamine in the UK. In February 2007 the SPA approved expenditure for the enhancement of protective services by creating a second SOCU focusing on threats such as drugs traffickers and those involved in the organisation of immigration crime.

Additional funding has also been provided to enhance Special Branch community intelligence functions in order to tackle the threat of terrorism and extremism.

Progress is being made with other South East forces on collaborative working to strengthen protective services. Governance arrangements and funding for joint projects are already in place, and areas of focus have been identified. One example of existing collaborative working is Sussex Police's joint forensic contract with Kent Police, which went live in August 2006. Sussex Police is also the host force for the regional intelligence cell and regional intelligence unit, to which it has made a significant commitment in terms of staff, HR and facilities support.

Following the inspection in 2005 of policing at Gatwick Airport, HMIC has seen Sussex Police respond with significant progress – a wide-ranging transformation of approach and evident enthusiasm and commitment to deliver a more efficient and professional service, along with firm foundations for partnership working with key stakeholders.

The force has integrated traditional roads policing with the wider policing agenda, and is preparing to launch a database of anti-social drivers to tackle driving behaviour – Sussex's main cause of collisions and injuries.

In 2006 Sussex Police demonstrated its continued ability to manage critical incidents, including Operation Silverton (a large-scale fire at a fireworks factory near to Lewes which killed two fire service personnel) and Operation Zipper (a Metropolitan Police operation into Islamist extremism involving extensive searches at a school in East Sussex, for which Sussex Police provided specialist search support and a three-mile outer cordon for the site).

The HR and learning and development functions have been working closely with HMIC to address the Poor grading received in the 2006 baseline assessment. Both have produced costed plans with clear objectives and timescales to deliver improved performance. As a result, the Inspectorate has increased its grading of both areas to Fair and Improved, with the force's direction of travel continuing upwards.

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Since the 2006 inspection, the force's financial forecast has been updated, reinforcing projections of potential sizable deficits over the period to 2010. External consultants from Ernst & Young validated the assumptions. The Challenge Programme has been established, under the leadership of the deputy chief constable (DCC), to achieve the necessary savings while safeguarding the delivery of a high-quality service and strengthening Neighbourhood Policing and protective services.

Sussex Police continues to make best use of its physical and financial resources. Efficiency gains of over £20 million, of which £12 million are cashable, have been assessed in the last financial year and the force's financial outturn for 2006/07 was just 0.03% (£84,000) under budget. The force and the police authority achieved strong grades in the Audit Commission's Use of Resources Evaluation published in March 2007.

Notwithstanding low funding – central government and the council tax precept income remains below the shire average, and police officer strength excluding Gatwick is significantly below average – Sussex Police has achieved significant performance and development since HMIC's 2006 inspection.

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Findings

National summary of judgements

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
Neighbourhood Policing				
Neighbourhood Policing	6	14	21	2
Performance management				
Performance management	6	29	8	0
Protecting vulnerable people				
Child abuse	3	17	21	2
Domestic violence	1	13	27	2
Public protection	2	16	23	2
Missing persons	1	21	21	0

Force summary of judgements

Neighbourhood Policing	Grade
Neighbourhood Policing	Good
Performance management	Grade
Performance management	Good
Protecting vulnerable people	Grade
Child abuse	Fair
Domestic violence	Fair
Public protection	Fair
Missing persons	Fair

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Neighbourhood Policing

GRADE	GOOD
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National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
6	14	21	2

National contextual factors

The national Neighbourhood Policing programme was launched by ACPO in April 2005 to support the Government's vision of a policing service which is both accessible and responsive to the needs of local people. It was anticipated that, by April 2007, every area across England and Wales would have a Neighbourhood Policing presence appropriate to local needs, with all Neighbourhood Policing teams in place by April 2008. For local communities this means:

- increased numbers of PCSOs patrolling their streets, addressing anti-social behaviour and building relationships with local people;
- access both to information about policing in their local area and to a point of contact in their Neighbourhood Policing team; and
- having the opportunity to tell the police about the issues that are causing them concern and helping to shape the response to those issues (Home Office, May 2006).

By focusing on the key areas of resources, familiarity/accessibility, problem identification and joint problem solving, this inspection has identified the extent to which Neighbourhood Policing is being implemented. It has also examined forces' capability and commitment to sustain implementation beyond April 2008.

Contextual factors

Sussex Police aims to live up to its claim to be 'visible', 'accessible' and 'responsive'. In order to achieve this ambition the force has continued to develop Neighbourhood Policing over the past 12 months by continuing the roll-out of dedicated Neighbourhood Specialist Teams (NST)s on a priority basis to ward areas. Wards have been analysed using various data, including signal insecurities, and then risk graded.

Neighbourhood Policing is the first section of the local policing plan and it sets out Sussex Police's commitment to three Neighbourhood Policing key principles:

- permanent and dedicated teams with specific responsibility for each defined neighbourhood;
- activities of those teams being intelligence led, focusing on those problems identified by communities as mattering most; and

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- neighbourhood teams working closely, and taking joint action, with local authorities, voluntary groups, businesses, criminal justice agencies and other partners to tackle those issues important to the public.

Since the 2006/07 baseline assessment there has been a change in chief officer lead for Neighbourhood Policing roll-out within the force. The new assistant chief constable (ACC) has basic command unit (BCU) command experience of a national Neighbourhood Policing pilot site within another force area. Although it is relatively early to make a considered judgement as to effectiveness, it is apparent that he has brought a fresh perspective to the role which includes demonstrable management grip, and a communication and consultative style which is being well received by NST members.

The SPA has fully supported the roll-out of Neighbourhood Policing in Sussex, well ahead of many other forces, and has included the funding of PCSOs ahead of the national trend and the funding of improvements in the communications department in direct support of Neighbourhood Policing and the citizen focus agenda. There is considerable SPA member involvement in relation to Neighbourhood Policing. The police authority has appointed a lead member who sits on the force's Neighbourhood Policing implementation board and ensures that progress in relation to Neighbourhood Policing is thoroughly examined during the SPA regular planning and performance steering group (PPSG) meetings.

The force has identified 77 natural and geographical neighbourhoods which are covered by 53 NSTs. The force is divided into five BCUs and 16 districts (including Gatwick Airport), each being coterminous with a crime and disorder reduction partnership (CDRP). The force has reached its target complement of 354 PCSOs.

The force has achieved:

- 100% coverage of neighbourhoods, with a named contact within each neighbourhood;
- effective systems in place to ensure easy access to policing services by the public which are regularly reviewed;
- effective engagement taking place in over 50% of identified neighbourhoods; and
- effective joint sustainable problem solving which is taking place in over 30% of identified neighbourhoods.

The performance measurement framework is increasingly being used at the monthly force performance meetings (FPMs) during which chief officers require divisional and district commanders to explain their progress on Neighbourhood Policing.

The force conducts neighbourhood reassurance surveys at ward level, and currently intends to revisit each ward every 12 to 18 months to monitor changes in either community confidence and/or the public's satisfaction with policing services. It is intended that performance indicators will be set within the force to measure any improvement.

The force has a comprehensive community engagement strategy which has recently been reviewed within the last 12 months.

Sussex Police is well placed to maintain NSTs, currently having 354 PCSOs, which is one of the highest proportions in the country, most of whom work alongside 125 neighbourhood specialist constables in NSTs.

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Local action teams (LATs) are well established. They are set up to deal with crime, disorder and anti-social problems with local partners, helped by start-up funding of £500 from Sussex Police. A database containing data from the force's 88 LATs enables action to be tracked and good practice to be shared.

A strategic Neighbourhood Policing communications strategy has been implemented since May 2006 which lists numerous actions that either have been, or need to be, completed to improve the delivery of Neighbourhood Policing. The document covers internal and external issues and includes tactical options for district commanders and BCU media officers. When considered together with the force post-implementation plan both documents detail clear targets to improve both internal and external communication (see Areas for Improvement).

Each NST covers a locally agreed geographical area. The force has a vision for effective Neighbourhood Policing and seeks to ensure that team members are visible, accessible, locally known and knowledgeable about their areas. As well as dealing with crime and disorder, it is intended that they work closely with communities and partners to resolve the problems and issues that matter most to local people.

The NSTs are led by dedicated NST inspectors. NST inspectors co-ordinate all aspects of Neighbourhood Policing and make sure that the Sussex Police model of Neighbourhood Policing is adhered to by the teams under their supervision.

The size and make-up of each individual NST varies according to the nature of the area it covers and the particular needs of the local community. The resources dedicated to each team were arrived at after an assessment of crime trend data, the vulnerable localities and individuals' indexes, areas of high risk, signal crime insecurity data and other incident data.

Every single NST has at least one of each of the following: neighbourhood specialist sergeant, neighbourhood specialist constable and PCSO. These have established, or are in the process of establishing, joint action groups (JAGs) with local community members in order to identify issues of local concern and engage in sustainable joint problem solving.

Good progress has been made in defining neighbourhoods. The first stage has been completed centrally, using a wide range of data sources including partnership data.

The second stage is under way, involving the statistical model being enriched by local knowledge and further consultation with partners and communities to identify where natural neighbourhoods might not align with political boundaries. Good use is being made of analytical products to identify signal crime and incident hotspots.

Neighbourhood Policing teams, which are coterminous with CDRPs, were introduced in Sussex in 2003. At that time, however, the Neighbourhood Policing teams covered both response and community policing.

In recognition of developments in Neighbourhood Policing, both from the pathfinder BCU in Sussex (East Sussex) and nationally, the force implemented its own Neighbourhood Policing project in 2005.

Supported by effective governance arrangements, significant progress has been made in the introduction of a new specialist Neighbourhood Policing structure, including dedicated neighbourhood specialist constables and sergeants supported by high numbers of PCSOs working with the wider Neighbourhood Policing team.

British Crime Survey data to December 2006 shows that Sussex Police is in line with its MSF peers in relation to its perception of crime (an improvement on 2005 figures). Confidence in Sussex Police has also steadily improved over the past 12 months and is now in line with the MSF average.

Strengths

Since HMIC's 2006/07 baseline assessment there has been a change in chief officer lead for Neighbourhood Policing roll-out within the force. The new ACC (who has taken the chair of the monthly Neighbourhood Policing board) has recent BCU command experience of a national Neighbourhood Policing pilot site within another force area. He is well supported by another recently appointed head of profession (superintendent) who has extensive knowledge of Neighbourhood Policing requirements and is enthusiastically engaged in the roll-out of this specialist area of policing.

Although it is relatively early to make a considered judgement as to effectiveness, it is apparent that he has brought a fresh perspective to the role which includes demonstrable management grip, and a communication and consultative style which is being well received by NST members.

Neighbourhood Policing is strongly supported by the ACPO team and the SPA, with the roll-out of Neighbourhood Policing being one of just three strategic priorities for 2007/08. Effective programme management ensures integration of related projects between force level, and on BCUs, where district commanders are responsible for the delivery of Neighbourhood Policing.

Prior to each Force Performance Meeting (FPM), the division that is scheduled for review has its performance in key areas examined in detail. This is supplemented by inspection visits focusing on particular areas of business, focus group meetings, etc. A series of questions is then formulated around the findings of the inspection team. The FPM is structured around the priorities within the local policing plan (including Neighbourhood Policing).

During the FPM, BCU/divisional commanders and department heads are required to explain their understanding of local performance issues. The Neighbourhood Policing implementation team, through the performance improvement manager, supplies the chief officer team with a bank of questions related to Neighbourhood Policing which are specific to geographical and locally identified neighbourhoods.

(eg "How many neighbourhood profiles have been completed for the division and how are you ensuring that they are regularly updated and maintained?"

"I understand that your district has not found street briefings to be a very effective method of reaching the local community. What other methods do you use to engage with the community and how do you decide the most appropriate method?").

The corporate development department also monitors the progress of NSTs to ensure compliance with the local policing plan commitment to develop permanent and dedicated NSTs for each defined neighbourhood. Monthly returns are generated for each division by the HR department detailing the number of vacancies within each NST. The force has recently completed the development of a Neighbourhood Policing performance guide within which individual and team performance indicators have been agreed. The document is in the final stages of sign-off and is due for imminent implementation.

A tenure, deployment, abstraction and patrol plan policy has also been introduced to clarify the role, demonstrate Sussex Police's commitment to Neighbourhood Policing and ensure that officers are not abstracted for other duties except in the most serious of cases.

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It should also be noted that the force engages in activity analysis, and results are considered on a quarterly basis. This process identifies the extent and nature of any abstractions and their appropriateness (see Areas for Improvement).

Each division has its own inspection team, and although operating methods vary the overall objective is to ensure that performance issues are addressed at district level. Neighbourhood Policing features in this process. Pre-inspection and inspection reports are produced to inform BCU commanders and the chief officer team.

A number of checks are in place as part of the inspection process to ensure that systems and processes are actually working. These include:

- face-to-face interviews with command team officers pre-FPM;
- focus groups with NST members pre-FPM (police constables, police sergeants, PCSOs);
- telephone contact with partners;
- public reassurance surveys;
- neighbourhood reassurance surveys (both held locally and facilitated centrally);
- attendance at street briefings;
- face-to-face interviews with public; and
- quality of service checks conducted by local supervisors.

There is a very strong emphasis on local policing on the Sussex Police website with links to the Neighbourhood Policing pages. The local officer/ PCSO for each Neighbourhood Policing team can be easily located from these pages and can be contacted directly by email or voicemail.

Each officer/PCSO has the facility to update their page on the website with news of local initiatives, crime trends, street briefings, etc and the expectation is that these pages are updated, as a minimum, every 28 days by each officer/PCSO.

Neighbourhood Policing also features heavily in BCU performance plans. In East Sussex a joint strategic assessment document has been produced with partner agencies – local authority and CDRPs – along with a joint control strategy (Appendix C) and a BCU plan (Appendix D) which reflects the key priorities within East Sussex. Unlike previous strategic assessment documents, which have focused on police-led issues, this year's assessment has evolved into a partnership document and as such the focus is wider.

Within the East Sussex control strategy, priorities have been allocated to a plan owner. Plan owners include partnership personnel and not just police officers, eg the plan owner for prolific and priority offenders is Sussex Probation Service.

Within the Brighton and Hove BCU plan 2007/08, the three priorities were decided upon as a result of extensive consultation with the public and partner agencies through the work with the local authority and community safety teams, CDRPs, JAGs, and the consideration of public reassurance surveys, etc.

Each of Sussex Police's divisions has access to either an anti-social behaviour or Neighbourhood Policing analyst and their products are shared within either the tasking and co-ordination group (TCG) or JAG process for multi-agency consideration.

Some 22% of the Sussex Police workforce is dedicated to Neighbourhood Policing. Sussex Police has identified 77 geographical and natural neighbourhoods within the force area. Every neighbourhood has a named NST officer. In total there are 53 NSTs.

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Joint problem solving with the community (involving the use of police National Intelligence Model (NIM) products) is being utilised within Sussex. Initial issues of community concern are being identified through the JAGs which are triangulated against other sources of data, including established CDRP intelligence products.

Members of Neighbourhood Policing teams have been trained in SARA (scanning, analysis, response, assessment) problem-solving skills which include the mechanics of problem definition. Problems are being defined in detail, including the identification of victim, offender and location. A degree of joint problem-solving training has taken place (see Work in progress, in relation to the student officer course and the production of informative DVDs).

There are already established links to both police tasking and coordination group meetings and LATs. There are already many examples of how the force brings together joint partner assets and members of the public to tackle neighbourhood priority problems together.

The Sussex Police Local Action Team (LAT) intranet site includes a database to record a summary of LAT activity across the force. It is currently showing 88 LATs as active. The LATs are tackling a wide range of issues of concern to the community, including rowdy behaviour and nuisance in public places, street drinking and inappropriate use of motor vehicles.

The membership of each LAT varies enormously and is driven by the nature of the problems under consideration and those in a position to be able to contribute positively to resolve them.

Some examples of those involved in LAT activity are local MPs, the Environment Agency, residents' associations, the Highways Agency, local authority anti-social behaviour teams, Network Rail, schools, parish councils, Neighbourhood Watch, supermarkets and other local businesses. The focus of all LAT activity is multi-agency problem solving.

Sussex Police has developed an innovative problem-solving toolkit which is on an intranet-based website and is available across the force. It identifies problems that have occurred in other areas that may be similar to current problems faced and explains how they were both analysed and resolved, along with a list of other useful ideas.

The toolkit currently lists 106 records, and the website also includes a postcode search engine. Once details are entered, the public user is directed to the web page of their local NST which contains a profile of each of the specialist neighbourhood officers and their contact details.

Community intelligence has been defined and is increasingly being integrated into NIM processes. For example, the force strategic assessment includes community-identified problems.

The force has developed analytical guidance for completion of strategic assessments which includes gauging the public's perception of the issue and identifying any ongoing partnership working. There is currently a working party attended by the Neighbourhood Policing head of profession, head of Special Branch and head of intelligence, who are seeking to align the intelligence requirement with Neighbourhood Policing priorities.

The force has delivered training to Neighbourhood Policing staff in relation to the submission of intelligence, including the 5X5X5 system, and it is currently developing systems within the intelligence framework to manage the increase in community intelligence and ensure that individual intelligence feeds are appropriately graded and receive the right analytical consideration.

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The force has a detailed community engagement strategy to facilitate the identification of local priority problems which incorporates eight elements: neighbourhood profiling, community consultation, community intelligence, partnership working, active citizenship, cultural change, performance, and media and marketing.

The force demonstrates extensive use of LATs, multi-agency projects (Mid Sussex BCU), citizen focus surveys and the development of feedback mechanisms. The force also ensures that Neighbourhood Policing team members attend community meetings, conduct street briefings, identify key independent networks (KINs), and gain intelligence through schemes such as Shop Watch and Bar Watch, and it has recently introduced Neighbourhood Watch by email.

The force utilises surveys to assess community concerns and has appropriate links within the force website which explains the concept of Neighbourhood Policing and allows members of the public to contact their local NST officers.

Members of NSTs are active in relation to community consultation. Although the force recognises that it can do more to engage with hard-to-reach groups, there is strong evidence of an ability to identify and work with a wide range of communities to solve local problems.

Local JAGs, LATs and presence at non-police-led community meetings and the SPA, who hold regular public consultation meetings, enable communities to discuss areas of concern and influence the prioritisation of action.

Regular meeting structures supported by a sub-strand of the community engagement strategy (media and marketing) allow police and partners to report back progress to local communities.

The force is fully engaged with the ACPO implementation team and ensures that it supplies data for the ACPO tracking process. The force has developed a Neighbourhood Policing post-implementation plan which involves gap analysis and generates actions to improve delivery. The post-implementation plan is considered on a monthly basis during the Neighbourhood Policing board meeting. The ACPO implementation team has been invited to review and comment in relation to the development of the post-implementation plan and its members are standing attendees at the Neighbourhood Policing board meeting.

The post-implementation plan which supports the force performance assurance framework is intended to run from April 2007 to April 2008. The plan is owned by a chief officer and is set within a project framework.

Objectives are clearly explained, agreed activities are documented, milestones are identified and action holders are held to account in relation to expected delivery dates. The force review and inspection team conducts the review, audit and inspection functions for the Neighbourhood Policing board meeting.

The Neighbourhood Policing implementation and roll-out phase has now been replaced by the post-implementation plan. Although the roll-out of Neighbourhood Policing will be completed by April 2008, the force intends to retain the Neighbourhood Policing board beyond this date.

The board considers it has an evolving profile and wants to ensure that it tracks Neighbourhood Policing data, develops outcome measurements and uses the corporate

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development department to reality-check Neighbourhood Policing delivery to assess and improve the effectiveness of implementation.

Sussex Police media and marketing department provides a range of publicity material to assist NSTs to engage with communities. Members of NSTs are encouraged to assess where the best opportunities can be found to publicise their roles.

A number of Sussex Police station reception areas were visited and staff were informative in relation to the force's commitment to Neighbourhood Policing. Reception staff were easily able to assist callers seeking details of NSTs. The force call-handling centre has access to the force website and was also able to locate named officers' contact details.

General reality checking during the inspection found that a significant number of local businesses and public buildings had information in relation to NST contact details.

As part of the force's engagement strategy, the force has developed and integrated the Crime and Disorder Data and Information Exchange (CADDIE) which has been developed jointly by the emergency services, councils and various other community organisations. It is a partnership website which holds crime and disorder information which is user friendly and has been assessed by a number of other visiting forces.

CADDIE can be accessed in any area within Sussex and allows the viewing of data to establish what is happening in any given area. The service is available from the force's intranet front page. The force also conducts quality assurance surveys with local communities to gauge the ease of access to policing services.

The force is engaged with the ACPO Neighbourhood Policing programme and is cognisant of the requirement to comply with regional action plans.

Staff attached to Neighbourhood Policing teams are trained in the completion of neighbourhood profiles and neighbourhood problem profiles, with the assistance of analytical support from BCU intelligence units.

General reality checking reveals that there is a growing resource of local community data available which can be relied upon when planning policing activities. Although not a consistent approach, there are numerous examples of other specialist units that have sought early community impact assessments from Neighbourhood Policing teams during major crime investigations.

Both the force's strategic assessment and attendant control strategies focus on resolving neighbourhood issues which have been identified through the completion of problem profiles supplemented with additional data sources, including surveys and information from partners.

Sussex Police has published a document entitled *Operating Guidance for Neighbourhood Policing: A Definition of Neighbourhood Policing in Sussex*. The guidance is clear in relation to deployment, tenure, abstraction and patrol plans. Members of Neighbourhood Policing teams are expected to deal with any crimes, incidents and problem solving within their geographical area. Issues identified as a community priority include:

- repeat victims;
- incidents involving prolific and priority offenders, divisional or neighbourhood targets;
- individuals subject to an anti-social behaviour order (ASBO);
- nuisance or anti-social behaviour; and
- environmental or quality of life issues.

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The roll-out of Neighbourhood Policing has brought associated tensions in relation to the provision of additional accommodation and equipment. Notwithstanding some concerns expressed in relation to a shortage of vehicles and computers, the estates and resources strategies which have complemented Neighbourhood Policing development have ensured that staff engaged in this specialist discipline have been able to perform their roles effectively. It should also be noted that the continued provision of effective Neighbourhood Policing is a major factor in the force's long-term financial planning strategy.

As a result of previous inspection recommendations the force has reviewed its approach to the training of staff involved in Neighbourhood Policing. Although reality checking found a small number of staff who had not been trained, in general terms most Neighbourhood Policing team members have had recent and appropriate training.

The force has developed its own Neighbourhood Policing training course (the Academy Package). The course aims include understanding community engagement, applying principles of problem solving, exploring partnership engagement and effective communication.

The package covers wider issues such as the richer picture and links between Neighbourhood Policing and major or organised crime. The force is currently seeking to evaluate the programme to ensure that it meets the needs of students, informs the next steps of continuation training and explores the accreditation of Neighbourhood Policing staff within a recognised specialist role.

Sussex Police has linked LATs, ASBO co-ordinators and Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinators with local Neighbourhood Policing teams. The force has also integrated local community wardens, special constables and volunteers into NSTs.

PCSOs within Sussex have benefited from the Neighbourhood Policing Academy Package. Reality checking found that PCSOs felt supported and were able to obtain information and advice from a number of sources.

There is a clear and easily defined link between the force Neighbourhood Policing lead, the HR department and the SPA. The design and evaluation of the Academy Package and frequent reiterations of the Neighbourhood Policing module within the student officer course reveal a strong working relationship.

A recent example is the requirement for officers on the student officer course to undertake a part of their Neighbourhood Policing training externally and work on a joint problem-solving exercise case study with partners.

The force has developed a neighbourhood profile template which guides users through a process that ensures that a wide range of available data (including partnership data) is considered when developing neighbourhood profiles.

As stated, local neighbourhood profiles are used to inform tactical deployment at a local level, and the force strategic assessment. The guidance accompanying the template advises that local neighbourhood profiles should be subject to regular review.

Sussex Police has built on established CDRP protocols in relation to intelligence sharing. The force has considered the challenges associated with an increase in community intelligence and delivered training to Neighbourhood Policing teams in relation to intelligence requirements and the 5x5x5 grading criteria. The force is monitoring intelligence submissions to ensure that appropriate analytical assets are available to service any significant uplift in community intelligence.

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Apart from geographical neighbourhoods, Sussex Police has mapped out more generic neighbourhoods based on data gathered. The force is effective at utilising the opinions of KINs and other diverse groups to influence strategic and tactical decision making. The force has one of the largest gay and lesbian communities in Europe, and has sought to understand the needs of the various sub-groups by the use of meetings and surveys. Survey results are utilised to respond to needs and to shape policing priorities and activities.

The response has been tailored to ensure that these communities are policed by staff who are aware of the priority issues concerning this specific community. Local differences are taken into account, and constant environmental scanning supported by regular formal dialogue ensures that new or emergent communities are considered by the force.

As stated, the force has already achieved full coverage, but the post-implementation plan ensures that numbers are monitored using tracker data and discussed at each monthly Neighbourhood Policing performance board meeting. The programme contains a realistic engagement strategy.

The force is currently engaged in the Challenge Programme which is intended to review how the force can make financial savings through improvements in efficiency. The Chief Constable and the SPA have defined the parameters of the work of the Challenge Programme with a clear direction that all department heads are to ensure that any budget reductions do not affect the commitment and investment in Neighbourhood Policing. The force's financial department contributes to the Neighbourhood Policing performance board and is working to deliver a corporate and consistent costing model for Neighbourhood Policing.

The force has embarked on joint strategic assessments with partners. The results of these initiatives have been evaluated and the force is amending existing guidance and considering lessons learnt.

The force has developed a template which clearly sets out how joint strategic assessments should be completed and this has been trialled within East Sussex. Where previous police strategic assessments might have essentially covered the same ground as tactical assessments, the purpose of the new joint assessments is to focus on the risks and threats that impact on the counties as a whole, including public safety and public confidence.

The force has ensured that, alongside the development of Neighbourhood Policing, response, call handling and other customer-facing functions are all well integrated with the citizen focus agenda. Reality checking found that force control room and front office staff were knowledgeable about Neighbourhood Policing and were able to give appropriate advice and direction. The force has a well developed website which is informative and guides users to their local NST.

Work in progress

Reality checking revealed that Neighbourhood Policing specialist officers and other staff engaged in Neighbourhood Policing activities are being utilised by other specialist departments who are aware of the opportunities that local community intelligence can contribute (ie major crime investigation). The diversity team within Sussex Police is currently reviewing community impact assessments to ensure that community intelligence, KINs and Neighbourhood Policing become pivotal in the process.

The force is currently developing a DVD training aid which will inform all staff and external partners both why and how the effective implementation of Neighbourhood Policing can improve other areas of policing business.

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The force is currently developing an IT solution (NEMESIS) which will integrate numerous existing separate databases. The force is also continuing to develop an IT-based electronic problem-solving toolkit as well as customer relationship management systems which include allowing members of the public to make their own appointments with NST staff over the internet.

The force plans to conduct a thorough review of Neighbourhood Policing functions between September 2007 and March 2008. The review will include formal visits to each district by the lead ACC, who will check Neighbourhood Policing performance data and hold individual interviews and focus groups with Neighbourhood Policing staff and partners.

The force is currently developing quarterly activity analysis to assess Neighbourhood Policing abstraction and vacancy levels and to develop automatic reporting processes.

The force has recently accepted an offer from the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) to run partnership-focused Neighbourhood Policing workshops. It is intended that the NPIA will run the workshops (which will be attended by both police and key partners) which will focus on effective ways of joint involvement in Neighbourhood Policing problem solving.

The force has recently appointed a dedicated customer service implementation manager whose role is to develop, implement and manage delivery of the Sussex Police customer service strategy. This role will focus upon liaising with colleagues at West Sussex County Council to identify any synergies, pool resources and develop common customer service practice.

The force is currently seeking to make policing services more accessible to the public by developing community outlets. This project will provide access to force computer systems from remote locations to support community policing. A successful trial of the solution has taken place, a draft pilot report has been produced and a number of recommendations implemented. A limited rollout to a small number of community outlets is now taking place.

Sussex Police's information systems (IS) department has carried out a scoping exercise to look at a replacement for the existing watch systems following a Neighbourhood Watch review by the police authority. Input has been provided from across the force and there has been collaboration with other forces to evaluate their solutions. The report has now been passed to the senior sponsor for consideration.

Areas for improvement

A dip check of a representative sample of performance development reviews (PDRs) reveals that, although staff involved in Neighbourhood Policing have up-to-date PDRs, the objectives were generally qualitative and hard to measure. Job profiles were often generic and not representative of the roles performed. The force needs to review the PDR process for staff engaged in Neighbourhood Policing and introduce measurable objectives and more appropriate role profiles.

Notwithstanding published force policies in relation to deployment, tenure, abstraction and patrol plans, it is evident that staff engaged in Neighbourhood Policing activities are expected to perform different investigative roles dependent on where they serve. The force needs to consider this issue and review policy in relation to both the monitoring of, and type of investigative workload carried by, Neighbourhood Policing team officers.

RECOMMENDATION 1

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The force needs to conduct a review of the policies and guidance which support the Neighbourhood Policing function. The review should specifically focus upon the relevance of performance development reviews to roles performed and include a detailed examination of compliance with abstraction policies.

Sussex Police has developed a comprehensive training package for staff engaged in Neighbourhood Policing activity. The force should consider the value of delivering Neighbourhood Policing training to staff employed in other specialist roles. Further consideration also needs to be given to the delivery and timing of refresher training and the development of an evaluation process to test the impact of Neighbourhood Policing training products on staff.

The force has developed activity templates which cover Neighbourhood Policing team patrol and activity. They are intended to record the activities of Neighbourhood Policing team staff, including crime or incident hotspots patrol, tactical TCG tasking, reassurance patrols, intelligence requirement activity, KIN contact, neighbourhood feedback, planned appointments and problem-solving activities. These returns are not always completed, properly supervised or used to inform individual PDR performance meetings.

Line managers have concerns that the contracted hours of PCSOs conflict with those of officers parading for duty and therefore they do not always receive adequate briefings.

Notwithstanding the recognised need for the completion of essential administrative and analytical support functions to ensure effective Neighbourhood Policing roll-out, during the reality-checking phase of inspection activity when speaking to supervisors within focus groups, it became evident that there was a shared perception by many that administrative bureaucracy (including responding to a disproportionate amount of unnecessary emails from HQ) keeps supervisors within police buildings for significant amounts of time, restricting their ability to both observe Neighbourhood Policing team staff performance and be available to give direction, support or advice.

The force understandably expects supervisors to conduct a range of activities that do not involve direct supervision, including completing ward problem profiles, PDRs, and establishing KINs. The tension between role requirements and a perception by supervisors that they cannot perform some basic line-management functions effectively needs to be addressed by the force.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Triangulated reality checking within the force revealed a frustration by first-line supervisors in relation to a perception of unnecessary administrative burden. The force should conduct a review of the first-line supervision functions within Neighbourhood Policing in order to assess how first-line supervisors can be more effective.

It was interesting to observe that many respondents within this process had never been given the opportunity to discuss these matters (or other Neighbourhood Policing issues) collectively, or to raise concerns, spread best practice or suggest new or improved ways of working. The programme of district visits planned by the new ACC lead should be consultative at practitioner level, in order to identify any barriers (real or perceived) to effective Neighbourhood Policing delivery and seek opportunities for improvement.

Sussex Police needs to review managerial roles within Neighbourhood Policing and assess how supervisory effectiveness can be improved. Again, when speaking to Neighbourhood Policing supervisors, it was felt that a significant amount of staff involved in Neighbourhood

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Policing activity spent a disproportionate amount of time using the internet to visit sites for non-police-related matters. The ACC with NP portfolio responsibility has started a district inspection process and intends to gauge whether this issue is localised or the findings are symptomatic of a wider problem.

The force needs to use existing IT monitoring arrangements to identify whether this perception by supervisors is a reality which is inhibiting performance. This issue is flagged for consideration by the force, and may be worthy of review in a wider context to ensure that this perception is addressed and managed within corporate policy and procedure.

The force also needs to develop a structured supervision plan for Neighbourhood Policing which is monitored for compliance.

Sussex Police enjoys good partnership and intelligence-sharing arrangements within the traditional CDRP structure; however, the roll-out of Neighbourhood Policing is being driven at a pace that is challenging to partners.

The force needs to review its communication and consultation strategy with key partner agencies and to work towards improving its current commitment to developing joint strategic assessments. Feedback also suggests that partners would benefit from up-to-date structural schematics, including who is responsible for what within the force and contact details.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The force needs to conduct a review of the Neighbourhood Policing internal and external communications strategy to identify how communication with key partner agencies at a strategic level can be improved and how to ensure that Sussex Police staff are kept up to date with Neighbourhood Policing roll-out progress.

The force has abstraction policies in place in relation to officers engaged in NST activities. Reality checking found that, although PCSOs and Special Constabulary officers were predominantly allowed to carry out their intended roles uninterrupted, there were a number of examples of police officers and supervisors who were required to perform other policing duties (ie cover call response and perform the role of custody officer).

Although such incidents were isolated and dependent on local BCU policy, the force needs to review its generic abstraction policy and ensure that compliance is included within the force performance framework.

Notwithstanding that problem-solving activities with partners and the public are being utilised effectively, the force needs to develop the assessment of problem-solving results into the tasking and co-ordination process, including the introduction of feedback assessment of the communities' appraisal of delivery and the development of formal sign-off agreements.

The force needs to develop a policy to ensure effective continuity and succession planning for neighbourhood officers and staff.

This assessment has sought to establish whether Neighbourhood Policing is a philosophy or style that runs through the force and is visible through its culture.

Sussex Police has traditionally been very customer focused and the re-branding of Neighbourhood Policing is a natural progression. The force does still need, however, to educate a number of officers in non-Neighbourhood Policing roles about the opportunities

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afforded by the delivery of effective Neighbourhood Policing, ensuring that BCU and department managers are knowledgeable and giving clear and consistent messages in relation to the importance of Neighbourhood Policing.

The force needs to consider whether the strategic independent advisory group and the local BCU independent advisory groups should become more involved in the strategic priorities and arrangements of Neighbourhood Policing.

Although policies are 'run past them', their role should be one of independent challenge during the consultation stage of policy development.

The published roles of staff engaged in Neighbourhood Policing within the engagement strategy ensure that the Neighbourhood Policing style within Sussex Police remains focused on vulnerable people. The force should test the current engagement strategy against the Victim Code and the National Quality of Service Commitment to ensure that it is fully compliant.

Community intelligence is fully integrated into Sussex Police's NIM processes, but the force acknowledges that the management and analytical response needs further development.

The force needs to consider how it can measure the effectiveness of community engagement outcomes in terms of public confidence.

The communications strategy also needs to be reviewed to ensure that the actions contained within the strategy are being discharged within clear time frames. As stated in previous inspections, the strategy needs to be implemented consistently to increase public confidence in local policing and promote greater community involvement. Reality checking also found that a number of staff engaged in Neighbourhood Policing would have benefited from more regular feedback as to how Neighbourhood Policing is being developed within the force.

Developing Practice

AREA OF INSPECTION Neighbourhood Policing

TITLE: Sussex Police Consultation Mapping

PROBLEM:

Sussex Police and the SPA have been involved in gathering feedback from the public on a variety of issues for a considerable time, often via public meetings. Significant time and money were being expended on communication, consultation and engagement.

The force and the police authority recognised that they were duplicating efforts and missing numerous opportunities to communicate, consult and engage. This was identified as attributable to gaps in engagement. The force undertook a more detailed analysis and established that even where people did respond to consultation or attend meetings, they were not necessarily representing the views of the majority of the community.

Further research revealed that the force and the police authority's consultation process was, albeit unintentionally, not effectively engaging with certain groups of people. These included people with childcare commitments or those who had problems with travel or access, young people, black and minority ethnic communities, gypsies and travellers, elderly people and disabled people.

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SOLUTION:

The force and the police authority set out to establish a web-based resource that is capable of being interrogated by users in order to:

- access a catalogue of the diverse range of communities in Sussex – communities being defined by geographical area (postcode, neighbourhood, district, division, etc), demographics (gender, age, ethnicity, faith, disability, sexual orientation, etc) or common interest (eg all those who may be affected by a single issue such as Stop and Search);
- understand what mechanisms exist in order to communicate, consult and/or engage with each of these communities, including where, when and how to access these mechanisms;
- appreciate which of the mechanisms are considered most effective or are the preferred means for communicating, consulting and/or engaging with particular communities (and why);
- gain access to an archive of existing research and consultation relating to any particular community;
- understand who is responsible for communicating, consulting and/or engaging with a community within each partner public agency;
- understand who 'owns' or can otherwise assist access to a specific resource, including opportunities for co-ordinated approaches, both within public agencies and also communities themselves;
- give public subscribers the ability to register interest in community issues and leave feedback on the mechanisms and resources contained in the database; and
- identify gaps in public authority engagement among particular groups or in certain locations which can be targeted for improvement.

It has been established that key partners (East and West Sussex County Councils and Brighton and Hove City Council) have consultation databases which, to varying degrees, meet many of the above objectives. Sussex Police is seeking to develop better arrangements to share multi-agency resources.

OUTCOME(S):

As a result of implementing these changes, Sussex Police has identified appropriate contacts and systems with partner organisations and has established more productive dialogue on sharing consultation resources.

In the near future it is planned to apply jointly for capacity-building funding from the Sussex Improvement Partnership (GoSE) to build a central 'hub' that will allow the force to share information between the various databases.

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Performance Management

GRADE	GOOD
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National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
6	29	8	0

National contextual factors

There is no single accepted model of performance management across the police service, but any such model or framework must be fit for purpose. Ideally, forces should demonstrate that individuals at every level of the organisation understand their contribution to converting resources into agreed delivery, and know how they will be held to account. On a daily basis, first-line supervisors monitor, support and quality assure the performance of their teams. At the other end of the spectrum, chief officer-led performance meetings – often based loosely on the American Compstat model – are a vehicle for accountability and improvement. Robust leadership, a commitment to improvement and reliable, real-time information systems are all critical factors in effective performance management.

There is no mechanistic link between overall force performance and the grade awarded in this framework. The grade is based on the quality of the force's processes that enable it to identify and react to changes in performance.

Contextual factors

Since the last baseline assessment, Sussex Police has significantly developed its performance management framework. In other recent reports the performance structure within Sussex Police has been recognised as a highly effective means by which to monitor and challenge performance at district, BCU and force levels.

The force has introduced a local policing plan development board (chaired by the DCC) which includes senior police authority members appointed by the PPSG). The force has also developed a new-style force strategic assessment which has much more focused analysis on risk, and which will hopefully lead to a more impactful strategic intelligence requirement.

Dynamic performance information allows supervisors to consider and react to emerging problems. The Chief Constable has a clearly articulated vision which is articulated to staff and shared by partners. He ensures that there are clear lines of accountability from the ACPO team through BCU commanders and department heads to junior supervisors and front-end staff.

The Chief Constable chairs monthly performance meetings (attended by members of the SPA) during which force performance is thoroughly considered by all key stakeholders. During the meeting action plans are agreed and the DCC ensures compliance by conducting supportive visits to BCUs and departments within agreed time frames.

The force has embedded NIM processes and ensures that the force strategic assessment is linked to business planning. Control strategies support business and strategic objectives, and the overall performance framework is linked to corporate planning, budgeting and

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resource management. Strategic, operational and financial planning cycles are integrated in the force planning cycle. This ensures that key strategic and operational priorities are included within the financial planning cycle to inform budgeting decisions.

The performance management framework within Sussex Police is integrated into the three main strands of the policing plan priorities:

- Neighbourhood Policing;
- keeping the public safe; and
- making best use of resources.

Each strand has a nominated ACPO lead to ensure corporate accountability. There is a desire to achieve continuous improvement in a challenging financial climate, in terms of both quantitative and qualitative data linked to the service principles listed under the 'LISTEN' acronym.

Strengths

The force intranet has been technically developed following detailed consultation with key staff agencies to allow performance data to be updated in a timely manner and to be retrieved on a daily basis so that it provides an exact performance picture broken down into force, BCU, department or individual (including protecting vulnerable people and Neighbourhood Policing teams). This ensures timely intervention to performance risks and provides the basis for viewing comparable data in real time to inform future resource priority and focus on a daily basis.

All performance data is accessible on the force intranet for managers and individuals to identify performance priorities. Skilled analysts sitting within BCUs and departments are also able to provide additional analytical interpretation of data.

The performance regime is further enhanced by comparison with citizen focus PPAF (policing performance assessment framework) MSF groups across a range of qualitative measures and this is given prominence at the FPM to ensure that quantitative targets are not exclusively prioritised.

Citizen focus is a key element of performance measurement and is included at all levels of local training delivery. Each front-line supervisor is required to conduct a minimum number of qualitative checks each quarter with victims or service users direct. This data is fed into a central repository and evaluated by the HQ performance department. The importance of citizen focus is reinforced through the FPM and local performance meetings within each BCU.

The Sussex Police website has an innovative portal for public contact via a postcode search to identify a local officer or PCSO in addition to the traditional contact options. This will automatically focus community members into the local policing priorities detailed and assists in the branding concept key to Neighbourhood Policing delivery.

Key performance priorities are detailed in the annual policing plan which is linked to the force strategic assessment and control strategy. The policing plan priorities are reflected locally on each BCU through the implementation of an action plan which is the central focus of policing response. The action plan is managed by district commanders through the prescribed NIM, tactical TCG and CDRP processes, and monitored through the FPM and by the SPA Planning and Performance Steering Group (PPSG).

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The PPSG has recently been restructured to replicate the local policing plan strategic objectives. The role of lead members, the considered appointments to the PPSG and the enhanced scrutiny of protective services, public satisfaction levels and HR performance are further developments in the performance management regime.

The PDR process within the force is managed on an electronic database that is identifiable to individuals linked to the policing plan priorities. Adherence to the PDR process is maintained by linking the completion of an up-to-date PDR as the benchmark for assessment for lateral development or promotion.

Responsibility for local performance lies with the BCU district commanders (chief inspectors) who manage identified resources within their geographical boundaries. Internal and external scrutiny regimes are managed through the local tactical TCG and FPM. In addition, the district commander and a nominated SPA representative provide the statutory link to external partners through membership of the CDRP.

The force has a clear strategic steer that all individual PDRs must reflect policing plan priorities and be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely). Skill competencies for each role are measured against the integrated competency framework.

Performance risks are reviewed and prioritised at the tactical TCG every two weeks at BCU level, where NIM principles are addressed through application of the SARA problem-solving model. Force and BCU performance risks are managed during the application of the level 2 tactical TCG process.

The force enjoys a healthy relationship with the SPA. Both the force and the SPA are firmly committed to enhancing and improving performance by ensuring that there is a proper balance of governance and oversight by the police authority without affecting the operational decision making of the chief officer team. The SPA is proud of the improvements evidenced within the force over recent years, but is by no means complacent and seeks to position the force as a national leader in delivering policing services. The SPA and the force have effective methods of consultative engagement with communities and work together to ensure that policing plans and objectives reflect both national and local priorities.

The SPA has set the annual budget (2006/07 = £227.2 million) with a priority focus upon delivering improvements to policing services across a wide spectrum. The police authority seeks to ensure that the force is assessed at regular intervals through the formal presentation of performance reports to the PPSG which is held quarterly. The SPA has appointed a lead member for each of the key policing disciplines, who in turn report findings independently to the PPSG and the wider full SPA meeting.

Membership of the PPSG has recently been strengthened to ensure representation from lead members for each of the key strategic priorities: Neighbourhood Policing, keeping the public safe and best use of resources. The PPSG has also within its membership executive members of the police authority such as the chair, vice chair and lead members for HR, resources and community engagement.

During numerous focus groups the 'force vision' was tested (eg communications and NSTs). It was evident that the majority of staff were aware of the force priorities and were able to articulate the three headline strands. More importantly, staff were able to contextualise their contribution; however, additional clarity would be encouraged for the staff engaged in protecting vulnerable people disciplines.

Sussex Police has a dedicated performance manager who is sited at HQ and has close liaison and formal contact accountability processes with ACPO and BCU command.

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The performance manager is responsible for force performance and presents a detailed overview at the monthly FPM and this is supplemented by provision of a performance pack in advance that encompasses all key performance areas. The force review and inspection team conducts review, audit and inspection functions for the force.

Overall BCU resource levels are set in accordance with an agreed strategic formula that satisfies scrutiny by the HR board, finance board and territorial policing and operations board. Each BCU also has a documented performance plan that is tested centrally for compliance with community consultation and adherence to policing plan priorities. The performance plan requires validation and endorsement by ACPO.

The FPM is an innovative response to strategic performance management and is utilised as a showcase to spread good practice and resolve problem areas. In addition, the inclusion of an awards element for staff at all levels, supplemented by videoed service delivery feedback that features members of the local community, is acknowledged as evidence of strong cohesive leadership. The design of this forum is under constant review to maintain its focus and freshness. The FPM provides the force with visibility and accountability that link the strategic assessment, control strategy and local policing plan.

The strategy of the ACPO team has been to devolve responsibility for policing delivery and performance to BCU commanders and department heads. This positive empowerment is measured and scrutinised at a senior level by examination and monitoring at the monthly FPM and by decision making at the force executive board, supplemented by further scrutiny at the territorial policing board, HR board and finance board.

This process allows BCU commanders flexibility to deliver local policing priorities to a mix of rural, urban and semi-urban communities while still maintaining the Sussex Police corporate approach.

The force ensures that performance is central to an effective PDR process, and all staff are required to have a completed and up-to-date PDR that forms the basis of assessment for lateral or hierarchical development. In addition, the FPM is utilised as showcase to present officer awards that are highlighted in the media and published widely within the force. Poor performance is dealt with at an appropriate level, focusing on support, development and learning from mistakes made. The SPA also engages in the process by recognising individual officer performance at full police authority meetings.

There is a clear process of engagement and assessment of performance risk on a monthly basis whereby a nominated BCU or specialist department is selected for performance monitoring and accountability.

The framework is transparent in that the relevant BCU or department is selected in advance and an independent review team is delegated to review key business areas in accordance with the force assurance process that is modelled on the Going Local 3 template for inspection. The relevant BCU or department is fully consulted at key points in advance of the FPM.

Following appearance at the FPM, documented actions are identified and managed through to discharge by the nominated ACPO lead.

The DCC, supported by chief officer colleagues, regularly conducts post-FPM programme performance inspection and this visibly holds key stakeholders to account. He ensures that problems are shared and that appropriate support and advice are made available.

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Area BCUs are subdivided into identifiable districts, with performance responsibility delegated to district commanders (chief inspectors) who are performance-assessed at both BCU and FPM levels.

Each BCU is led by a chief superintendent who carries responsibility for actively pursuing external performance outcomes through membership of the Crime Disorder & Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs,) Joint Agency Groups (JAGs) and Local Action Teams (LATs). This engagement enables the police and the community to assess joint performance within strategic frameworks.

A central resource allocation formula is applied to determine BCU strength which is factored against a risk-based assessment of demand, population and sparsity. This process is scrutinised at the territorial policing and operations board. A central pool of additional specialist HQ resources can be utilised by BCU commanders following successful resource application bids at the force tactical TCG held every two weeks.

The force makes effective use of British Crime Survey data and conducts additional independent surveys to gauge customer satisfaction and confidence in policing. The survey data is analysed and fed into the force performance framework to inform planning and service delivery. The force also conducts video interviews with service customers on the street. A number of these interactions are played for the benefit of all staff who attend the monthly FPM.

Sussex Police has a major international airport (Gatwick) within its boundary and has invested heavily in extra HQ-based resource to support the management of cross-border criminality and the counter-terrorism threat.

The DCC is the lead for the force in the collaborative arrangements with Surrey Police. The force has recently learnt that (with Surrey Police) it has achieved pilot status and will receive additional government funding to develop an integrated specialist operational command. It is hoped that the process will deliver considerable benefits to both forces in terms of improvement in efficiency and effectiveness.

Activity analysis and activity-based costing (ABC) are both widely used and integrated into the force's stream of performance information, including their use at the FPM. HR and financial resources managers are included in both BCUs and FPMs to ensure that resource use is regularly scrutinised alongside other areas of performance.

The performance management framework integrates crime and detections performance with use of resources (eg HR, ICT, finance, sickness and ABC data) and outcomes (PPAF and neighbourhood reassurance surveys). The force planning process ensures that key department heads are jointly consulted, and held to account in relation to the progress that the HQ support functions are making in delivering the force's published objectives.

Work in progress

The force is still progressing a database to ensure that the capture of data is seamless, but has made significant strides since the last baseline assessment in developing the intranet so that data that can be drilled down to an individual is retrieved and available in a timely manner. Further work is ongoing to improve the availability of data relative to crime performance and customer service/user satisfaction.

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Areas for Improvement

Sussex Police is a performance-driven organisation that has clear community engagement strategies (such as LISTEN). This philosophy needs to stretch into all specialist departments that do not easily fit the quantitative data profiles. Further work is ongoing to ensure that a balance of qualitative and quantitative measures is visible and measurable across all specialist disciplines and linked through role-specific PDR profiles and performance priorities.

As detailed within Neighbourhood Policing, a recurring theme emerged when interviewing Sussex Police personnel concerning frustrations being felt by front-end staff and supervisors in relation to the perception of having to deal with needless paperwork and respond to emails when time could be used more usefully. Sussex Police needs to consider how best to improve its approach to achieving continuous learning, developing processes for staff feedback, ideas and concerns, and how to reduce needless bureaucracy.

Notwithstanding LAAs and although evident within relationships between BCUs and CDRPs, the force needs to further develop the integration of its performance management and review processes with that of its partners, including shared targets, tasking and accountability. The four disciplines inspected under protecting vulnerable people, for example, would benefit from further development in this area.

The strategic vision for PDR completion and links to the policing priorities were evident in the inspection focus groups in general, with the exception of protecting vulnerable people disciplines where more thought needs to be considered to including appropriate objectives that can contribute to the overall force strategy.

It was evident that SPA members are invited to the FPM, but it was apparent through observation and reality checking that their role is non-participative. The force needs to consider whether SPA members should also be invited to ask questions of BCU or department command teams.

Sussex Police needs to establish a workforce allocation model that is subject to regular review. The force needs to become more sophisticated in its assessment of individual and team workloads balanced against both risk and resources available. Again, during the inspection of the related disciplines within protecting vulnerable people, there was clear evidence of disproportionate staffing allocation and team or individual workloads dependent on location.

RECOMMENDATION 4

The force needs to further develop the integration of its performance management and review processes with that of its partners, including shared targets, tasking and accountability. The four disciplines inspected under protecting vulnerable people, for example, would benefit from further development in this area.

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Developing Practice

AREA OF INSPECTION: Performance Management

TITLE: Effective use of performance information

PROBLEM: Performance information within Sussex Police was produced on a monthly basis and was not widely used or understood. Attempting performance analysis on the substantial amount of data within the force's crime-recording computer system, introduced in the early 1990s, was a time-consuming and relatively manual task.

SOLUTION:

Business Objects and the force's intranet were used to provide a stream of timely, accurate and relevant data. Performance information was democratised – made easily available to all and explained in accessible terms at the FPM. Meanwhile an innovative system developed by an operational police officer brought substantial improvements to the management of active crime investigations.

Before the changes, a significant amount of resource was invested in producing Home Office returns and a relatively small set of month-end reports. For example, the main headline report was only available during the second week of the following month. Performance data is now refreshed daily, with the previous night's figures available in the early hours of the morning. Headline figures are now displayed on the force intranet's home page, reflecting the central role that performance plays in Sussex Police. In addition, divisional and departmental performance analysts have access to a range of source systems through Business Objects, enabling local, bespoke analysis in addition to the suite of centrally published reports.

Tight management of active crime investigations was identified as a barrier to improving detection performance, for example the need for supervisor reviews to be completed on time. A divisional sergeant developed the SMART package to give fellow supervisors close grip of their team's active workload and managers, to identify teams lacking timely reviews. SMART was adopted across the force, and has now been updated and integrated with team- and individual-level performance data and Sussex Police's electronic crime investigation forms.

OUTCOME(S):

The improvement achieved in Sussex Police's performance in the past four years is the desired outcome. The Office for Criminal Justice Reform recognised Sussex Police's "effective use of performance information" as a main driver for detection improvements.

Users can 'personalise' their intranet page to show data for their local area, and three-quarters of police officers and staff have done this, demonstrating the current penetration of, and interest in, performance data.

SMART, combined with an intranet home page display showing each officer their 'active crimes under investigation', produced much tighter grip of ongoing enquiries, including substantial reductions in 'live' crimes and a tighter process of supervisor reviews.

FORCE CONTACT: Phil Woolf, Head of Performance Improvement, Corporate

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Development Department, Sussex Police – 01273 404589

INSPECTION AREA: Performance management

TITLE: Force performance meeting

PROBLEM:

In 2003 Sussex Police introduced district-based policing, with chief inspectors accountable for all aspects of performance delivery within their CDRP area. The force needed a process to drive performance improvement through this new structure.

SOLUTION:

Sussex Police developed the FPM, held on a frequent cycle, to recognise high achievement, share good practice and relentlessly support and scrutinise lower performers. The process continues to evolve in 2007 with a developing inspection framework and the inclusion of citizen focus and best use of resources among its key areas of focus.

Chaired by the Chief Constable (and in his absence the DCC) the four-weekly meeting now examines BCUs and departments (eg the HR department in a risk-assessed response to baseline assessment grading). All chief officers are fully engaged in questioning, giving them effective scrutiny of front-line delivery, and direct communication of performance priorities and risks. The Chief Constable recognises high performance by presenting awards at each meeting.

The meeting is kept under constant review to ensure that it is effective and focused on current priorities and risks. During the past year enhancements have included the screening of video-taped interviews with the public to include the 'victim's voice' within the meeting; and detailed questioning about BCU use of resources (including activity based costing (ABC) data).

An inspection framework, based on Going Local 3, has now been developed to extend qualitative performance monitoring and broaden the areas of scrutiny.

OUTCOME(S):

Sussex Police has achieved significant increases in performance in the past four years, and HMIC among others has recognised the role played in this by the FPM.

The Office for Criminal Justice Reform, in its review of improved offences brought to justice performance in Sussex, highlighted performance management – including the FPM – as one of the main drivers for the force's improvement. Detection rates for crime overall are the highest on record – total rate at 30.6% and sanction rate 27.2% (compared with 21% two years ago and 16.9% six years ago).

During 2006/07 a sustained focus on burglary dwelling detection performance – an identified strategic risk for the force – has raised the rate to the local policing plan target.

The profile of citizen focus initiatives – eg Sussex Police's Neighbourhood Policing website and quality of service checks – has been raised at the FPM, assisting the development of citizen focus as a key strand of force performance.

FORCE CONTACT: Phil Woolf, Head of Performance Improvement, Corporate Development Department – 01273 404589

Protecting Vulnerable People – Overview

National contextual factors

The assessment framework for Protecting Vulnerable People was first developed in 2006 as part of HMIC's baseline assessment programme. It replaced two existing frameworks – Reducing/Investigating Hate Crime and Crimes against Vulnerable Victims – which focussed on hate crimes (predominantly racially motivated), domestic violence and child protection. Following consultation with practitioners and ACPO leads, a single framework was introduced with four components – domestic violence, the investigation and prevention of child abuse, the management of sex and dangerous offenders, and vulnerable missing persons. Although the four areas are discrete, they are also linked and share a common theme – they deal with vulnerable victims where there is a high risk that an incident can quickly become critical, and where a poor police response is both life-threatening and poses severe reputational risks for the force.

This year's inspection has been carried out using similar assessment standards as those in 2006. These highlight the importance of leadership and accountability; policy implementation; information management; staffing, workload and supervision; performance monitoring and management; training; the management of risk; and partnership working.

The work carried out by forces to protect the public, particularly those most vulnerable to risk of serious harm, is complex and challenging. No single agency, including the police, has the capacity to deliver the required response on its own. Success is therefore, dependent on effective multi-agency working and there are a number of established partnerships, involving a wide range of services and professionals, aimed at ensuring that an integrated approach is adopted to protecting those most vulnerable to risk of serious harm.

Contextual factors overview

The force states that "keeping the public safe" is one of its three strategic priorities for 2007/08. Literature, which is widely published internally for the benefit of staff and externally for partners and the public, clearly explains how the force intends to protect vulnerable people by supporting those who become victims and to protect the public from the most dangerous offenders, by ensuring that arrangements are in place to work together with the prison and probation services to manage any identified risk to communities.

Notwithstanding this published commitment, and although child abuse investigation features in detail within the force performance assurance framework (produced in November 2006) where the majority of action owners are specialist investigations branch (SIB) staff, there is no significant consideration of child abuse, domestic abuse, missing persons or multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) within the force's strategic assessment, control strategies, annual policing plan or the performance framework.

There has been a recent realignment of ACPO responsibilities with Sussex Police due to the appointment of two new ACCs following retirements. The Protection of Vulnerable People portfolio is now led by one ACC who links in with partner agencies at a strategic level. The Sussex SIB located at HQ supports and co-ordinates operational activity in relation to:

- child protection;
- adult protection;
- missing persons;
- public protection;

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- asylum and immigration issues;
- domestic violence;
- race/hate crime;
- hi-tech crime unit;
- serious sexual offences;
- human trafficking;
- Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure; and
- notifiable occupations.

The SIB is under the command of a detective superintendent (head of profession) who is the nominated professional lead for the above subjects, supported by a dedicated detective chief inspector (DCI) deputy. Day-to-day activity in relation to responding to the needs of vulnerable people is generally dealt with by divisional staff.

The most serious allegations of crime are investigated by trained detectives within divisional specialist investigations units (SIUs) on each BCU.

The detective superintendent and DCI within the HQ-SIB fulfil a number of strategic roles, especially in relation to partnership arrangements and including the force's contribution to MAPPA. Both are line-managed by Sussex Police head of CID.

The head of profession meets regularly with other external heads of adult protection, including representatives from East and West Sussex County Councils and Brighton and Hove City Council, to discuss opportunities for multi-agency problem solving.

The force HQ-SIB is responsible for maintaining a corporate structure and link into BCU commanders who determine the resource levels and line-manage BCU-SIU staff. BCU commanders are responsible for resilience within the units and determine abstraction rates. This is a potential friction point due to other competing demands.

Force performance focuses on measurable data. A great deal of SIB activity is related to problem solving and conducting interventions designed to minimise and prevent risk. Successful interventions are difficult to measure in terms of outcomes as it can never be proven that such activity has either prevented a serious crime or reduced risk.

This assessment has established that staff involved in protecting vulnerable people activity are not subject to the same performance scrutiny as other departments and feel undervalued by the force.

There are many sections of legislation relating to SIB activity which are often supported by statutory guidance, policy and national best practice. Optimum resource models are suggested which, if fully implemented, would significantly drain resources engaged in other core policing activities.

There is clear evidence of effective joint working and data sharing with partner agencies involved in all the disciplines that constitute the protecting vulnerable people portfolio. The force is developing partnership activity and there are established systems to ensure that relevant data is readily available to inform operational policing decisions, including 24-hour access to the CRB.

Clear policy, guidance and information-sharing protocols have been published in relation to meeting the needs of vulnerable people and are available to practitioners in easily accessible formats, including the force intranet.

The BCU-SIUs deal with investigations concerning child abuse, domestic abuse and MAPPA, but missing persons sit outside the BCU-SIU structure and is managed by the local duty inspector, overseen by the chief inspector district commander.

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HQ-SIB is staffed by experienced officers who provide a strong strategic lead, a degree of co-ordination, and advice and training for BCU-SIU practitioners.

The accountability framework is blurred, as the head of profession can only negotiate with, and influence, BCU senior management team members. It is, however, widely understood that the risk of failing to deliver effective public protection services rests with individual BCU commanders.

Strengths

Force representatives attend six-monthly Achieving Best Evidence group meetings which are multi-agency and are held to ensure that all agencies are aware of their responsibilities when dealing with vulnerable victims. During the meetings (which are well attended), best practice is shared and new initiatives are discussed.

The co-location of staff within BCU-SIUs ensures effective links between staff dealing with closely related disciplines such as domestic abuse, child abuse and MAPPA.

The relationships enjoyed by Sussex Police and partners across the various disciplines within the public protection units have enabled excellent partnership working at both local and strategic levels. The relationship between the force and key agencies is formalised by agreed protocols and memoranda of understanding that are subject to regular review.

Effective information-sharing protocols have been developed with partner agencies, covering issues including access to fast-time intelligence and handling of third-party disclosure. BCU-SIU staff are actively encouraged to challenge other agencies at joint partnership meetings if they identify any areas of professional concern.

Areas for improvement

As detailed within the four disciplines below, HQ-SIB lacks capacity to engage in any meaningful review and inspection programme to measure BCU-SIU performance and identify risk. Recognising competing resource demand, a capacity and capability review of HQ-SIB should be conducted to ensure that it can discharge all of its responsibilities to a standard that is acceptable to the chief officer team.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Although in general terms (when compared with most similar force areas) Sussex Police has an appropriate number of staff engaged in protecting vulnerable people activity at district level, there is a shortage of resources available at the HQ-based specialist investigations branch (SIB) to support and co-ordinate protecting vulnerable people activity. The force needs to consider whether HQ-SIB resourcing is appropriate and how it can improve the support, co-ordination, audit, inspection and review functions for protecting vulnerable people activity.

The force should consider the introduction of a strategic public protection board (similar to the Neighbourhood Policing post-implementation board) with published terms of reference, chaired by the appropriate chief officer, in order to develop and co-ordinate force activity in relation to protecting vulnerable people, including child abuse, domestic abuse, missing persons and MAPPA.

If adopted, the board should comprise internal stakeholders and any additional sub-groups should include key partners. The introduction of a formal governance process should ensure

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that all public protection disciplines have clear lines of accountability and a chief officer champion.

Current policies should be reviewed against relevant ACPO and National Centre for Policing Excellence (NCPE) guidance in order to bring a greater degree of clarity to the accountability framework. Further specific development is also needed to ensure that BCU commanders and the head of profession for protecting vulnerable people are absolutely clear of their responsibilities.

Although HQ-SIB is the professional lead for child abuse, domestic abuse, missing persons and MAPPA, force policy dictates that selection, tenure, working arrangements, staffing levels, abstraction policies and other line-management arrangements are the responsibility of BCU commanders. The force should reflect upon and consider the potential strengths and weaknesses that realignment to a more centralised model may provide to improve performance.

RECOMMENDATION 6

The force needs to introduce a strategic steering group to consider interrelated protecting vulnerable people disciplines and ensure that any associated risk is assessed. Together with the assessment of reviews, resources, processes and systems, such a group should also ensure that there is properly documented consideration of risk and that policy and guidance remain contemporary.

The missing persons function is not contained within BCU-SIUs but performed elsewhere on a BCU – under the line management of the chief inspector (operations). The force should consider the possible benefits of realigning the missing persons role within the BCU-SIU structure.

RECOMMENDATION 7

The force should consider whether the realignment of the missing persons portfolio to the existing specialist investigations branch structure would improve performance across interrelated protecting vulnerable people disciplines.

The majority of specialist staff are appropriately trained. There is, however, no formal costed training plan that clearly sets out any training needs analysis for staff performing BCU-SIU activities, or a specific training programme that ensures that practitioners have appropriate skills before taking on specialist roles. The force also needs to consider how it will deliver ongoing professional development, accreditation and relevant refresher training.

Offenders who commit crimes investigated by BCU-SIUs pose a significant risk within Sussex communities. Current force policing plans do not include any specific plans or strategies for responding to child abuse, domestic abuse, MAPPA or missing persons.

Although individual role profiles are available for BCU-SIU practitioners, the force needs to develop a formal documented accountability framework which clearly articulates the strategic and operational responsibilities, from practitioners through to the chief officer lead.

RECOMMENDATION 8

The force needs to develop a formal documented accountability framework which clearly articulates the strategic and operational responsibilities, from practitioners through to the

chief officer lead. Consideration also needs to be given as to whether the line management, recruitment and selection of local specialist investigations unit staff should become the responsibility of the HQ-based specialist investigations branch.

The force needs to develop diagnostic tools and a capacity to conduct meaningful inspections, reviews and assessments of this area of policing.

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Protecting Vulnerable People – Child Abuse

GRADE	FAIR
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National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
3	17	21	2

National contextual factors

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on the police to ‘safeguard and promote the welfare of children’; safeguarding children, therefore, is a fundamental part of the duties of all police officers. All police forces, however, also have specialist units which, although they vary in structure, size and remit, normally take primary responsibility for investigating child abuse cases. Officers in these units work closely with other agencies, particularly Social Services, to ensure that co-ordinated action is taken to protect specific children who are suffering, or who are at risk of suffering, significant harm. The Children Act 2004 also requires each local authority to establish a Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB). This is the key statutory mechanism for agreeing how the relevant organisations in each local area will co-operate to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in that locality, and for ensuring the effectiveness of what they do.

Membership of LSCBs includes representatives of the relevant local authority and its Board partners, notably the police, probation, youth offending teams, strategic health authorities and primary care trusts, NHS Trusts and NHS Foundation Trusts, the Connexions service, Children and Family Courts Advisory and Support Service, Secure Training Centres and prisons.

Contextual factors

HQ-SIB has identified five strategic targets:

1. Work with partner agencies to create effective Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) structures across Sussex;
2. Continue to play an active part in serious case reviews at both investigative and strategic levels;
3. Work with the IS department for the creation of a child protection database and management system for family files;
4. Consult with Surrey Police concerning the schools liaison officer becoming part of specialist investigations in order to truly deliver the statutory duties expected from the new Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), and;
5. Continue to offer tactical advice on all child protection matters and specifically those relating to the child death protocol.

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Strengths

A recently appointed ACC now has full portfolio responsibility for all the protecting vulnerable people areas, including child abuse.

There is a clearly defined framework for child abuse investigations. The force is actively engaged in the LSCB and has developed clear links between strategic partnerships and operational delivery through supported and co-ordinated SIUs on BCUs.

Each BCU has variable staffing levels and in a previous SIB review (18 months ago) they were found to be adequate. A force performance formula has been used to set resource levels on BCUs, but it was evident from interviewing the performance manager that it is difficult to apply a formula to this discipline. In the BCUs visited the staffing levels appeared to be consistent and appropriate to demand. Staff interviewed stated they had a manageable caseload of eight to ten cases across a broad spectrum.

The head of profession (detective superintendent) is experienced and knowledgeable in relation to child abuse investigations. He is responsible for a progressive implementation of the NCPE and ACPO guidance which is well established. He also attends the strategic LSCB. Sussex Police representation at local LSCBs is covered by BCU-SIU supervisors.

LSCB action plans within each BCU are clearly documented, with multi-agency action owners. Plans cover a broad range of child-focused intervention strategies.

Each BCU-SIU has a dedicated detective inspector as department head and a role-specific detective sergeant (who are accredited detectives) who will on occasions also supervise other protecting vulnerable people disciplines. Sussex Police recognises the need for detective skills within child abuse investigation and the majority of staff are either already detective accredited or scheduled to attend the Initial Crime Investigators' Development Programme. All specialist staff have received Achieving Best Evidence training. Child abuse investigation staff have appropriate accommodation, access to vehicles and equipment, and ready access to IT terminals.

HQ-SIB has a dedicated detective superintendent who manages a small team which conducts all Part 8 reviews and manages recommendations which are disseminated to BCUs via the regular area detective inspector meetings chaired by the head of profession. These meetings are properly recorded and any actions noted and revisited until discharged.

BCU-SIUs are responsible for investigation into domestic abuse, MAPPA and child abuse. The co-location of these disciplines aids communication and intelligence sharing and allows for mutual assistance.

All student officers receive a half-day attachment to child abuse investigation teams, and new staff within the units are mentored by more senior staff on appointment (but this process is not yet formalised). Sussex Police has also developed a well-established joint agency training course for child abuse investigation that is both managed and quality-assured by HQ-SIB.

Occupational health visits are mandatory for staff on a twice yearly basis.

HQ-SIB manages the child abuse investigation policy, which is a clear strength area in terms of documented procedures (however, it does require updating to ensure that it reflects recent ACPO guidance).

Child abuse investigation units are located within BCU-SIUs and have clear terms of reference (including policies in relation to role responsibilities).

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The force policy is very expansive and makes clear statements about the progression of an investigation and critical criteria for managing referrals on a single or joint agency basis. Guidance documentation entitled *Working Together* is properly referenced throughout. This document would provide sufficient detail for an officer with limited knowledge to be guided through the process and initial considerations of an investigation. The minimum investigative standards are properly detailed within the force performance assurance framework. Force child abuse investigation policy is acknowledged by practitioners as a safety net for front-line staff, and HQ-SIB is to be acknowledged for developing this positive and easy-to-reference document.

Call handlers and response team officers are aware of their responsibilities in relation to children at risk and children in need. There are clearly documented procedures for such cases which are supported with clear referral documents. Initial supervisors and duty inspectors are aware of their supervisory responsibilities in relation to compliance with child abuse policies.

The force's strategic priorities are recorded in the policing plan which includes a key strategic priority of keeping the public safe. Two sub-strands of this document (which is widely publicised both within the force and externally) are protecting vulnerable people and protecting the public from the most high-risk offenders.

Child abuse investigation features in detail within the force performance assurance framework produced November 2006, where the majority of action owners are HQ-SIB staff.

HQ-SIB leads the strategic elements of child abuse investigation and influences BCUs in terms of developing good practice. The formal policy is an expansive document that is well written and updated to reflect current procedures. SIUs on BCUs are answerable to the local crime manager (DCI) who carries a broad portfolio. All BCU-SIUs are headed by a detective inspector who has clearly defined areas of responsibility.

All child abuse investigation cases checked were managed in accordance with policy and included cases of inter-familial abuse (which is not defined within the policy). Child abuse investigation supervisors interviewed felt the workloads were variable and challenging, but manageable. There was no evidence of any inappropriate criteria being applied in determining acceptance (eg workloads).

All crimes are managed within an electronic database, and an examination of live cases in Battle illustrated appropriate recording, supervision and timely progression. All crimes examined complied with the National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) and were entered in a timely manner and progressed appropriately.

A focused dip sample of a number of cases revealed that the majority of cases were thoroughly investigated. Particularly strong supervisor endorsement was noted in rape enquiries. Each case was progressed with integrity in a timely manner and included documented and defensible decision making.

Although no formal risk management matrix has been developed within the force, there was evidence that the child abuse investigation detective sergeants played an active part in initial risk assessment and gave clear advice and direction in relation to case progression (although the consideration of risk was not as readily apparent in subsequent case reviews).

Where possible, conference attendance is undertaken by a experienced child abuse investigation member of staff; this includes both initial strategy meetings and joint review conferences and there was also evidence of regular attendance by the supervisors from the focus groups. In instances where there was no meaningful police update, police were still expected to attend in order to record any additional intelligence disclosed by partner

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agencies. Clear guidance in Appendix M of the force policy details the response criteria for joint investigation.

All family files within the force are paper based but flagged on the CIF IT system; crimes are progressed electronically. All minutes and associated documents are kept in a family file and can be located by searching the CIF system. The CIF database, by default in compliance with the NCRS, provides intelligence that is retrievable.

Details contained within the child at risk register are accessible via social services during office hours, and out of hours via emergency duty teams.

Areas for Improvement

The ACC and chief officer team need to demonstrate a more active involvement and support for this key area of business. Without ensuring that child abuse investigation is both effective and efficient, the force will not be able to deliver on the 2007/08 strategic priority of keeping the public safe. Although the recently appointed ACC is recognised as force champion and chairs the force steering group, the force needs to consider how accountability – both strategic and operational – is managed and how performance is monitored at chief officer level.

The force HQ-based SIB is responsible for maintaining the corporate structure and acts as head of profession. The detective superintendent in command of HQ-SIB links with BCU commanders and can only seek to influence and negotiate. This situation leads to wide inconsistency and resource uncertainty. BCU commanders determine the resource levels and abstraction rates based on competing demands. The force should consider whether the line management of BCU-based SIU staff should be realigned with the head of profession at HQ-SIB.

HQ-SIB holds monthly meetings with all BCU-SIU detective inspectors, which serves as a forum to promote efficiency and a corporate approach. However, this meeting, which was observed during the inspection, was focused upon strategic issues as HQ-SIB does not have the authority to direct resource activity, even though they are dedicated specialists who hold senior ranks. BCU commanders have the authority to drive the resource response, which can promote a lack of corporate approach. The force should reconsider its structure and whether to centralise the resource pool to increase efficiency and coverage.

Child abuse investigation is not specifically mentioned within Sussex's policing plan, strategic assessment or the force control strategy. Child abuse investigation is encapsulated in the major crime strategy, but again this is not obvious or easy to reference. The force needs to consider whether an effective response to child abuse is a strategic priority for the force and whether it should be included in future strategic planning publications.

The specialist knowledge and experience required in protecting vulnerable people disciplines was equalled by the vocational and dedicated attitude displayed by staff who are required to successfully complete nationally accredited training in a complex series of disciplines that have been subject to constant legislative and procedural change.

The SPA has a nominated lead member who is responsible for each of the protecting vulnerable people disciplines. Members stated that they hold a monthly meeting with the head of profession which provides a platform and communication portal for effective discussion concerning critical issues of concern between the force and the SPA. The main and consistent interaction appeared to be on a strategic level, although it was expressed that there had been some tactical engagement.

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It was evident that the SPA had given careful thought to the appointments of the lead members who were selected in part due to their occupation relative experience. This process of regular engagement is acknowledged as critical to enable the SPA to properly discharge its governance and scrutiny function within the force.

The SPA acknowledged the investigative complexities and associated risk issues within the protecting vulnerable people disciplines. The force and the SPA should jointly seek to review and where appropriate strengthen and further formalise the processes already in place on both strategic and tactical levels. This will ensure that the corporate and strategic aims focused upon keeping people safe are robust and progressive and have the necessary visibility to demonstrate a clear contribution – to the core performance objectives.

The SPA examines force performance in protecting vulnerable people by submission of periodic reports to the PPSG. The SPA should seek to programme the continued professional development opportunities for lead members who perform this critical function. This will ensure that an appointed member is able to enhance and maintain their skill base through accessing effective joint training, awareness seminars and conference opportunities on local and national levels in proportion to the functions they discharge.

Policies and guidance held by the force are not clear in relation to the areas of responsibility and accountability. If a child abuse critical incident was mismanaged within the force, it could be unclear who had responsibility for specific actions.

If the current structure is to remain, the force should ensure that a formal written accountability framework is developed for child abuse investigation.

BCU commanders are held to account at the FPM, but it was evident from observing a meeting that child abuse investigation is not a regular agenda item. However, approximately 18 months previously HQ-SIB did provide an overview to the force of the risk issues in protecting vulnerable people disciplines. Reality checks with BCU commanders revealed that their knowledge base was limited with respect to risk issues. Their attention was focused upon volume crime measures.

Child abuse investigation is co-located with criminal investigation departments (CIDs) in most BCUs. However, from conducting general focus groups, it was evident that there was limited awareness of the discipline and it was seen very much as a specialist role.

Focus groups suggested that staff were usually left to concentrate upon their business, but a number experience abstractions due to family liaison officer duties, night duty and weekend core CID cover. Evidence was provided that when vacancies or abstractions occur there is no resilience, and when the child abuse investigation teams are short-handed there is no reciprocal arrangement to provide external support. The force needs to review its abstraction policy.

Due to BCU flexibility there are inconsistencies in relation to child abuse investigation specialist coverage. Child abuse investigation cover is provided between 8am and 8pm from Monday to Friday and between 9am and 5pm on Saturday. East Sussex BCU supplies detectives to the night cover rota, which is a source of friction as it is the only BCU that does. It was also noted that weekend coverage was not provided in accordance with force policy.

The rationale for staffing levels within SIU child abuse investigation teams on BCUs needs to be regularly reviewed and documented, with a clear audit back to the decision maker(s).

Notwithstanding the capacity of child abuse investigation detective sergeants to be able to effectively supervise child abuse investigation cases, due to the competing demands of the

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other protecting vulnerable people disciplines, the supervisory opportunities for the SIU detective inspectors in relation to the conduct of individual child abuse case progression was found to be poor. Any intrusive BCU managerial interest above detective inspector was also scarce. The force needs to ensure that BCU DCIs and BCU commanders develop inspection and review systems to satisfy themselves that child abuse investigation within their BCUs is being conducted professionally.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The force needs to ensure that basic command unit (BCU) detective chief inspectors and BCU commanders develop inspection and review systems to satisfy themselves that child abuse investigation within their BCUs is being conducted professionally.

Supervisors are aware of strategy meetings but, according to policy, attendance can be delegated to any child protection team staff member. This policy can lead to less informed individual decision making and should be reconsidered by the force. An examination of live cases on CIF did not reveal any agreed joint actions that were either corporate or of an acceptable standard.

The force needs to collate local and strategic performance data in relation to child abuse investigation multi-agency conferences attended in order to assess demand. The force was unable to provide basic data which would allow them to assess their involvement in multi-agency activities.

The force needs to further develop an audit and inspection regime that includes independent dip sampling and formal review processes by supervisors to assess the force's investigative response to child abuse and associated victim care issues. At least three interview tapes of child abuse victims, witnesses and suspects per officer per year should be sampled and reviewed by supervisors (as per ACPO guidance).

The force also needs to adjust the PDR role profiles for those involved in child abuse investigation (including detective inspectors and detective sergeants) which currently reflects generic standard detective roles and is not fit for purpose.

New staff within the units are mentored by more senior staff on appointment. This process is not yet formalised or consistent throughout individual BCUs. The force should consider this best practice during new policy development.

The force should consider adopting the recent NPIA child abuse investigation training and also review to what extent diversity is covered in training and whether staff have sufficient understanding and awareness of diversity issues within the context of child abuse investigation.

Notwithstanding the SPA annual review of the recommendations arising from the Bichard Inquiry, the force needs to consider whether its ability to search child abuse investigation records is effective. Cases are currently managed on paper files and the CIF system is used as a database to progress crimes.

Non-crime referrals and conferences are largely paper based. The force has in excess of 250,000 family files, of which a very substantial amount are not back record converted onto searchable electronic systems. This could potentially lead to a child abuser not featuring in either vetting searches or outside force enquiries.

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The NIM is not a factor in driving child abuse investigation strategy. The investigative response is a reactive element based on both internal and external referrals. The force should seek to implement NIM principles into child abuse investigation activities to ensure the best use of resources.

Officers complete a paper form MOGP1 to make a referral to BCU-SIU child abuse investigation staff. This form is risk-assessed in-house, but the process is cumbersome and likely to delay dynamic risk assessment due to geographical issues. Call-handling staff understood when a particular case merited internal referral (mostly from experiential learning). Common sense rather than corporate standards applied in most cases. The force needs to review policy and training in relation to these issues.

Other than the force performance assurance framework, which captures a broad range of crime performance in conjunction with particular sections on child abuse investigation, this assessment found little evidence of any performance management information being fed back to senior managers or that it had been used to monitor and improve performance.

BCU-SIUs cover the whole range of protecting vulnerable people areas with the exception of missing persons which is led by HQ-SIB. At BCU level, missing persons investigations are the responsibility of the chief inspector (operations).

As numerous missing persons are children, there are obvious links between the two disciplines. Sussex Police should consider whether a realignment of missing persons within the BCU-SIU structure would improve preventative and investigative opportunities.

Due to the model adopted by Sussex Police, combined with the resources allocated by BCU commanders to respond specifically to child abuse incidents, there is little scope for practitioners to dedicate any meaningful time to developing innovative practices or engaging in proactive activities. The force should review the drivers behind the current reactive response, seek to develop innovative solutions to problems, and engage more in preventative and proactive activities.

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Protecting Vulnerable People – Domestic Violence

GRADE	FAIR
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National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1	13	27	2
Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1	13	27	2

National contextual factors

There is no statutory or common law offence as such of 'domestic violence'; the term is generally used to cover a range of abusive behaviour, not all of which is criminal. The definition of domestic violence adopted by ACPO does, however, take account of the full range of abusive behaviour as well as the different circumstances in which it can occur:

'any incident of threatening behaviour, violence or abuse (psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional) between adults, aged 18 and over, who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality'.

As with the investigation of child abuse, responding to and investigating domestic violence is the responsibility of all police officers. Again, however, forces have dedicated staff within this area of work, although their roles vary. In some forces staff undertake a support/liason role, generally acting as a single point of contact for victims and signposting and liaising with other agencies and support services; in others, staff have responsibility for carrying out investigations.

Irrespective of who carries out the investigation in domestic violence cases, an integral part of every stage is the identification of risk factors, followed by more detailed risk assessment and management. In 2004, HMIC, together with HMCPSI, published a joint thematic inspection report on the investigation and prosecution of domestic violence. At that time, risk identification, assessment and management were in the early stages of development throughout the service. Since then, there has been considerable progress in developing formal risk identification and assessment processes and - in a number of forces - the implementation of multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARACs). Other improvements include the introduction of specialist domestic violence courts and the strengthening of joint working arrangements.

Contextual factors

The force HQ-SIB has set five priority targets:

- 1 Create new performance indicators in light of changes to powers of arrest;
- 2 Work with the Sussex Criminal Justice Board to create a domestic violence court – in particular ensuring that partner agencies play an active role;
- 3 Create with partner agencies domestic abuse reduction panels across the force area;
- 4 Consolidate the risk assessment into domestic violence reduction panels;
- 5 Create a process for a multi-agency review of domestic violence homicides.

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A recently appointed ACC now has full portfolio responsibility for all the protecting vulnerable people areas, including domestic abuse investigation. He is supported by a dedicated head of profession (an experienced detective superintendent) who also oversees all protecting vulnerable people functions. The head of profession is the domestic abuse investigation policy holder and is responsible for the provision of a domestic abuse investigation good practice database. He also works closely with the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) in relation to discontinuance monitoring. The post holder also ensures that domestic abuse investigation-related post-incident murder reviews are conducted, and links with homicide investigation teams in cases that are connected to domestic abuse investigation. He also undertakes divisional inspections of domestic abuse investigation activity. The head of profession also has a responsibility to chair regular BCU-SIU detective inspector meetings.

The force has recently reviewed and published a comprehensive domestic abuse policy which incorporates ACPO guidance and states that "Domestic abuse incidents which occur within Sussex will be subject to an exceptional level of investigation." The policy reflects Home Office, ACPO and NPIA guidance. Operational compliance with the policy is the responsibility of BCU divisional commanders. The policy contains a comprehensive list of tactical options which are related to the victim, offender and location.

Research has shown that in the Sussex Police force area, between 15% and 20% of domestic violence incidents occur in a public place. Therefore, reducing domestic violence can significantly impact on the force's violence in a public place performance measures.

The long-term aim of the domestic abuse investigation policy is to realise a reduction in the number of domestic violence incidents. The force anticipates that there is significant under-reporting of this type of crime, and therefore an outcome measure focused on reduction would work against the approach of the policy. Reduction in repeat domestic abuse investigation has therefore been selected as a performance measure to judge success.

The strategy of Sussex Police in relation to domestic abuse is to:

- prevent the commission of domestic violence incidents;
- hold offenders criminally accountable for their actions;
- encourage the reporting of domestic violence;
- transfer from the victim to the police and partner agencies the responsibility for holding the abuser accountable;
- undertake a crime or criminally focused investigation; and
- reduce repeat instances using best practice available.

Domestic abuse is recognised as a priority area and is reviewed during the monthly FPMs. BCU commanders have responsibility for driving performance locally and rely on trained detectives within BCU-SIUs to effectively respond to allegations. Domestic abuse investigation incidents are regularly audited by the policing standards team to inform the FPM.

Policy dictates that BCU commanders should ensure that:

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- investigative standards for domestic violence are adhered to;
- incidents are investigated by suitably qualified and trained personnel;
- lines of accountability are established and documented, and understood;
- any personnel working in an anti-victimisation unit have a job description for their role and terms of reference;
- performance measures are implemented;
- local, regular audits of operational performance are conducted;
- a positive media strategy is applied;
- staff are kept apprised of current issues, policy and procedures developed with outside agencies;
- communities are kept informed of the commitment being undertaken by the police in this area.
- domestic abuse is viewed as a priority by all staff; and
- domestic abuse forms part of the division's strategic intelligence requirement and as such is a standard item at the strategic and tactical TCG.

There is an expectation within the force that the crime managers group will check that policy is being applied and adhered to.

Strengths

The force has a dedicated chief officer who is responsible for the oversight of domestic abuse prevention and investigation. He has a responsibility to set strategic direction and ensure that the discipline is subject to appropriate governance arrangements.

The force has published very clear operational guidance which covers a range of domestic abuse investigation scenarios. It ensures a clear understanding of the action to be taken at any incident, including any follow-up action. Reality checking found that front-line staff understand policy and guidance and how to implement them in practice (although more work is needed to broaden their understanding of the role of specialists).

The force has a positive arrest strategy which makes it clear to both victims and perpetrators that it is the police who charge suspects, and the CPS who prosecutes. This is supported by the regular taking of victim personal statements, both during initial investigation and shortly prior to either trial or sentencing. The prosecution case is also enhanced by the use of digital photography to record both injuries and crime scenes. Check tests with numerous operational staff revealed that the positive arrest policy and subsequent actions expected were widely understood by staff.

There is clear evidence of joint working with other agencies to tackle domestic abuse investigation, including the CPS, the probation service, the judiciary, the medical profession, housing authorities, social services and victim support groups.

The co-location of domestic abuse investigation, child abuse investigation and MAPPA within BCU-based SIUs allows for effective shared intelligence across the three disciplines.

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Joint working is evident at both strategic and local BCU levels: examples include the work that has taken place within the judiciary in relation to the provision of domestic violence courts and the police's contribution to the West Sussex Strategic Community Safety Partnership.

The force displays a victim-centred approach to domestic abuse investigation. Sussex Police is primarily concerned with preventative and enforcement opportunities, but numerous partnership referral protocols have been agreed which are intended to give victims long-term support.

The code of practice for victims of crime is adhered to by BCU-SIU staff and dip sampling has revealed that in general victims are kept well informed of the progress of domestic abuse cases within Sussex.

There is a planned approach to training of both specialist and non-specialist staff. The force has ensured that all staff who would potentially come into contact with domestic abuse victims have had appropriate training or have been identified to receive it. The force has developed training packages to ensure that there is good training coverage within the force, from the initial student officer course input to refresher training delivered at BCUs. Additionally, reality checking discovered numerous examples of SIU staff attending local training days and running BCU courses to raise the awareness of domestic abuse investigation issues with operational staff.

Domestic abuse investigation is the only protecting vulnerable people discipline to be considered within the force performance framework.

A revised statutory performance indicator now measures the percentage of domestic violence incidents where an arrest was made related to the incident. This policy is intended to align with the emphasis on successful outcomes driven by quality-focused investigations.

All incidents of domestic abuse within Sussex must be recorded either as a crime or as a crime-related incident. This policy ensures that sufficient data is recorded and searchable.

The force recognises cultural and other backgrounds which may influence domestic abuse investigation cases. The domestic abuse investigation policy has been impact assessed in relation to diversity issues and now contains clear guidance in relation to treating victims according to their individual needs.

Initial call receipt handlers have been given training in relation to initial evidence gathering and a risk assessment based on first contact. They are trained to ask a number of key questions which have been generated to ensure that officers en route to domestic abuse incidents are in possession of relevant information.

Flagging on the operational information system enables call receipt staff to quickly establish whether any call to a domestic abuse incident is related to a repeat victim and whether they have been previously graded as low, medium or high risk.

The force has a distinct repeat victimisation response which is both graded and proportional to identified risk. In cases that are identified as high-risk the BCU-SIU is notified, safety plans are activated, high-risk safety markers are added, the duty inspector is made aware, and the district commander will be appraised of any high-risk cases by the SIU.

A mandatory aspect of initial investigation into domestic abuse is to assess the welfare of any children present during an incident of domestic violence and take whatever steps possible to protect them from harm. Sussex Police insists that children must be physically seen, even to confirm that they are sleeping. In cases where either party is a parent, the

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officer or their nominee will share this information with the BCU-SIU's child protection team using the form MOGP1. The child protection team will refer all cases of domestic violence where children are in the family to social services. Reality checking with child abuse investigation staff reveals excellent sharing of data arrangements.

The force has entered into a partnership arrangement with the CPS to ensure that statutory charging applies to the majority of domestic abuse investigation cases. Any domestic abuse investigation file submitted to the CPS is clearly marked 'Domestic Violence' in order that it receives appropriate consideration.

The force has recently adopted a database which utilises existing IT to automatically identify high-risk domestic abuse victims by virtue of repeat calls or seriousness/potential seriousness of incident. This system takes the case notes (crime reports) already recorded within the crime information system (CIS) and produces a victims listing. In order to process the information on the CIS, the data is processed using a macro programmed into an Excel spreadsheet.

The program initiates the production of case history files which are produced on a domestic violence checklist and can be available to all officers in an IT format. When an officer returns from a high-risk victim incident, they are transferred from the listing page on the intranet by means of a hyperlink. The notes are then printed out and placed within the court file so that the CPS has the information to hand at the initial hearing.

Sussex Police has considered its response to internal domestic abuse cases and has published clear guidance which is victim focused. Additionally, if an offender is also a member of Sussex Police staff, the SIU detective inspector will be notified and give direction as to case progression. Sussex Police is also active in seeking remedial placements for perpetrators. The Integrated Domestic Abuse Programme runs for a 28-week period and is offered to perpetrators as a condition of a community rehabilitation order, parole or licence. In Sussex there are two programmes, one in Brighton and the other in Eastbourne. Currently the two schemes are part of a court order and are not offered on a self-referral basis. Other self referral programmes are run locally, including one in Brighton.

Participants working in the groups are required to complete 28 weeks in weekly sessions of 2½ hours' duration. The programme being used is based on *Men who are Violent to Women*, a group work practice manual based on the Change programme. The Sussex programmes undertake routine monitoring and evaluation, and report that none of the perpetrators who have attended the programme have re-committed domestic violence.

Staff engaged in specialist roles within BCU-SIUs (including domestic abuse specialists) are offered welfare and counselling should they require it. Reality checking found that staff are encouraged to look out for each others' welfare in relation to recognising signs of stress.

Work in progress

The force has developed a comprehensive implementation support plan for the effective management of domestic violence. It sets out numerous actions which should be completed with the aim of improving domestic violence performance. The support plan requires the identification of action owners and needs to be set within an accountability framework.

There are several upgrades planned for the GVPS database and it is acknowledged that the NEMESIS system will replace this program in the near future. One such upgrade is the integration of the child abuse records held on the CIS as these crimes are often an indication of domestic abuse.

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Another feature being worked on is the development of a predictive program which would search through the CIS for domestic violence patterns. There will be occasions where victims are regularly assaulted, for example in the run-up to Christmas, and such trends would be flagged up.

Areas for improvement

The chief officer team needs to demonstrate more active involvement and support for this key area of business. Without ensuring that domestic abuse investigation is both effective and efficient, the force will not be able to deliver on the 2007/08 strategic priority of keeping the public safe. Although the recently appointed ACC is recognised as force champion, the force needs to consider how accountability – both strategic and operational – is managed, and how performance can be effectively monitored at chief officer level.

Due to resource constraints, the HQ-SIB is unable to effectively discharge audit and review functions at BCU level. Resource at BCU level appears appropriate; however, the force should consider whether additional investment within the HQ-SIB would significantly improve general domestic abuse investigation performance.

There is a clear need for a centralised audit and inspection regime which can assess force performance in relation to:

- quality of initial scene attendance;
- quality of investigations;
- quality of the management/direction of serious incidents;
- ensuring that domestic abuse crimes are recorded in compliance with the NCRS and Home Office Counting Rules;
- auditing/dip sampling of random domestic abuse cases;
- an assessment of what percentage of domestic abuse incidents resulted in recorded crime (accompanied by informative analysis);
- general quality of the police response to domestic abuse incidents;
- reviewing decisions not to arrest;
- monitoring and reviewing formal risk identification/assessment procedures;
- monitoring compliance with force policy on domestic abuse and promulgating any changes/developments; and
- monitoring performance across BCUs to ensure that the quality of response is consistent.

RECOMMENDATION 9

The force needs to ensure that basic command unit (BCU) detective chief inspectors and BCU commanders develop inspection and review systems to satisfy themselves that domestic abuse investigations within their BCUs are being conducted professionally.

The force needs to develop a written accountability framework in relation to domestic abuse investigation. In Sussex Police, operational responsibility is locally devolved but with strategic responsibility retained centrally; the links between the two should be evident and show a clear chain of accountability.

Notwithstanding the performance data that is produced to support the FPM, the force should consider how BCU commanders are discharging their command duties in relation to domestic abuse investigation. Force policy is clear in relation to the expectation of BCU commanders in relation to domestic abuse investigation (see Contextual factors above), but

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in practice BCU-SIUs are left to operate independently with little evidence of external supportive management intervention.

Although domestic abuse investigation is considered as a performance issue within the FPM, there is no specific mention of it within current policing plans, strategic assessments or control strategies. As with other protecting vulnerable people disciplines, if Sussex Police is serious about protecting vulnerable people, domestic abuse investigation needs to be mainstreamed within the performance framework, treated as a priority area and, once quantified, performance actively measured.

Notwithstanding that risk-measurement processes are in place within Sussex Police, the force should conduct a review to establish how these procedures have been determined, researched and evaluated and to ensure that appropriate training in their use has been delivered. The force should also consider a review of the documentation and of risk-based decisions. A clear accountability framework in relation to risk needs to be developed which details who carries it out, how risk levels are arrived at, and what is the involvement of supervisors.

Supervisory levels do not allow for proactive and effective meaningful supervision of specialist domestic abuse officers at BCU level. Dip sampling found that supervisors were generally committed to their own enquiries and other administrative tasks, and lacked the opportunity to spend additional time conducting effective supervision. HMIC found evidence of supervisory intervention within case notes, but these often amounted to comments such as case progression noted without any proper assessment of risk, detailed commentary or clear direction as to suggested further actions.

The roles and job descriptions of specialist domestic abuse investigation officers have been identified. There is still work to be done to ensure that staff in these roles are given meaningful PDRs that accurately reflect the roles they perform instead of generic detective roles.

Difficulties are evident in relation to the current flagging processes for domestic abuse investigations. A number of people can be involved in the referral, recording, reporting and investigation stages of domestic abuse investigation incidents. There is no clear guidance available as to when (or by whom) flags should be instigated. The current policy needs to be updated to ensure that there is absolute clarity in relation to who has responsibility for ensuring that flags are correctly applied on command and control systems.

Notwithstanding that force policy mentions the delivery of appropriate training and that evidence was found of adequate training provision, the force could do more to ensure that a costed training plan is developed to support the force's domestic abuse investigation response, including consideration and inclusion of the NPIA's modular training programme (or a similar approach).

Although joint problem solving is gaining momentum within the Neighbourhood Policing context, there are similar opportunities to engage in multi-agency reduction problem solving when considering domestic abuse investigation. Due to the demands of the role, specialist BCU-SIU staff are primarily reactive and have limited opportunity to engage proactively with partners in joint problem-solving case studies.

The force should consider how it can ensure that more time is spent on domestic abuse investigation preventative activity rather than the current reactive investigative approach. Without such a change the force will not be able to use NIM processes to inform the strategic priorities for domestic abuse investigation.

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Protecting Vulnerable People – Public Protection

GRADE

FAIR

National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
2	16	23	2

National contextual factors

The Criminal Justice and Courts Services Act 2000 led to the formation of the Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements, commonly known as MAPPA, requiring the police and probation services to work together as the Responsible Authority in each area of England and Wales to establish and review the arrangements for the assessment and management of sexual and violent offenders. Subsequent legislation brought the Prison Service into the Responsible Authority arrangements and also requires a range of social care agencies to co-operate with the Responsible Authority in the delivery of the assessment and management of risk in this area. These agencies include health, housing, education, social services, youth offending teams, Jobcentre Plus, and electronic monitoring services.

Under MAPPA, there are three categories of offender who are considered to pose a risk of serious harm:

Category 1 – Registered Sex Offenders (RSOs)

Category 2 – violent and other sex offenders

Category 3 – other offenders (with convictions that indicate they are capable of causing, and pose a risk of, serious harm).

To be managed under MAPPA, offenders must have received a conviction or caution. However, there are some people who have not been convicted or cautioned for any offence, and thus fall outside these categories, but whose behaviour nonetheless gives reasonable ground for believing a present likelihood of them committing an offence that will cause serious harm. These people are termed Potentially Dangerous Persons (PDPs).

Following risk assessment, risk management involves the use of strategies by various agencies to reduce the risk, at three levels:

- Level 1 offenders can be managed by one agency;
- Level 2 offenders require the active involvement of more than one agency;
- Level 3 offenders – the ‘critical few’ – are generally deemed to pose a high or very high risk and are managed by a multi-agency public protection panel (MAPPP).

In 2003, the Home Secretary issued MAPPA guidance to consolidate what has already been achieved since the introduction of the MAPPA in 2001 and to address a need for greater consistency in MAPPA practice. The guidance outlines four considerations that are key to the delivery of effective public protection.

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- defensible decisions;
- rigorous risk assessment;
- the delivery of risk management plans which match the identified public protection need; and,
- the evaluation of performance to improve delivery.

Contextual factors

Along with the probation service and the prison service, Sussex Police is responsible for the development and management of MAPPAs. The force co-chairs, co-ordinates and manages all the MAPPAs meetings and is primarily responsible for the management of registered sex offenders (RSOs). Sussex Police contributes to preventative and enforcement activity, including the monitoring of offenders (eg covert surveillance) and is responsible for obtaining civil orders such as sexual offences prevention orders, risk of sexual harm orders and foreign travel orders.

The force also manages the registration of sex offenders, undertakes detailed risk assessments and is responsible for the investigation of any who re-offend. Agencies also have a statutory obligation to manage the risk posed by dangerous offenders and potentially dangerous offenders.

Sussex Police has a chief officer lead for public protection issues who is supported by a head of profession within Sussex HQ. The head of profession (detective superintendent) jointly chairs the MAPPAs strategic management board together with the head of the local probation service. The membership includes professionals and lay advisers, including representatives from the youth offending service, children's services, district councils, victim support, the prison service, mental health organisations and forensic services.

The number of RSOs within Sussex is increasing although when measured against other force areas, numbers are relatively low. Year-on-year increases are inevitable as more offenders are caught, convicted and added to the register. Fewer people drop off the register upon expiry of their registration than are currently being added to it upon conviction.

The number of violent offenders considered within MAPPAs has also increased. While there has been a small overall increase in violent crime, courts have been sentencing violent offenders more severely, bringing a higher number of offenders within the remit of MAPPAs. The current and expected continual increase of persons who will require statutory management will provide challenges for forces in relation to resource allocation.

Within Sussex Police this duty is discharged through BCU-based SIUs which house related disciplines, including child and domestic abuse investigation teams. The BCU-SIUs are supported by an HQ support and co-ordination unit (the SIB) which contains a dedicated MAPPAs co-ordinator, an administrator and a Violent and Sex Offenders Register (ViSOR) training and support team.

Strengths

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The force has appointed a jointly funded MAPPAs administrative assistant who is responsible for providing dedicated and professional secretarial support to the Sussex MAPPAs. This includes supporting the continuous cycle of meetings by collecting referrals, drafting agendas and minutes, and maintaining and updating the MAPPAs database. This post is key to ensuring the consistency and accuracy of all MAPPAs written documentation and the decision-making rationale. The post has been jointly funded by all three members of the responsible authority and the local health authority.

The joint agencies have also invested in a dedicated MAPPAs officer who provides co-ordination for all the agencies involved in the MAPPAs process. The post holder performs a review function to ensure that MAPPAs is being conducted consistently and reflects current and emerging national guidance within East and West Sussex County Councils and Brighton and Hove City Council.

The post holder monitors multi-agency attendance and ensures that any agreed actions are discharged by the responsible authority. In addition to chairing level 2 meetings, the MAPPAs officer has significantly influenced the development and implementation of the strategic management board's business plan, the production of the annual report and the continued strategic development of ViSOR.

The force has worked hard to achieve buy-in from partners, including the prison service who, nationally, has been slow to engage within MAPPAs processes. Representatives from the prison service sit on the strategic management board and at level 3 MAPPAs meetings.

The force has effectively negotiated with the prison service to improve MAPPAs performance. This includes a commitment from the prison service to ensure that Sussex Police is given at least six months' notification of the expected release dates of all level 3 offenders and at least three months' notification of those being managed at level 2.

Improved liaison with the prison service has led to increased information sharing and risk management information in order to help the MAPPAs plan appropriate release responses.

Sussex Police has been instrumental in the recruitment and training of two lay advisers who have brought both an independent and challenging perspective to the MAPPAs process. Both post holders, who have a wealth of related experience, provide a valuable community perspective to the role and are both standing (and active) members of the MAPPAs strategic management board. The lay advisers have attended a national training course and are encouraged to challenge the rationale behind any decisions taken and to question the proportionality of actions taken.

There are effective links between staff dealing with RSOs and violent and sexual offenders managed under MAPPAs, and closely related disciplines such as serious violent and sexual crimes, domestic abuse and child abuse investigations. The co-location of these disciplines within BCU-SIUs and the central co-ordination provided by the HQ-SIB ensure that there is effective communication between practitioners and information sharing takes place.

Sussex Police employs a ViSOR administrator who is responsible for maintaining and ensuring the accuracy and integrity of the data held on the system. The post holder is also responsible for ensuring that all public protection staff are fully trained in the use of ViSOR and for assisting in the development and identification of operational guidance and best practice both within Sussex and at a regional level.

Sussex Police has been part of a project designed to develop an agreed 'risk of harm' definition. The definition is based on the probation service's offender risk assessment

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system (OASys) and ensures that all partner agencies have a clear understanding of what each risk level means, particularly in terms of risk indicators, imminence of risk and the potential impact of that risk.

The force has been instrumental in the design and standardisation of MAPPA documentation, including a standardised MAPPA referral form and a MAPPA minute recording form. This work now ensures a corporate approach throughout Sussex Police and within each partner agency.

The force engages in regular joint training with partners; recent examples include joint police, probation and prison service staff training in the use of civil orders, such as sexual offences prevention orders and risk of sexual harm orders, available under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Employment vetting procedures are robust; police officers and staff in relevant roles are subject to vetting requirements. All SIB and BCU-SIU staff engaged in sex offender management have been trained in the Thornton Risk Matrix 2000 risk assessment tool and have ready access to other sources of intelligence, including the probation service's OASys tool and related prison intelligence. All specialist staff and supervisors are also ViSOR trained to an appropriate standard.

The Sussex MAPPA strategic management board has developed a business plan for 2006/07. The plan contains a number of proposed actions to ensure that public protection activity becomes more effective and reflects the recent business plan produced by the responsible authorities' national steering group. The plan focuses on four key areas: MAPPA development, monitoring and evaluation, communication and partnerships, and training. A structure of sub-groups to deliver the plan under each of these areas has been adopted by the board.

In December 2006, together with the probation service, the force published the Sussex MAPPA operational guidance document which is very comprehensive and clearly defines MAPPA arrangements and sets out the roles and responsibilities of those involved.

MAPPA meetings are effectively structured at all three levels and comply with MAPPA guidance. Level 1 meetings are performed locally at BCU level and are considered by BCU-SIU practitioners. Level 2 meetings are chaired by the joint MAPPA officer, and level 3 meetings are jointly chaired by either the police or the probation service who are both experienced in the role. The head of HQ-SIB or his DCI deputy attend MAPPA level 3 meetings. The MAPPA officer monitors attendance and co-ordinates all MAPPA activity to ensure that compliance is being achieved.

There are established protocols which have been developed to support the MAPPA meeting process, including advanced disclosure of information considerations. Contingency plans have also been developed to ensure that if persons subject to MAPPA considerations commit further offences, a review of police is undertaken (although the capacity to do this is limited due to resource demands within HQ-SIB) in order that lessons can be learnt for the future.

In December 2006 the jointly funded MAPPA officer produced comprehensive policy and guidance which clearly set out procedures for reporting, managing, responding to and investigating both RSOs and violent and sex offenders registered within the MAPPA process.

At each MAPPA level there are clear processes utilised for the assessment of risk. Practitioners ensure collaboration with partner agencies and discuss collective risk assessments which are documented and held within the ViSOR system.

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The force has clear policies in relation to the conduct of home visits to RSOs which ensure that they are only conducted by trained public protection practitioners.

The force command and control and crime recording systems both have the ability to flag individuals and premises. Both are used effectively to ensure that incidents involving both RSOs and violent and sexual offenders managed under MAPPA are identified to public protection specialist officers.

Personnel involved in delivering the public protection response within Sussex Police are routinely offered welfare provision and are encouraged to look out for any signs of stress in each other.

There is planned training for public protection practitioners within Sussex Police which includes role-specific training with consideration of the needs of supervisors. There are also a number of joint training courses, seminars and forums that are attended in order to enable effective collaborative joint-working arrangements.

Areas for improvement

The recent appointment of a new ACC with considerable detective and BCU experience (who now holds this portfolio) provides a fresh opportunity to engage at a strategic level, especially in relation to influencing the direction of the MAPPA strategic management board, closer involvement in MAPPA level 3 decision making, involvement in strategic priority setting, and ensuring there is a clear accountability chain within the process.

Although public protection is a key theme within the force strategic priority of keeping the public safe, it does not feature in policing plans, the strategic assessment, the force control strategy or during the monthly FPM. The force needs to develop a performance management framework that uses a range of quantitative and qualitative assessments as the basis for judging public protection performance, which can be fed back to senior managers to monitor and improve performance.

Although specialist operational guidance is available for public protection officers, the force needs to develop a wider understanding, to raise the profile of public protection and ensure effective promulgation of policy and guidance to relevant staff.

The force also needs to publish an accountability framework that shows who is both responsible and accountable, from the chief officer lead through to BCU-SIU practitioners.

Reality checking found that BCU commanders had little involvement in MAPPA processes and yet had line-management responsibility for locally based public protection officers. The force should develop processes that clearly articulate how BCU commanders are to be held accountable for their public protection performance.

The development of a multi-agency structural chart showing the various roles, lines of supervision, lines of accountability and contact details would prove a useful tool both internally and for use by external partners.

Although the annual MAPPA report details the four key objectives of the strategic management board, there needs to be further strategic formal development of agreed joint performance measures with other agencies.

Reality checking found that, although initial risk assessments appear appropriate within the force, risk review functions need to be improved. The identification of triggers needs to be considered, which will automatically lead to the review of risk.

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The programme of home visits to RSOs within Sussex is generally appropriate, but reality checking discovered that the approach was inconsistent between BCUs due to resource allocation.

Notwithstanding existing resource constraints, the force needs to identify and manage offenders falling outside the MAPPA criteria who present a serious risk of harm, including clarity as to who has ownership for their management.

In common with other disciplines contained within the BCU-SIUs, the staff are a resource under the line management of the local BCU commander. This has led to an inequality of capability within the force dependent on individual BCU policy. Although not routinely abstracted from core duties, reality checking revealed that, due to the low number of public protection practitioners, resilience was a challenge during periods of sickness, training or leave. It was also apparent that public protection practitioners were consumed with reactive home visits and administrative follow-up which severely restricted any other proactive opportunities.

HQ-SIB is not currently resourced to effectively carry out audit, inspection and review activities and therefore there is no co-ordinated approach at force level to monitor public protection activity at BCU level to ensure that the quality of response is consistent.

The rationale for staffing and supervisory levels within public protection need to be recorded and any considered resource risks also need to be documented within a risk register, with a clear audit back to the decision maker and the rationale behind the decision.

Due to competing supervisory and MAPPA administrative demands, public protection practitioners are not routinely subject to supervisory observation or formal workplace assessment. There was limited evidence of supervisors formally endorsing risk levels, reviewing risk levels, monitoring home visits or reviewing actions and risk management plans. Supervisory capacity needs to be reviewed together with the opportunities afforded by joint inspections conducted with partner agencies.

Although ViSOR can be a useful tool for supervisors to assess the competency of staff, dip sampling found little evidence of meaningful supervisory intervention other than a record of a supervisor's visit and an associated commentary such as "comments and action noted".

In common with other HQ-SIB disciplines, the force needs to review job descriptions for public protection staff, supervisors and the additional specialist roles performed at HQ. A dip sample of PDRs found that staff had generic roles and responsibilities which did not accurately reflect the job performed; consequently any objectives set are not in context.

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Protecting Vulnerable People – Missing Persons

GRADE

FAIR

National grade distribution

Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1	21	21	0

National contextual factors

Each year, thousands of people are reported to police as missing. Many have done so voluntarily and are safe from harm, whether or not they return home. But a number are vulnerable, because of age or health concerns, and the police service has developed well-honed systems to respond swiftly and effectively to such cases. For obvious reasons, missing children arouse particular concern, and many forces deploy 'Child Rescue Alert' to engage the media in publicising such cases. Key good practice in this framework are early recognition of critical incident potential, effective supervision of enquiries, the use of NIM problem profiles and other intelligence techniques to analyse repeat locations (eg, children's homes), and the use of an IT-based investigation tracking system such as COMPACT.

Contextual factors

HQ-SIB leads on the development of the force's missing persons response, but the local response to persons reported missing sits outside BCU-SIUs and is under the line management of the operational chief inspectors on each district.

HQ-SIB has three strategic targets in relation to missing persons:

- 1 Continue to work with the IS department to achieve a missing persons database with research and investigative functions;
- 2 Achieve a reduction in the number of missing persons by utilising partner agencies through the LCSB and FPMI;
- 3 Provide a support and review function to divisions for missing or trafficked persons.

Day-to-day management of an investigation is undertaken by the duty inspector and passed between shifts. Initial reports are recorded on the national risk form usually completed by call handlers.

Strengths

Missing persons has a dedicated ACPO lead who is referred to as the 'Misper champion' within the force action plan. He is driving the missing persons strategy and ensuring that recommendations from the force's recent capability assessment (produced in response to NPIA guidance) are being carried out.

Procedures ensure that there is clarity of ownership of missing persons investigations. The force policy gives clarity in relation to supervisory responsibilities.

Force policy is clear and well publicised in relation to subsequent enquiries and expected supervision of missing persons enquiries. However, it needs to be refreshed and brought up

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to date (especially in relation to initial response). Call handlers follow a prescribed menu during initial reporting and officers complete a form that provides clear direction and ensures consistency.

The force has adopted a gold, silver and bronze response to manage any high-risk missing persons investigations that are anticipated to be either large or complex enquiries which would require the appointment of a senior investigating officer. Reality checking within the force found that call-handling staff were knowledgeable in relation to their roles and responsibilities and used drop-down menus to ensure that appropriate questions were asked. All potential critical incident calls are overseen by supervisors who are trained in the assessment of risk and know how to initiate the gold, silver or bronze response.

The force identifies, assesses and manages risk through use of the national risk document stage 1 and stage 2 forms and utilises the standard thresholds for high, medium and low risk categories.

All missing persons reports are included within BCU daily tasking and co-ordination summary reports for the attention of BCU senior management team members in order that they can be appraised of the circumstances and direct resources if deemed appropriate.

The CIF database ensures active supervision of missing persons reports. Each case generates an ongoing investigation log which is overseen by the duty inspector. Current policy incorporates a basic supervision model.

The force has developed protocols with partners in relation to developing multi-agency responses. The protocol is lengthy and detailed, but easy to read (it will benefit from review and update). However, it is still currently fit for purpose.

Work in progress

The force has not carried out a problem profile or other analytical work in relation to missing persons. There is, however, planned activity in relation to this issue detailed within the missing persons force action plan.

Recommendations from the force's recent capability assessment (produced in response to NPIA and ACPO guidance on missing persons) are being carried out.

The force is developing an action plan in relation to its response to missing persons, but it is not detailed enough at this stage to assess whether implementation will improve performance. There is developmental activity planned to address a number of missing person's issues, including the need to develop the conduct of risk reviews.

HQ-SIB acknowledges that it needs to conduct regular reviews of missing persons activity. Officers intend to visit BCUs to conduct inspection activities to quality-assure performance and seek feedback as to how policy and procedure can be developed further.

Areas for improvement

HQ-SIB leads on the strategic elements of the force's response to missing persons, but this is not reflected on BCUs, where local responsibility lies with the DCI (crime manager) and resource deployment with the district commander (chief inspector).

HQ-SIB has only an advisory/influencing role and cannot officially direct resources, which has the potential to promote an inconsistent response. Local SIUs have no responsibilities in relation to the investigation of missing persons other than to be notified of any young missing person who may be exposed to child abuse risks. The force should consider

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whether the response to missing persons should be realigned to BCU-SIUs. The SPA has appointed a lead member for missing persons, but it would appear that this area of policing does not feature in any performance framework.

Numerous strategic SPA meeting minutes have been checked, with no evidence of any SPA scrutiny of the response to missing persons. At a strategic level, the Chief Constable mentioned during the October 2006 FPM that BCUs should review resource implications and encourage a partnership approach due to resource costs incurred, but no follow-up action has been discovered.

On receipt of a missing persons report and deployment of a police resource, a paper-based form is completed by the attending officer and retrospectively loaded onto the CIF database for maintenance of an investigation log. The paper form is subsequently filed, but the CIF, when observed, had access control issues and was unable to be accessed or tested in detail at the time of visit. Front-line staff often default to recording initial investigation progression onto command and control logs. This process can lead to the misplacement of critical detail.

Area detective inspectors have a quality-assurance and supervisory role within the policy for low-risk outstanding missing persons investigations, which includes formal reviews within the initial, and every subsequent, 48 hours. It is not clearly articulated what is expected from their input and the attendant recording processes, leading to a wide variance of standards across the force.

Notwithstanding that a missing persons policy exists within Sussex Police, a review should ensure that (apart from recording processes) the following should be more expansive: risk identification and assessment, tactical options, supervisory responsibilities and review requirements.

No evidence was offered of any proactive response. All missing persons investigations are managed on a reactive basis without being NIM-driven at either a strategic or tactical level. Opportunities to engage in reduction and preventative activities are therefore lost, together with the ability to engage in joint problem solving with partner agencies. Although missing persons investigations are discussed at the divisional daily review and prioritised, this process is reactive rather than NIM-driven from an intervention perspective.

There is limited evidence to suggest that any performance management information is being gathered and fed back to senior managers or used to monitor and improve performance. The force needs to develop a performance management framework that uses a range of quantitative and qualitative assessments as the basis for judging performance in relation to missing persons.

The policy document, while easy to reference and containing plenty of useful general advice, does not provide explicit reference to what is expected from a front-line officer, but rather articulates responsibilities at inspector rank and above. This area should be re-drafted to incorporate call receipt and initial steps when the policy is reviewed.

Although there is a risk-measurement process in use within the force, there is no formal training for key decision makers, which can lead to a number of different interpretations of risk based upon the same facts. The force needs to ensure that key decision makers are trained in the evaluation of risk.

Return interviews are undertaken by front-line officers according to force policy. Reality checking reveals that interviews have wide variables due to experience and competence. There is currently no corporate standard to aspire to other than a footnote comment within

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the policy document about the process. The force needs to review this gap and ensure that HQ-SIB is sufficiently resourced to undertake inspection and review activity.

Notwithstanding the review function carried out by the duty inspector, the force needs to put processes in place to ensure that any action taken continues to be commensurate with risk throughout. HQ-SIB also needs to ensure that the quality of missing persons investigations is monitored as part of an inspection and review process.

There is no co-ordinated approach at force level to monitor activity at BCU level. The force is currently unable to monitor performance across BCUs to ensure that the quality of response is consistent.

There is no training available in relation to the diversity aspects of missing persons enquiries. Reality checks revealed that people who report persons missing, and persons subject to missing persons enquiries, are likely to receive a similar service based on risk without addressing any unique diversity considerations that may be relevant.

Force policy (last updated in 2003) has a detailed protocol to manage looked-after children. This requires review and update to ensure that pan-Sussex procedures are applied consistently and are being appropriately monitored.

Notwithstanding that Sussex contains many children's homes which have generated a large number of repeat missing persons reports, preventative work with the homes has reduced the number of missing persons reports and this has in turn significantly reduced investigative workloads. Much more can be done to identify opportunities to ensure that the police response is proportionate to the risk. Problem-solving exercises should be considered in relation to repeat missing persons and venues of concern, to ensure that the force is making efficient use of resources.

RECOMMENDATION 10

In light of the findings contained within this report, Sussex Police should conduct a thorough review of its current missing persons strategy.

Recommendations

Neighbourhood Policing

Recommendation 1

The force needs to conduct a review of the policies and guidance which support the Neighbourhood Policing function. The review should specifically focus upon the relevance of performance development reviews to roles performed and include a detailed examination of compliance with abstraction policies.

Recommendation 2

Triangulated reality checking within the force revealed a frustration by first-line supervisors in relation to a perception of unnecessary administrative burden. The force should conduct a review of the first-line supervision functions within Neighbourhood Policing in order to assess how first-line supervisors can be more effective.

Recommendation 3

The force needs to conduct a review of the Neighbourhood Policing internal and external communications strategy to identify how communication with key partner agencies at a strategic level can be improved and how to ensure that Sussex Police staff are kept up to date with Neighbourhood Policing roll-out progress.

Performance management

Recommendation 4

The force needs to further develop the integration of its performance management and review processes with that of its partners, including shared targets, tasking and accountability. The four disciplines inspected under protecting vulnerable people, for example, would benefit from further development in this area.

Protecting vulnerable people

Recommendation 5

Although in general terms (when compared with most similar force areas) Sussex Police has an appropriate number of staff engaged in protecting vulnerable people activity at district level, there is a shortage of resources available at the HQ-based specialist investigations branch (SIB) to support and co-ordinate protecting vulnerable people activity. The force needs to consider whether HQ-SIB resourcing is appropriate and how it can improve the protecting vulnerable people support, co-ordination, audit, inspection and review functions.

Recommendation 6

The force needs to introduce a strategic steering group to consider interrelated protecting vulnerable people disciplines and ensure that any associated risk is assessed. Together with the assessment of reviews, resources, processes and systems, such a group should also ensure that there is properly documented consideration of risk and that policy and guidance remain contemporary.

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Recommendation 7

The force should consider whether the realignment of the missing persons portfolio to the existing specialist investigations branch structure would improve performance across interrelated protecting vulnerable people disciplines.

Recommendation 8

The force need to develop a formal documented accountability framework which clearly articulates the strategic and operational responsibilities, from practitioners through to the chief officer lead. Consideration also needs to be given as to whether the line management. Recruitment and selection of local specialist investigations unit staff should become the responsibility of the HQ-based specialist investigations branch.

Recommendation 9

The force needs to ensure that basic command unit (BCU) detective chief inspectors and BCU commanders develop inspection and review systems to satisfy themselves that protecting vulnerable people activity within their BCUs are being conducted professionally.

Recommendation 10

In light of the findings contained within this report, Sussex Police should conduct a thorough review of its current missing persons strategy.

Appendix: Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

A

ABC	activity-based costing
ACC	assistant chief constable
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ASBO	anti-social behaviour order

B

BCU	basic command unit
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C

CADDIE	Crime and Disorder Data and Information Exchange
CDRP	crime and disorder reduction partnership
CID	criminal investigation department
CIS	crime information system
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CRB	Criminal Records Bureau

D

DCC	deputy chief constable
DCI	detective chief inspector

F

FPM	force performance meeting
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H

HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
HR	human resources

I

IS information systems

J

JAG joint action group

K

KIN key independent network

L

LAT local action team

LSCB Local Safeguarding Children Board

M

MAPPA multi-agency public protection arrangements

MSF most similar force(s)

N

NCPE National Centre for Policing Excellence

NCRS National Crime Recording Standard

NIM National Intelligence Model

NPIA National Policing Improvement Agency

NST neighbourhood specialist team

O

OASys offender risk assessment system

P

PCSO police community support officer

PDR	performance development review
PPAF	policing performance assessment framework
PPSG	planning and performance steering group
R	
RSO	registered sex offender
S	
SARA	scanning, analysis, response, assessment
SGC	Specific Grading Criteria
SPA	Sussex Police Authority
SIB	specialist investigations branch (Sussex HQ)
SIU	specialist investigations unit (based on district)
SOCU	serious and organised crime unit
T	
TCG	tasking and co-ordination group
V	
ViSOR	Violent and Sex Offenders Register