



HMIC Inspection Report

Thames Valley 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.

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

Thames Valley Police is the largest non-metropolitan force in England and Wales, covering 2,200 square miles and serving a population of 2.1 million, with over 6 million visitors annually. It covers 16 crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs), within the areas of two county councils (Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire) and seven unitary authorities. It has five BCUs. In terms of resources, the net revenue expenditure for 2006/07 was £329.54 million. Police officer strength has continued to increase during the past financial year and in March 2007 there were 4,259.8 police officers (full-time equivalent), 2,764.6 police staff, 279 special constables and 318 police community support officers (PCSOs), assisted by some 463 volunteers.

Demographic profile of force area

The over-arching economic position of the force area is one of prosperity, with low unemployment and above average earnings, although there are some areas of deprivation. Steady and continued economic growth is predicted. In terms of demography, the Thames Valley area is experiencing continued population growth, most notably in Milton Keynes, Slough and Aylesbury. Some 6% of the population in Thames Valley are from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups with a much higher proportion of BME people in the south east of the force area, particularly in the major population centres of Reading, Slough and High Wycombe. Current trends suggest that the force will see considerable population growth in the coming years, with growth of virtually every ethnic group likely.

Strategic priorities

The strategic priorities of the force for 2005–08 are: to provide an effective and timely response focused on the needs of the citizen; to conduct policing in a Neighbourhood Policing style; to equip front-line staff to deliver objectives; to improve performance – get better at what the force does; to better protect the public from the risk posed by predatory offenders; and to be ready and equipped to deal with major crime and critical incidents.

Force developments since 2006

The force has managed to sustain and improve some areas of performance despite the significant challenges faced over the past 12 months. These include policing animal rights extremism at both a force level through Operation Rumble and specifically at Oxford through Operation Balance. The anti-terrorist Operation Overt at Wycombe, in collaboration with the Metropolitan Police, required significant operational policing resources for the thorough and extensive search of various properties and an extensive area of woodland.

There has been a marked improvement in many areas of service delivery. The number of thefts of vehicles is down by 6.5% and theft from vehicles by 1.4%. Outside the scope of the British Crime Survey (BCS) categories, there has been a reduction in burglary of commercial and other non-dwelling premises. Crimes included within the BCS categories increased by 5.3%, reflecting the Excellent grading by the Audit Commission for crime recording practices and encouraging more reporting of domestic violence.

Domestic violence was set as a priority for the force in terms of the sanction detection rate and at a local partnership level in terms of increasing the level of domestic violence reporting. Numerically, there has been an increase in sanction detections and there has been a 20% reduction in domestic violence offences resulting in more serious injury.

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The number of offences brought to justice has exceeded by approximately 6% the numerical target of 48,000 offences. The force detection rate is more closely aligned to the most similar force (MSF) group average. In respect of road safety, Thames Valley is on track to achieve the 2010 casualty reduction strategy target.

The force has met the sickness targets set and sickness rates are marginally below the national average. The force has far exceeded the efficiency saving targets, achieving £11.56 million in cashable savings and £6.33 million in non-cashable savings.

As a result of implementing recommendations from the best value review of hate crime and work undertaken as part of the quality of service programme, the force has improved satisfaction levels among the victims of racist incidents by nearly 5% to 74.2% over the past year.

Improved call handling and access to the service has resulted in over 90% of users being satisfied with their initial contact with the force, putting it near the top of the MSF group. The abandonment rate of non-999 calls by the police enquiry centres (PECs) has exceeded the target, with only 2.3% of calls abandoned.

Neighbourhood Policing is being rolled out with over 184 neighbourhoods now live. The force has and will continue to actively develop and maximise the use of the extended police family through PCSOs, special constables and volunteers.

Each BCU now has its own dedicated public protection unit (PPU) and child abuse investigation unit to ensure that the expertise is in place to deal with the most vulnerable in our communities.

Significant progress has been achieved in complying with the HMIC protective services marking standards, reflecting the importance of serious and major crime and investing in counter-terrorist activity. Systems have been put in place to ensure that lessons are learnt from critical incidents and disseminated across the force. The force now has a resilient, fully accredited firearms cadre.

The quality of service programme is being implemented; witness care units are established and training in the victims' code of practice has been rolled out. The benefits are already apparent, through an increase in the levels of satisfaction with being kept informed of progress.

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

Neighbourhood Policing

GRADE	FAIR
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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

Since the 2006 baseline assessment of Neighbourhood Policing, Thames Valley Police has conducted a gap analysis, redesigned the project roll-out and replaced the project manager. The re-design of the structure was to enable quick decisions to be made, since the reality checks undertaken as part of the gap analysis had identified that the structure and processes were bureaucratic. The force now has 184 of its identified 265 neighbourhoods fully staffed. Each of these neighbourhoods is staffed by: neighbourhood sergeants, neighbourhood specialist officers (NSOs), neighbourhood officers (NOs) and PCSOs. The PCSOs had to be specially recruited whereas NSO and NO posts are filled by serving police officers. Combined NSO and NO posts are set at a threshold level of 365 PCs, or 15% of combined BCU PC target strength. NSOs are now recruited to 67% of the established target. The remainder are due to 'go live' on a rolling programme until 31 March 2008 (see www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/info/neighbourhood_policing.htm).

The roll-out of neighbourhoods is dependent on having enough PCSOs trained and available. The decision was made not to have pathfinder sites and to develop Neighbourhood Policing in an incremental way. The force did, however, have pilot sites and the learning gained from that experience was used by the project team to enable efficient Neighbourhood Policing development across the force. One of these pilot sites, at

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Bracknell, was fully staffed and remains so. These were seen as priority areas for policing; Bracknell was chosen because it has 14 neighbourhood areas, eight of which are identified as priority neighbourhoods. In some priority sites, eg Oxford, the priority crime team has areas that are coterminous with neighbourhood teams.

Telephone survey		
Question	% positive answers	% national average range
Q.1. All police forces have put in place local teams, consisting of PCSOs and others to deal with problems of most concern to the public. Are you aware of a neighbourhood team, neighbourhood police officer or PCSO in your area?	50.0	49.3–52.2
Q.2. Do you know how to make contact with any of the police team who work in your local area?	58.7	54.9–56.3
Q.3. From what you know, are the local police speaking to local people about tackling problems in your area?	57.7	53.1–54.8
Q.4. How much effort do the police in your local area put into finding out what people think? Would you say they put in (a lot/some/none)	70.1	64.1–67.2
Q.5. How much say do you think local people have over what the police do to tackle problems in your local area? Would you say they have (a lot/some/none)	67.4	66.3–69.2
Q.6. How much opportunity do you think there is for local people to work with the police to help tackle problems in your local area? Would you say there is (a lot/some/none)	80.2	75.8–78.4

Strengths

There is evidence of strong leadership from the Chief Constable's management team (CCMT) and the police authority for the implementation of Neighbourhood Policing, which features prominently in the authority's annual policing plan www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/planning/planning.htm (see 'Areas for improvement'). The Chief Constable visited all local policing areas (LPAs) in 2006 to check on the progress and implementation of Neighbourhood Policing; this involved going out on patrol on a neighbourhood on each of the LPAs. The Chief Constable has also visited all local authorities, promoting neighbourhood principles with the chief executives.

The police authority has committed £16 million to the Neighbourhood Policing project. The aim is to put sufficient resource and support infrastructure in place to turn Neighbourhood Policing into sustainable business for the future. It is proposed that the chief inspector project lead for Neighbourhood Policing will remain employed by the project for at least six months after the March 2008 go live date to oversee corporacy.

There is evidence that there is a developmental process in place for Neighbourhood Policing. The assistant chief constable (ACC) local policing (LP) and his project team have developed good links with the ACPO (now National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA)) Neighbourhood Policing team in order to get advice, guidance and best practice. The force is contributing to NPIA products and was a key contributor to the Newbury racecourse conference at which the ACC (LP) gave the opening address. Each BCU has a Neighbourhood Policing implementation group, which undertakes and guides local delivery. These groups also engage with informal focus groups which look critically at local procedures and systems. Now that most teams are in place, the force is focusing extra activity on implementation in specific areas. For example, the Berkshire East BCU implementation board is focusing on Slough and Maidenhead, as these areas are yet to be fully resourced. BCUs are subject to a quarterly visit by the ACC (LP) and central project team in order to test implementation and compliance.

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The force has undertaken a self-assessment in order to measure its progress against ACPO (now NPIA) guidance. As a result, actions have been identified and these have been incorporated into the project plan. At a local level, BCUs have self-assessed and the resulting actions are managed via local BCU implementation boards. These boards are attended by the headquarters (HQ) project team. Some BCUs did the self-assessment per LPA rather than BCU. Local BCUs use the ACPO self-inspection guide as a checklist to monitor Neighbourhood Policing implementation. BCU meetings and action plans driven by the local BCU commander supersede ACPO Neighbourhood Policing implementation plans. Each BCU has a local delivery plan recorded on a spreadsheet and this is accessible on the intranet. This database was developed at Wokingham and is seen as best practice for the force.

The chief officer lead, the ACC (LP), works closely with the project team and is considered to be easily accessible. Neighbourhood Policing activity is managed by the monthly executive project board which is chaired by the ACC (LP) and is attended by the police authority chairman, police authority lead member and BCU commander representative. Members of the police authority also sit on the BCU implementation boards. It is managed through the force implementation group, which meets every two months and is chaired by the head of local policing. Additionally, the project manager chairs monthly implementation managers meetings, which include the BCU and LPA implementation managers (champions). These meetings monitor and check progress and the project manager will communicate with delegates by email between meetings. The five BCU champions attend their own monthly BCU meetings, chaired by BCU commanders. These meetings feed information into the force implementation meeting. The project plan has been developed using PRINCE2 project management principles. An exit strategy is also being devised and costed in order that Neighbourhood Policing becomes more mainstream post-March 2008, when the project team is reduced. The BCU implementation managers will stay in post for one year beyond this date (see 'Areas for improvement').

The force does not use a Gantt chart to monitor the critical path of the project, but it does use an Excel spreadsheet, which defines activities, duration and rates of completion and enables managers to track progress easily. A traffic-light system is used to monitor the roll-out of Neighbourhood Policing. This system highlights important areas for action and monitors progress. Red identifies priority areas for both immediacy of roll-out and the requirement for enhanced staffing levels. The risk of not reaching establishment as proposed is identified in the project risk register to ensure that resourcing is continually monitored. Partnership risk focuses on failure of the engagement strategy, and as a result action has been identified. An example includes a conference proposed for the end of 2007 for all Neighbourhood Policing inspectors and neighbourhood action group (NAG) chairs.

ACPO tracking data is regularly submitted which illustrates that 17% of the current total workforce are in Neighbourhood Policing roles, amounting to 15% of the total BCU target PC establishment. Once all neighbourhoods are live, 20% of the total workforce will be in Neighbourhood Policing. There are 265 identified neighbourhoods, all of which have been scoped and prioritised. Some 184 of these are fully staffed and operational; the remaining are partially staffed and being filled as PCSOs are recruited to work with neighbourhood sergeants, NSOs and NOs. Some 249 (94%) of neighbourhoods have named contacts (see www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/info/neighbourhood_policing_index.htm). As each neighbourhood becomes fully staffed, there is a launch event attended by the public and partners.

The force has graded neighbourhoods according to demand (crime and deprivation). There are three grades – priority, enhanced and capable – and there is a ratio which can be used to staff these neighbourhood areas. Each priority neighbourhood has a dedicated neighbourhood sergeant, two ring-fenced NSOs and two PCSOs. For enhanced and

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capable neighbourhoods, a sergeant post is allocated to every six PC posts. The force threshold model is: priority, two NSOs and two PCSOs; enhanced, one NSO and two PCSOs; and capable, 0.33 NSOs and one PCSO.

These resources can be supplemented by other officers, subject to local management interventions and identified need. This is particularly so for NOs, who are abstracted from response teams and are not red circled. There is also a maximum model, which uses the total resource allocation formula.

There are role definitions for all neighbourhood staff including PCSOs. These are well understood by Neighbourhood Policing staff and are becoming more understood by other staff throughout the force (see 'Areas for improvement'). The human resources (HR) strategy reflects the priority to fill Neighbourhood Policing teams within prescribed timescales. This is monitored and progress is a standing item at the HR meeting. Neighbourhood sergeants have informal contracts to stay in post for between 18 months and two years. This is seen as a specialist post by the force and the role profile is currently being reviewed now that NSOs have taken line management responsibilities for PCSOs (see 'Areas for improvement'). Continuity of these posts is seen as the responsibility of the local BCU implementation boards (see 'Areas for improvement').

The force has accelerated the recruitment of PCSOs. Recruitment teams have held sessions attended by members of the public expressing an interest in joining the force. These candidates are assisted with their application forms and background checks are immediately completed. They are then interviewed and often are accepted the same day. The force now has a pool of candidates interested in becoming PCSOs and no longer feels the need to advertise further. This has been an effective cost-saving initiative and should be seen as good practice. This is not the case for NSOs in some parts of the force (see 'Areas for improvement').

There are currently 373 PCSOs in post (the overall target is 417) with the remainder undergoing training or going through the recruitment and vetting process; they will be on the ground working by the end of September 2007, but this figure moves to 530 when joint funding is included. It is anticipated that all 530 will be in post by December 2007 and there is a current waiting list of 200 applicants. All PCSOs awaiting training have had offers of employment and the only delays have been concerning vetting and occupational health.

There is a corporate template for neighbourhood profiles. Analysts produce demographic and social trends analyses; all LPAs have produced these and they are recorded on the 'know zone'. These are inspected by the ACC (LP), who has a personal performance development review (PDR) objective for this, and are quality assured by the force diversity team. The neighbourhood profiles include social and demographic data broken down into neighbourhoods, problem profiles, demographic and social trends analysis information and the results of environmental visual audits. In the early stages of the project, there was little consultation with partners and the police relied more on informing after decisions had been made than consultation. Key members of the community were unhappy with this and influenced the police approach. From the outset of the project, consultation with partners was key to deciding on the neighbourhood areas. The template developed at Bracknell was used as good practice to achieve this consultation. The project team worked closely with the West Oxfordshire community safety manager. Since this time, there has been much more communication and consultation and some geographical negotiation took place when the neighbourhoods were identified and defined. This consultation was assisted by CDRP links. CDRPs identified, at an early stage, the impact of Neighbourhood Policing and developed an intrusive style which demanded regular reports from the police. The profiles have developed incrementally and are now better understood by Neighbourhood Policing officers.

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As a result, more information is being added. They are stored on the force intranet and are printable if required.

The project team has produced guidance for Neighbourhood Policing teams. This includes the Neighbourhood Policing manual. It has developed over time and has been modified to include best practice. Currently, best practice is also circulated via briefing papers. Corporate documents are produced, eg demographic and social trends analyses, which are included in the intranet site and accessed directly through a link from the intranet opening page. Specific instructions are given regarding key activities, such as tactics of community engagement and how to complete community surveys.

There is evidence of systems and processes being adjusted to support Neighbourhood Policing; for example, PECs and the force control room (FCR) staff generally understand Neighbourhood Policing concepts and the roles and responsibilities of Neighbourhood Policing officers. This has been helped by the fact that the officer in charge of call handling used to be the project manager for Neighbourhood Policing. Notwithstanding this, the ability to identify a neighbourhood area to a caller's location relies on the knowledge of staff. However, to support this, neighbourhoods are identified by maps on the intranet site. Some limited information regarding Neighbourhood Policing is included within the PEC's reference database, used by PEC staff as a repository for best practice and operational knowledge. PEC staff can give the names of neighbourhood police officers to callers and are able to transfer calls to Neighbourhood Policing officers' voice mailboxes. The PEC and FCR staff can click onto the name of the Neighbourhood Policing officer and the IT system will automatically display the relevant duty screen, so that the public can be easily informed as to when these officers are on duty. They state that Neighbourhood Policing staff are proactive on the radio taking suitable calls and will use the radio to book on duty (see 'Work in progress').

The intranet has a domain called the 'know zone', which identifies Neighbourhood Policing teams within a single electronic page, gives the team details, their contact telephone numbers and their duties and lists the area priorities. This facility is used by these staff. Radio operators within 'call and despatch' in the FCR are supplied with paper lists containing details of those neighbourhood police officers who are on duty. Furthermore, the crime and incident management units (CIMUs) crime recorders also make themselves aware of neighbourhood priorities from the intranet. The efficient identification of crimes within a neighbourhood that link with community priorities relies on the CIMU staff searching this facility. The CEDAR crime recording database has been adjusted to reflect neighbourhoods.

There are integrated communication strategies between BCUs and partners. An example of information sharing includes the work done by BCU communication officers; they have formal links to communications staff in partner organisations as well as internal groups such as the Gay Police Association, Black Police Association, etc. The inspection team was provided with ample evidence of internal and external communication undertaken by these officers. Furthermore, the force newspaper is used to update staff with news concerning the implementation of the project. All staff are given updates on Neighbourhood Policing through monthly briefing sheets. For some staff who work alongside Neighbourhood Policing teams, additional information should be made available, eg, scenes of crime officers. A regular Neighbourhood Policing update briefing document is produced, which shows clear progress against key project targets. The Chief Constable uses scheduled management briefings to reinforce the Neighbourhood Policing message (see 'Work in progress' and 'Areas for improvement').

There is guidance concerning community engagement (the seven-step model). From the outset of the project, additional communication took place through the independent advisory

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group and Thames Valley Partnership (a capacity building organisation) (see www.thamesvalleypartnership.org/). This group ran seminars and provided feedback on the challenges for Neighbourhood Policing, eg engagement with rural neighbourhoods. It will also help with the NAGs chairs forum, which is to be held later in 2007.

Before a neighbourhood is signed off as having rolled out, there has to be evidence that the community is being engaged. Therefore, all 184 neighbourhoods that have been rolled out are engaging with their communities, amounting to 69% of those identified. There is evidence of community engagement being used to good effect; for example, Milton Keynes completes an annual survey of communities which is analysed by an external organisation. This complements local NAG surveys and data received by way of external polls. There are some very local surveys being completed, eg, to shops or to local firms, which are then used together with command and control data to assist in the identification of problems. Furthermore, schools are engaged by Neighbourhood Policing teams and some sixth-formers have been invited to sit on NAG meetings. Safer schools officers are part of some of the Neighbourhood Policing teams and schools have been graded using the traffic-light system. Red is seen as priority and is allocated a dedicated officer; lower priorities are served by the NOs and PCSOs. Generally, PCSOs are tasked with visits to primary schools, where they work with schools officers and give talks to the children. This initiative is fully supported by the education department.

A tactical list of engagement techniques has been developed as a result of the experience and learning in the pilot sites. Tactics include: street briefings; meetings with key partners and communities; formal presentations; surveys and door knocking; questionnaires; and crime prevention initiatives. There is a good level of NAG engagement and activity within these tactics. NAG meetings are attended by statutory partners, including the council, and often have a young people's representative. At a strategic level, statutory partners are generally well engaged apart from the notable exception of health. This reluctance was attributed to some health service restructuring and was addressed by engaging a health representative as a leading contributor to the CDRP. This meant that they were required to attend all meetings. There is a regular exchange of information through email between statutory partners.

There are many formal engagement processes where consultation and information exchange takes place – police authority meetings, CDRPs, etc – and these have been supplemented by more creative and often less formal meetings. An example is three business breakfasts which are facilitated by the ACC (LP) and at which the Chief Constable gives a formal address. These engagement activities aim to provide consultation in order to set strategic priorities.

Some key members of the community (including NAG chairs) were invited to the regional Neighbourhood Policing conference held at Newbury racecourse. This was an ACPO conference at which best practice and tactics were outlined. Partnerships make use of a community messaging system, which is IT based and automatically sends messages to nominated subscribers by email, text and telephone. A force survey was conducted of communities in ten fully staffed neighbourhoods. Residents were asked whether or not they knew their NSOs and PCSOs. The results of this survey varied between neighbourhoods and some did not know the name of their local officer, nor the 0845 non-emergency number. However, the telephone survey carried out on behalf of HMIC shows a more positive picture (see table in contextual comments).

Neighbourhood Policing staff are completely aware of their responsibilities for the engagement of communities and for the requirement to share information with partners. There are a number of tactics used to engage both local and minority communities. These include surgeries, public meetings, mobile police stations within villages etc. NAG meetings

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are also finding ways to engage, such as stands at annual fairs, leaflet drops etc. A public survey is organised at the Eynsham Fair, where NAG members interview visitors. The force undertakes joint activity with NAGs to deploy a 'crime prevention truck' to local fairs to raise awareness of crime prevention messages. The Witney NAG is an open meeting and it actively engages with minority groups such as youth. They have been proactively engaged within their meetings. There are clearly defined engagement plans at all levels within the force. These plans have timelines and activities and are starting to be monitored for compliance with the Neighbourhood Policing force plan. Outside the force, NAGs have their own engagement plans, as do partners and CDRPs.

Feedback to the public is via a variety of means, including public meetings, postcard and leaflet drops, posters displayed within shops and local amenities, flyers on police vehicles, letters to residents after drug searches and by utilising the public media. Some neighbourhoods have their own newsletters and the council also uses its communication officers to spread Neighbourhood Policing messages. There is also some evidence of the Neighbourhood Policing webpages on the force internet site being used (www.thamesvalley.police.uk/bcu/berkshire_west/local-police-areas/neighbourhoods/Reading/central-news1.htm). The results of confidence and satisfaction surveys were broken down to neighbourhood level (20 neighbourhoods) in order to understand the effects of Neighbourhood Policing. NAGs, however, have developed their own neighbourhood management public survey forms which are sent to members of the public in order to gauge levels of satisfaction and to check contact ability and visibility. These also help to define the public priorities.

Partner reluctance was included within the programme risk register and has been the subject of debate at appropriate meetings. There was limited reluctance in the very early stages of the project but this was immediately addressed through information sharing and a joint understanding of the benefits of Neighbourhood Policing. There are currently no outstanding problems and it has been removed from the force risk register. In the early stages, some local authorities decided not to contribute towards PCSO funding, eg Milton Keynes. However, local parish councils undertook to fund some of these officers. Buckinghamshire County Council has given £2 million towards PCSO funding and some funding has come from safety partnership initiatives. There are currently 113 part-funded PCSOs within a full establishment of 530. Another example of partner reluctance was where Wokingham highways department saw community priorities as a threat to its service provision. It had developed its own plans and did not want NAG priorities to influence these, as it had only limited resources to deploy. Eventually, the expectations of NAGs had to be lowered through information and engagement, as many groups wanted physical restrictions such as speed humps to be installed. Another theme across the force was the expectations of communities for councils to provide youth services and venues for youth meetings, in order to address ASB issues. Councils have worked hard to provide more supervised activities for youths in accordance with their s.17 responsibilities. The Chiltern NAGs and town councils wanted to get neighbourhood officers back rather than have PCSOs, but realise that this is impractical.

Engagement with partners is very successful and there are many examples of joint activity, including:

- joint working with council teams to serve warrants – Oxford;
- parish councillors patrolling with PCSOs in order to understand problems – Chiltern;
- a graffiti group in Milton Keynes where police and council jointly work to clear up graffiti on both council and private properties. PCSOs give a street briefing to residents and drop leaflets outlining activity;
- joint working with the fire service and council on arson and bin fires – Milton Keynes;
- joint work to manage traveller sites – Milton Keynes;

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- joint communications officer with local authority – Oxford (which has its own dedicated Neighbourhood Policing website); and
- a handyman scheme which uses volunteers to target-harden vulnerable premises using locks etc – Buckingham.

Evidence exists that joint problem solving through multi-agency, problem-solving groups is taking place within all the 184 live neighbourhoods, amounting to some 69% of all identified neighbourhoods. Each is required to have a NAG in place before it is signed off as live (www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/info/neighbourhood_action_group.htm). There are structures and work in place to identify priorities in 184 neighbourhood areas. The force has ASB contract templates on the intranet which provide a corporate and easily accessed model for activity. The ASB unit staff complete joint visits with Neighbourhood Policing staff where contracts are drawn up with offenders and these are then jointly monitored. Neighbourhood inspectors have a priority crime meeting which discusses local priorities and priority crime types. An example of joint working and information sharing is the work that is being done with social housing landlords; information and lists are given to police and joint visits are made to tenants. Neighbourhood Policing staff work alongside council street wardens, who use their contacts within environmental health departments, to immediately remove graffiti. Good relationships with the probation service have resulted in offenders being used for cleaning this graffiti. NAGs do not have budgets to cover their activities and often use charity events to raise the necessary funding (see www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/info/pdf/NAGNotesbudgets.pdf). An example includes the purchase of a speed information device, where the monies were raised by local charity events, but where the council has agreed to purchase it in order to avoid payment of VAT. Some NAGs, such as in Oxford, are coterminous with their area committees. This gives access to the budgets of these committees for problem solving.

There is a strategic information sharing protocol in place between Thames Valley Police and its partners and beneath this sit local protocols which are considered subordinate and are linked to the overarching policy. Some Neighbourhood Policing information is included on statutory partners' websites. An example is www.Chiltern.gov.uk, which includes neighbourhood priorities. Local authority data has been provided to police and NAGs in order to develop and formulate the NAG priorities. In Oxford they have matched their local resources to neighbourhood police areas. Each is now covered by local environmental teams. Slough LPA has re-aligned its neighbourhood enforcement teams to Neighbourhood Policing areas. West Berkshire LPA has a partner intelligence management mapping system. Data sharing between statutory agents is improving, although there are some technical difficulties – for example, beat codes on the CEDAR crime system do not always match ward areas. Work is in progress to extend beat codes to Neighbourhood Police areas and then a back-record conversion process will take place. Data being collected is seen to inform a baseline assessment. In some neighbourhood areas, key individual network members have been identified as 'pulse takers'. These are contacts who are regularly telephoned by Neighbourhood Policing officers in order to obtain local intelligence. The CAD computer can be used to map partner information in relation to hotspots.

Neighbourhood teams use environmental visual audits as a method of identifying local need; these are undertaken with partners. Completion of all actions outlined will be subject to another audit at the end of the activity in order to ensure that issues are dealt with; this also acts as a performance indicator (PI) for the neighbourhood team. At Oxford they are starting to use National Standards for Incident Recording (NSIR) data in order to understand instances of ASB and their aim is to map these incidents. At West Berkshire actions emanating from neighbourhood team priorities are very closely monitored, using the red, amber and green system of completion measurement (see 'Areas for improvement').

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Tasking meetings take place on a fortnightly basis within LPAs. Partners attend these meetings and discuss strategies, tactics and joint working. Partners include probation, fire service, prolific and priority offender managers and the drug action team. Partners are held to account for their actions at both these and BCU tasking meetings. There are examples of success stories, which include 'crack house' closures and work to reduce ASB and bonfires prior to bonfire night (see 'Developing practice'). Neighbourhood priorities are now being included in the tactical assessment process undertaken at BCU level. Partners attend weekly tasking meetings at LPAs and are fully engaged with the tasking process. Bracknell Forest LPA has identified a group of 1,500 volunteers who are surveyed on a regular basis in order to test delivery and tailoring to local needs.

While the compilation of joint strategic assessments is still being developed (see 'Work in progress'), there is evidence of neighbourhood profiles from each LPA being fed into the strategic assessment process. The NOP survey was representative of the Thames Valley as a whole in terms of gender, age, working status and ethnicity and has been used to inform the profiles.

At Oxford there are two community intelligence desks (north and south). NAGs have been encouraged to pass intelligence to the police through these desks. An IT-based briefing system has been designed specifically for neighbourhood officers, informing them of incidents and crimes of note, local intelligence and tasking. Within the PCSO training programme there is a three-hour input on community intelligence and they have an additional input by Special Branch officers, where intelligence requirements are also a topic (see 'Areas for improvement'). Special Branch officers have given training inputs to Neighbourhood Policing teams specifically on the 'richer picture' and the relevance of intelligence submissions regarding suspicious people, vehicles and locations.

Within Thames Valley Police, community and diversity officers complete community impact assessments on behalf of, but not in isolation from, Neighbourhood Policing teams. They are completed as a matter of course for high-profile cases such as murders and on a needs basis at other times and community and diversity officers will liaise as appropriate with Neighbourhood Policing teams. There is up-to-date guidance by way of a policy document in existence and often independent advisory groups are given scrutiny of completed reports.

Facilities for Neighbourhood Policing teams appear, from limited site visits, to be fit for purpose; furthermore, the police authority will provide £3 million (over five years) to adapt buildings in order to improve accommodation for Neighbourhood Policing teams and partnerships. Some partners contribute to these costs and councils have donated properties for joint occupation.

The project team has circulated policy and guidance on the roles and responsibilities of NSOs and PCSOs. Non-crime incidents are allocated as appropriate to Neighbourhood Policing officers through the BCU-based service delivery units. Sergeants monitor workloads, which appear to be at an appropriate level.

The abstraction policy requires that 95% of available Neighbourhood Policing staff opportunity time should be spent on their neighbourhood areas. This policy has recently received ACPO endorsement – this was previously not intended for implementation until March 2008 – and measurement systems are being developed. The force intends to use the DMS system to monitor and manage abstractions (see 'Areas for improvement').

PDR objectives for Neighbourhood Policing staff are mostly compatible with their role, in so far as they outline community engagement and joint problem solving. Neighbourhood Policing objectives are included in PDRs for officers (PCSO to superintendent). Volunteers also have Neighbourhood Policing objectives included in their contracts.

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NSOs are given special priority payments in order to raise their status and reflect their extra responsibility for supervision of PCSOs. They are expected to stay in role for two years but will be encouraged to stay longer. Neighbourhood sergeants do not get special priority payments, but this is currently being reconsidered by the project board. There are awards for community officer of the year and volunteer of the year (see www.thamesvalley.police.uk/bcu/berkshire_west/local-police-areas/neighbourhoods/Reading/newtown-news2.htm). Recognition of other Neighbourhood Policing activities and service is given through BCU performance groups (see 'Areas for improvement').

Early in the project (March 2006), there was a series of joint training events with partners at management level. Local authorities, eg Oxford, have since arranged joint training events at a more tactical level. An example is a one-day conference held at Bicester village, which gave training to police, partners and community members. This was organised and run by the local police inspector. The project team has attended some of these in order to give input and identify best practice. Best practice has been included in an advisory document, which can be accessed by partners wishing to hold these events. There are other multi-agency days planned, eg with registered social landlords. An example of good practice is the development of a one-day training package for schools. This was designed in true partnership by a panel of partners representing the key areas such as schools and police.

Agencies that have taken part in joint training include the drug and alcohol action team, trading standards, youth offending teams, community wardens, community safety managers, environmental agencies, chief executives, health authorities, fire and rescue, town councils and youth groups. Some of this training has included problem solving and joint working. The roles of PCSOs have been also been explained (see 'Areas for improvement').

Neighbourhood inspectors and sergeants have been given two-day training in the scanning, analysis, response, assessment (SARA) model. Other Neighbourhood Policing officers have attended a one-day course during which they were trained in the SARA, professional assistance template and enforcement, prevention, intelligence and communication (EPIC) models. These one and two-day courses have included partners. The environmental audits completed by police and partners are seen as the primary tool for scoping environmental problems, which can then be addressed using problem-solving techniques. Problem-solving tactics and options are included in the best practice area of the Neighbourhood Policing website.

PCSOs have an initial five-week training course and are then supervised on patrol for a further four weeks (this is with a personal development plan.) They then return for a further one-week training course. Within their training they have a one-day input on Neighbourhood Policing. This course has been increased by one week as a result of a training needs analysis, staff feedback and the requirement for community placements in the Initial Police Learning and Development Programme (IPLDP). NSOs are also given a three-day leadership course, followed by a short course on the completion of PDRs and supervision of PCSOs. New NSOs to neighbourhoods will have a one-week course as part of the IPLDP (see 'Work in progress').

There is evidence that the force has integrated its performance management and review processes with that of its partners, such as CDRP and local criminal justice boards (LCJBs) – for example shared targets and tasking (see www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/partnerships/criminaljustice/index.htm and 'Performance management'). Each BCU has negotiated with partners a variety of local area agreements and the achievement of these is jointly monitored. The force has engaged the

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LCJB with active participation of senior Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) staff at the force performance group meeting and at the crime meeting (see 'Areas for improvement').

Work in progress

Work has started to develop an IT forum which includes a toolkit of best practice tactics which can be used to problem solve. This site is live for internal use and is intended to be accessible to partners and NAG members.

An initiative led by the deputy chief constable (DCC) and managed by a superintendent has started in order to progress joint strategic assessments with statutory partners. The force intelligence bureau is assisting in this project and is looking at ways in which data can be gathered and presented. There are also plans at CDRP level to assist in this aim but there are some difficulties in obtaining accurate and timely information from some partners' databases. At Milton Keynes they are using contacts with key individual network members to develop and monitor community tension indicators.

As detailed above, there is evidence of joint problem solving and the force does use the problem-solving triangle – victim, offender and location; however, this is still being developed with partners as Neighbourhood Policing is rolled out (see 'Areas for improvement').

Hard-to-reach groups, such as Muslim, Somali, Polish and Romanian groups, have been identified for additional efforts to access them fully. Local surveys only access a limited proportion of the population and therefore it cannot be guaranteed that the communities within the six strands of diversity are reached. This is recognised and will be complemented by police and partners sharing engagement strategies, systems and processes to have the maximum effect and give the maximum opportunity for engaging all such groups. Engagement with hard-to-hear groups is being developed by the force using surveys at a local adult education college (see 'Developing practice'). The force is also going through a recruitment process to attract Polish speakers to join as call handlers/operators within the PECs (see www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/departments/cred/index.htm).

The results of confidence and satisfaction surveys were broken down to neighbourhood level (20 neighbourhoods) in order to understand the effects of Neighbourhood Policing. NAGs, however, have developed their own neighbourhood management public survey forms, which are sent to members of the public in order to gauge levels of satisfaction and check contact ability and visibility. They also help to define the public priorities and should be seen as an example of good practice.

The internal audit discovered that there were deficiencies in the communication plan. Steps have been taken to improve communications and an example is the upgrades to the internet which have made Neighbourhood Policing accessible to all.

Bracknell LPA is currently piloting a system using activity sheets, in order to monitor both abstractions and activities of Neighbourhood Policing staff.

Each statutory partner is becoming more demanding of the others in order to obtain information and intelligence. There are now jointly funded analysts in partnership teams. Neighbourhood Policing teams access analysts through their Neighbourhood Policing sergeants, who make bids for the analysts' time, or a particular product. Generally, officers undertake their own analysis and do not use this process. At present, neighbourhood profiles are almost solely completed in this way. Local intelligence officers also engage with partners in order to obtain specific information, such as the identity details of residents within bail hostels.

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A pilot initiative at High Wycombe is looking at the best way to store community intelligence. This intelligence is being stored outside the force intelligence system and will instead be stored as a word document, in a domain within the intranet 'know zone'. This can then be easily searched. The force is considering issues of data protection and disclosure. The intention is for intelligence officers to access this repository of information and to extract relevant intelligence (see 'Areas for improvement').

As detailed earlier, analysts produce demographic and social trends analyses and some councils are seeking extra analyst funding due to the extra work that this generates. There is some limited provision of analytical product from police to partners. Some analytical support has been part funded by local authority/Government Office for the South East (GOSE) monies. Representatives from NAGS reported a tendency to request work from local authority analysts, as they are more easily accessible than police analysts. Consideration should be given by the NAGS, local authority and police to agree which partner agency is best placed to produce the products and for a protocol to be drawn up that addresses the NAGS requirements. Developing communities are being identified and leaflets are translated into languages as appropriate. Current understanding of social and ethnic groups is reliant on data which was obtained in the 2001 census and will not be updated formally until 2011.

A strategic assessment is in progress in Oxfordshire; data is being collected and a written assessment will be produced in due course. In Milton Keynes data is gathered through a partnership data officer, but as yet this information is not being used within any strategic assessment. Local and partnership data is seen to have good impact on BCU priorities and is starting to feed strategic thinking through the tactical tasking and co-ordination process. A stakeholder forum, which is a multi-agency group, has just started and its aim is to identify joint priorities for the future.

There are approximately 500 volunteers across the force, of whom 74 work on Neighbourhood Policing duties. There is a backlog in the vetting of these volunteers (currently 200 waiting), which the vetting manager sees as a priority. The force intends to develop an accreditation system for these volunteers.

A training needs analysis was completed in 2004 before Neighbourhood Policing training was delivered to mainstream officers. The project board has received a report outlining the training needs of Neighbourhood Policing staff. This reflects that there is a need to refresh the initial training provided to neighbourhood inspectors and sergeants. This recognises the increased knowledge base across the force and lessons learned. A training needs analysis is now being undertaken by the learning and development department to ensure that there is greater emphasis on practical skills, such as chairing meetings. The Neighbourhood Policing project team has initial responsibility for training delivery. It is proposed that this responsibility will be handed back to the training and development unit now that the IPLDP includes a workbook and a Neighbourhood Policing work placement. The evaluation of the training given so far has already been returned to the learning and development department and in future the training prioritisation board will make decisions and authorise courses or training for non-Neighbourhood Policing staff.

Making contact with Neighbourhood Policing teams is still being developed – for example, the Newtown neighbourhood team does not have a specific force email account and has set up its own NewtownNAG@hotmail.com while waiting for the force to implement email boxes for neighbourhood teams. The control rooms and enquiries department (CRED) is leading on work to implement a force email portal which will allow safe handling of emails from the public.

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At Bracknell LPA there is a pilot project to develop a Neighbourhood Policing activity sheet. This spreadsheet includes work completed within a geographical area by both response and Neighbourhood Policing officers and is used to inform the public of the level of activity in their area and to highlight some successes. The detail of activity concerning Neighbourhood Policing officers is the start of an activity audit. In future, activity needs to be analysed and compared against NAG priorities and other joint objectives.

There is some evidence of integration of different functions, such as Neighbourhood Policing, response, call handling and other customer facing functions consistent with the national Quality of Service Commitment. Work is under way to integrate the CRED and front counter services through the quality of service team (see 'Areas for improvement').

There are some very limited PIs for neighbourhood specialist officers. Some PIs are being developed and will measure activity through the use of personal digital assistants. At Slough PCSOs are using personal digital assistants to measure their community contact time. There is a pilot at Bracknell which is looking to measure more qualitative data, but is finding data collection difficult. There is an expectation that the national ACPO team would have developed PIs and they have been waiting for these to be circulated to them (see 'Areas for improvement').

Areas for improvement

Neighbourhood Policing is not a philosophy that yet runs throughout the force or is visible in its culture. There is little peer recognition that Neighbourhood Policing team roles (inspector, sergeant, NSO and PCSO) are specialisms which may be affecting the ability of the force to attract the right officers to become NSOs (see below). Furthermore, interviews with detectives both at BCU and within PPU's indicated a general lack of understanding of what Neighbourhood Policing is about and how it may influence their role or how they can assist neighbourhood teams. However, there is some evidence that there is recognition by the major crime team and serious and organised crime senior investigating officers (SIOs) of the value that the Neighbourhood Policing teams can add to the investigation of major crime through their links with and knowledge of the community. Furthermore, most functions of the force now have some Neighbourhood Policing element, eg the CRED; it has been identified that other operational command units (OCUs) and HQ functions need to be more closely aligned towards Neighbourhood Policing aims and also increase the level of awareness of their staff.

RECOMMENDATION 1

That the force continues to drive the message about the importance of Neighbourhood Policing to ensure that it becomes a philosophy that runs throughout the force and is visible in its culture.

Notwithstanding the efforts made through Neighbourhood Policing seminars, which have been held throughout the force where the ACC (LP) gave an overview of Neighbourhood Policing and PCSOs spoke about their role, there needs to be further communication, as there is some misunderstanding among communities about PCSOs and what they can do. Furthermore, there was criticism about the hours (shifts) that PCSOs work and a perception that these do not always allow the opportunity to tackle ASB, which is often prevalent in the early hours of the morning.

Even though some adjustments have been made to systems and processes to reflect neighbourhoods, the beat codes have yet to be changed to reflect neighbourhoods – for

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example, roads policing and its demands vary across neighbourhood areas. It is recognised that roads policing officers work routinely within Neighbourhood Policing areas and that the roads policing unit has produced a toolkit for dealing with local speeding issues and is involved in the briefing and tasking process. However, it is evident from site visits during this inspection that there is limited evidence that this work and the presence of roads policing officers are co-ordinated with that of Neighbourhood Policing teams.

BCU implementation boards have responsibility for continuity and succession planning for NSOs and this is proving to be problematic; for example, during the fieldwork stage Buckinghamshire BCU has only managed to recruit 30% of its NSO requirement, with no quick fix demonstrated. The current batch of NOs is showing a reluctance to move over to the role of NSO and this is affecting the successful roll-out of Neighbourhood Policing.

Partners generally felt that there was good information from the police about Neighbourhood Policing issues, but commented that there was a lack of feedback when they had reported individual crimes. Quality of service training has been given to all police officers and staff, including those in the communications room. This was developed by e-learning and is reinforced by PDR objectives. Training regarding victim codes and the Quality of Service Commitment to vulnerable victims such as those suffering hate crime or repeats has been given to all officers. This training has been delivered via e-learning, leaflets and a training DVD. Notwithstanding this, there was limited evidence of this being embedded across the force (see 'Performance management').

Within the performance management section of this report, there is detail on how victim satisfaction data is closely monitored and considerable emphasis applied to follow-up actions. There is, however, little discussed in terms of neighbourhood performance at some BCU performance group (PG) meetings; this is compounded by a lack of data, albeit Personal Performance Indicator (PPI) data is now on stream. There is, however, a strong focus on driving down and solving crime, and officers and staff associations expressed concern about the degree of focus being applied to these core areas, which to some amounted to having their discretion removed and to others to skewing activity away from community engagement and joint problem solving (see 'Performance management').

Notwithstanding the positive comments above, there has been limited training for NAG members, but this is inconsistent across the force. Statutory partners were aware of the SARA model but very few community members understood the model or problem solving in any depth. Furthermore, now that most training has taken place, new members of NAG teams either have to learn from current members or they can gain access to information from the internet, as there is no formal follow-up training process. This training requirement could be linked to any central training for NSOs in the future, although there are plans for sergeants and inspectors to be given enhanced skills in order to train and empower NAG members.

Currently, there is no specific training for Neighbourhood Policing teams to identify and collect community intelligence, as the force takes a view that there is no distinction between community intelligence and intelligence per se. PCSOs have had some input on this and also the 'rich picture' (see 'Strengths'). However, it is evident from site visits and group interviews that Neighbourhood Policing staff require further training in order to improve their skills and knowledge to obtain this intelligence from within their communities. Best practice and creative methods should be adopted, particularly for those communities currently not fully engaged within the intelligence process. Practical training has been given to PCSOs regarding the forms (CID72s) that are used for intelligence submissions.

The force considers that it has sufficient analytical capability and capacity and relies on leadership and management intervention to assist Neighbourhood Policing efficiently.

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Constables and PCSOs felt that they had limited ability to access this resource but they do get hotspot reports and maps, and access to analytical capability is included as a risk in the corporate risk register. It is recognised that officers are able to undertake limited research using data sources such as the command and control system in order to understand neighbourhood priorities, but their product will be limited by their skills and experience. This activity should not be allowed to impact significantly on their core patrol and customer-facing duties.

While NSOs are ring-fenced, this is not the case for NOs, who are abstracted. There is no abstraction policy in respect of these staff, who are seen as a supplement to threshold neighbourhood staffing levels. They have no tenure and are not given formal Neighbourhood Policing training. Furthermore, some Neighbourhood Policing inspectors fulfil other roles such as Police and Criminal Evidence Act authorities and it is removing them from their core role.

The project plan includes an intention to review neighbourhood boundaries in 2010 and thereafter every three years. It is considered that this formal process is too rigid and requires more flexibility to allow BCUs to review neighbourhood boundaries when the need arises.

Special constables are not yet embedded in Neighbourhood Policing teams. There are currently 279 special constables in Thames Valley Police and they have role profiles which do not yet include Neighbourhood Policing. However, the Special Constabulary has its own strategy document (in draft form), which includes Neighbourhood Policing as a priority. Alignment to Neighbourhood Policing teams is not compulsory but is encouraged. Interviews with special constables indicated that they have had limited Neighbourhood Policing training.

Developing Practice

INSPECTION AREA: Neighbourhood Policing

TITLE: Engagement with the hard-to-hear groups – BME and learning disabilities

PROBLEM:

To find an effective method of consulting with the hard-to-hear groups.

SOLUTION:

The neighbourhood inspector in Aylesbury had discussions with the local adult education college and requested that a local survey be completed by all classes, which included ethnic groups and also those with learning disabilities. This survey was part of the current educational curriculum and as such formed one of the lessons. The questions that were asked were:

- Name three things that you like about the area in which you live.
- Name three things that you dislike about the area in which you live.

OUTCOME(S):

This proved an effective method to capture those hard-to-hear groups. The issues identified ranged from noise, rubbish and vandalism to potholes in the road. These are typical issues identified from these surveys:

Some 46 persons completed the survey – 34 female and 12 male. Ethnicity: 19 Asian, 9 Black, 17 White, 8 other (Russian, Chinese, Hong Kong – not stated).

FORCE CONTACT: Inspector Anne Jones, Aylesbury – 01296 396286

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INSPECTION AREA: Neighbourhood Policing
TITLE: Community bonfire night
PROBLEM: To reduce the number of minor arsons on the Eaton Manor Estate on 5 November 2005.
SOLUTION: Over the past seven years, the fire service were frequently responding to fires on the estate, putting out fires that youths had started by ripping off garden fences and using this as firewood. This was not only a drain on the service's resources but also on funds, and something clearly needed to be done. With six weeks to go before Bonfire Night 2005, the fire service, the Eaton Manor Neighbourhood Policing team, Milton Keynes Council and members of the local community, both young and old, formally discussed the matter through a 'problem-solving table', with a common goal to address this issue and eliminate future incidents Within that six week period and by the time Bonfire Night arrived, the community had secured £6,300 of funding from various sources. A full risk assessment had been completed that enabled over 2,500 residents to witness the greatest, safest, best organised and most successful firework display the estate had ever seen. Over 3,000 hot jacket potatoes and various 'delicacies and flavours from around the world' were consumed at the event. That was coupled with street dancers and video recordings of music tracks performed, edited and played by a mixture of white and Asian youths from the neighbourhood. Local junior school children adorned their lanterns and representation from all sections of the community made this event the brilliant spectacle that it became and one the estate is proud of and intended to repeat in 2006. Sergeant Albert Bernard has chaired the first of the 2006 Bonfire Night Committee meetings.
OUTCOME(S): All this was achieved within a short space of time with a saving for the fire service of £70,000 by eliminating these incidents on this estate. There was also an indirect opportunity cost saving to the local neighbourhood team.
FORCE CONTACT: Sergeant Albert Bernard, Milton Keynes – 01908 276111

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INSPECTION AREA: Neighbourhood Policing
TITLE: Annual community sporting event
PROBLEM: Reducing the rivalry between Asian gangs and to promote closer links between the police and the Asian youth community.
SOLUTION: In the East End of Reading there was rivalry between Asian gangs and it was decided to hold annual community sporting events with football and cricket tournaments. This tournament was extremely successful and is now held as best practice in breaking down barriers, as it involves the police and the local community. It is also fully supported by the Black Police Association and has received favourable comment in the Houses of Parliament.
OUTCOME(S): Since the start of these events the East End is the only area in Reading that has seen a reduction in hate crime.
FORCE CONTACT: Inspector Kevin Sinfield, Reading – 0118 9536231

GRADE	GOOD
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Performance Management

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

During 2006/07 Thames Valley Police faced many operational challenges, the most significant of which was Operation Overt – a joint counter-terrorist operation with the Metropolitan Police Service that lasted from August to December 2006 and significantly depleted its operational capacity. The net cost to the force for Operation Overt was £3.18 million. There were 5,586 days worked in total. The breakdown of time spent during this operation was: constables 4,856 days, sergeants 328 days, which amounted to some 5,184 days, with the remainder coming from managers. The average number of working days lost for officers was 228; therefore, the equivalent of 22.7 constables/sergeants were lost for an entire year.

Notwithstanding this challenge Thames Valley Police continues to develop its comprehensive performance management framework for application at a strategic, BCU/OCU and support department level. The model reflects all the key principles from the Home Office joint publication *A Practical Guide to Performance Management*. The performance model incorporates the ethos of continued improvement and has resulted in collaborative ventures with other police forces and outside agencies. The strategic plan, annual plan and delivery plan have a strong and discernible emphasis on performance and acknowledge the importance of citizen focus.

There are a number of accountability mechanisms at all levels across the organisation – PGs at force and BCU/OCU level, crime meetings and a rigorous internal inspection regime. The relevant chief officer lead conducts on-site inspections and analysis over two full days with clear police authority and partnership involvement. Both strategic planning and regular performance review are being integrated together with National Intelligence Model (NIM)

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processes; this is in tandem with force and local control strategies reflecting national and local priorities. Force and local PGs are informed by NIM products and robust questioning around intelligence, prevention and enforcement further consolidates these links. The force PG has been continually developed and is a rigorous, robust and yet supportive process. The meeting covers a wide range of subject matter including quality of service/public satisfaction; Neighbourhood Policing; domestic abuse; hate crime; missing persons; resource usage; as well as reducing and detecting crime.

The police authority plays a proactive role in monitoring performance and challenging current approaches throughout the organisation; this follows the role set out in the performance management model. The authority is involved in all PGs, the internal inspection process, BCU committees and local area policing boards (LAPBs). The chairman of the police authority continues to have an active involvement in the review of Public Service Agreement (PSA) 1 crime reduction targets. The authority is modifying how it monitors the performance of OCUs, HQ functions and key priority areas and the executive director of the authority has prepared a report outlining this process and a suggested reporting schedule has been created. This extension of monitoring will include protective services.

Force performance achievements are detailed on its website and can be accessed via www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/planning/pdf06/tpv_summary_06_1.pdf.

Strengths

The force has integrated its performance management and review processes with those of its partners such as CDRPs and LCJBs – for example, shared targets and tasking (see 'Areas for improvement'). Each BCU has negotiated with partners a variety of local area agreements and the achievement of these is jointly monitored. The force has engaged the LCJB, with the active participation of senior CPS staff at the force PG meeting and the crime meeting.

An annual activity analysis is conducted to measure inputs across a wide range of policing activity. This data is then analysed and populates the Home Office return. Thames Valley Police follows the Home Office guidance on activity-based costing and has been assisting regional and national groups in developing its use. Currently, annual reports are compiled to provide comparative data from the annual data return for both the CCMT and the police authority. Further specific analysis has been carried out in areas like the utilisation of PCSOs to improve their visibility to the community. Currently, the data is being reviewed and used to assist in the benchmarking strand of the productivity plan and also to identify high-spending functions for further analysis.

There is consistent use of comparative analysis at force/BCU/LPA level during the performance group meeting. BCU and LPA commanders are encouraged to seek good practice from neighbouring BCUs and LPAs as well as those in their family of BCUs and CDRPs. At one BCU meeting attended by the inspection team, it was evident that much benchmarking with MSF BCUs and neighbouring forces has taken place and a number of learning opportunities used to good effect.

There is evidence of integration and correlation of performance review, strategic planning and the NIM (with the added advantage of the Chief Constable holding the national ACPO NIM portfolio). There is evidence of the aligning of operations and business planning through the strategic assessment.

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Two BCUs, Milton Keynes and Berkshire West, have NIM-style tasking meetings with partners to agree joint agency tactical deployment to identified and presenting crime and disorder issues (see 'Work in progress').

Each BCU/OCU and department (including finance, HR and information and communications technology (ICT)) have delivery plans which link into the force delivery plan, which in turn delivers objectives in the police authority annual policing plan.

Thames Valley Police has a long-standing history of tackling cross-border crimes and associated issues. It borders with nine other police forces and continues to develop its picture of cross-border criminality. The force has been running a number of joint operations with these forces in recent years. Thames Valley is a lead police force in tackling domestic extremism and has had a number of recent successes in dealing with animal rights activists. It supported a counter-terrorism operation with the Metropolitan Police Service for a five-month period in 2006. It has collaborative arrangements in place for the provision of air and transport support and is currently working on a joint ICT director post with Hampshire Constabulary.

There is clear evidence that the force and its authority are acutely aware of balancing national and local priorities and their resource implications. During the financial year 2006/07, each department was required to find 10% of savings for 2007/08. During 2007/08, in order for the force to achieve £10 million in savings, a 'six strand' productivity project is being undertaken to identify proposals for implementation in 2008/09. The crime support department has specific responsibility to quality assure and audit NIM compliance and a detective chief inspector (DCI) has ownership of the NIM action plan.

There is clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the police authority, Chief Constable and managers with regard to performance. A comprehensive performance management framework is in place for application at strategic force, BCU/OCU and support department level. It draws on previous well-established force systems, collaboration with other forces and the Home Office joint publication *A Practical Guide to Performance Management* (see 'Areas for improvement'). Members and officers from the authority regularly attend and take an active part in the force PG and crime meetings (see contextual comments for developments).

There are a number of mechanisms in place to tap into public opinion on policing matters and service delivery. The authority commissioned an opinion poll company to conduct a telephone survey of Thames Valley residents' policing priorities in October and November 2006. The interviewed sample (1,553) was representative of the Thames Valley as a whole in terms of gender, age, working status and ethnicity. The authority and force also carried out consultation on policing to inform their disability and gender equality schemes; priorities identified informed the policing plan process. The disability scheme consultation was a forum attended by around 100 stakeholders from disabled groups and the gender equality scheme consultation was a postal survey to over 100 stakeholders. The authority also developed online questionnaires on policing priorities designed for householders and the business community. Results of consultation showed the following to be of concern to the community and have been reflected in the annual policing plan: call handling – NOP public consultation survey identified ease of contacting someone as a concern; hate crime – community representatives and stakeholders at LAPBs and CDRPs have identified this as an issue; domestic violence – partners have identified through local area agreement targets to increase reporting that this is an area of concern; BCS crime reduction – NAGs and CDRPs have identified a whole raft of BCS crimes (eg criminal damage) as being of concern. See also www.tvpa.police.uk/finance/pdf/Council_tax_07_08.pdf.

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The authority has established LAPBs on each BCU. These boards include community representatives and have a responsibility for overseeing local engagement. This includes receiving updates on the work being carried out with local neighbourhoods (minutes from each LAPB are available). Examples of work with hard-to-reach groups include one LAPB holding a question and answer session with local sixth-form students and the consultation event around the disability equality scheme.

There is clarity among officers and staff about how they are held to account for performance at BCU/OCU/department level down to team and individual level. There are mandated performance objectives in all PDRs that are bespoke to their job role (see 'Areas for improvement'). An unsatisfactory performance process is in place and is used with support from BCU/OCU-based HR and performance officers.

Victim satisfaction data is closely monitored and considerable concentration is applied to follow-up actions. It is clear from PG meetings that quality of service and public satisfaction are high on the agenda and rigorously assessed; actions are put in place to address under-performance.

A long and well-established process of resource allocation is in place, known as the total resource allocation formula; this is based on the national formula and is reviewed annually. Allocations to OCUs and departments are by zero-based budgeting, which has periodic reviews to ensure resources are aligned to demand. The zero-based budgeting process is being used to help identify the £10 million savings required for the budget gap.

The force delivery plan, which feeds into the annual policing plan, has targets with chief officer ownership (see contextual comments for developments). The police authority representatives hold the DCC to account for force performance at their six-weekly performance review meetings. Actions are agreed and taken forward for review at the next meeting. The relationship is challenging and supportive and conducted in the same excellent spirit which characterises a good working relationship between chief officers and the authority.

An expectation that senior managers will be regularly and robustly held to account for performance is firmly established. The revised performance review processes, which are conducted in a learning and supportive environment, have become embedded throughout the force. There is a 'buddying' approach for BCU/LPA commanders to assist them in improving performance. There is a comprehensive internal audit and inspection process and a dedicated inspection team, with clear evidence that findings are acted upon. BCUs and OCUs have been regularly audited against HMIC 'Going Local' methodology and have included elements of HMIC's self-inspection regime (now subject to change over the coming year and more risk based). The appropriate chief officer leads conduct on-site inspections over two full days, with clear police authority and partnership involvement. Action plan management takes place through PGs, CCMT strategy days and BCU committees. Peer review during each on-site inspection adds considerable value to the process in terms of support, transparency and organisational learning (see 'Areas for improvement').

A range of mechanisms to reward good performance are embedded throughout the service, eg, the high sheriff shrievalty merit awards

www.westoxon.gov.uk/furtherinfo/whatsnew.cfm/245, Chief Constable's commendations and force and BCU PG presentations and commendations

www.thamesvalley.police.uk/communityawards/. High performance and best practice are communicated across the force through a variety of methods and publications.

Performance-related pay is managed effectively through the bonus payment scheme and annual PDR process.

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There is clarity around who is responsible for which action in the force delivery plan. Each BCU/OCU and department has its own delivery plans, which feed into the force plan. SMART PDR objectives for managers are geared towards achieving the targets within their respective plan (see 'Areas for improvement'). The management of programmes of work and projects is led by a strategic group comprising CCMT members and BCU commanders, with each programme of work having a chief officer lead. PRINCE2 methodology is used and there is a central project and programme support office which co-ordinates updates.

As commented above, all BCU/OCUs and departments have delivery plans and targets that are geared towards achievement of the force delivery plan. BCU/OCUs and department heads have autonomy to deliver these plans and targets but are rigorously held to account by chief officers.

There is active chief officer involvement at force performance, crime and tasking meetings, which are very effectively chaired (by the DCC and ACC specialist operations (SO)) and drive performance. As detailed earlier, these are the mechanisms where BCU/OCU/LPA commanders are held to account as well as department heads. Managers have PDR objectives that are linked to the delivery plan and these objectives are clearly linked to their day-to-day work (see 'Areas for improvement').

The police authority has an active part in planning and setting objectives. There is a close and professional working relationship between the force and authority members and officers during the planning cycle, with numerous inputs to the authority. The January performance review meeting considered draft local priorities identified through consultation and the various performance monitoring mechanisms described above. Targets were then proposed for agreement at the full authority in February; the authority agreed these subject to any amendments as a result of outturn data being different from the provisional data (the annual policing plan now contains year-end figures). As a result of this, the authority set a pragmatic crime reduction target of 3% for all crime for the period 2007/08 (see [www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/planning/pdf/strat_plan05-08\(low\).pdf](http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/planning/pdf/strat_plan05-08(low).pdf)) and while achievement of this target alone will not realise the three-year PSA crime reduction target on its own, it is nonetheless challenging but achievable. Comprehensive performance information is supplied to the authority on a regular basis www.tvpa.police.uk/meetings/index.htm. A six-monthly joint review is conducted of PSA 1 crime reduction, together with the police authority and GOSE. All CDRP chairs, community safety officers and LPA commanders attend this review. The meeting reviews progress against CDRP/BCS comparator crime targets set as part of the safer and stronger communities fund agreement, shares good practice and debates areas of concern. Furthermore, barriers to delivering crime reduction are identified together with appropriate solutions, including how GOSE, the police authority and force HQ can support CDRPs in their delivery.

As commented earlier, there is evidence of integration and correlation of performance review, strategic planning, the NIM and budgeting. There is evidence of aligning of operations and business planning through the strategic assessment.

Both strategic planning and regular performance review have become better integrated with NIM processes, with force and local control strategies reflecting national and local priorities. Performance reviews and the NIM are mutually reinforcing, with neither overly dominating the other. Force and local PGs are informed by NIM products and robust questioning around intelligence, prevention and enforcement further consolidates these links. The strategic plan, annual plan and delivery plan have a strong and discernible performance and citizen focus. The strategic assessment takes account of developments within the Police Performance Assessment Framework (PPAF) and previous inspection findings. This document is a key driver in the force's business planning.

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There is a discernible performance management framework that runs from the CCMT to the front-line constable and PCSO. There is absolute clarity among officers and staff (evidenced by group interviews) about what is required of them to drive performance to reduce and detect crime and to improve customer service. Officers and staff have mandated performance objectives within their PDRs that now reflect their roles and the completion rate for PDRs stands at 97.9% (see 'Areas for improvement').

A suite of timely, accurate and comparative performance data and management information is produced on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. The data is comprehensive, user friendly and visually impactful (see 'Areas for improvement'). Publication and reporting takes place both manually and electronically to an agreed corporate format. Publications are journalistic in style, with analysis-based contextual narrative. There is a comprehensive and integrated annual programme of performance reviews in place. This incorporates BCUs/OCUs, support departments and 16 CDRPs. This programme ensures that audit and inspection are timed in such a way that issues identified in the resulting action plans can be followed up via the PG.

Effective monitoring review processes enable emerging poor performance to be identified, with robust systems in place to link problems with the means of taking positive action, eg, the crime meeting, performance group and other local accountability mechanisms. There is effective use of comparative assessments with MSF and BCU groups (see 'Areas for improvement').

There are clear improvement targets throughout the force; most notable are the 3% crime reduction target and the targets associated with improving sanction-based detections (see www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/planning/polplan0405.htm). The fortnightly crime meetings, which are effectively chaired by the DCC, provide the focus for activity to achieve this and force PG meetings focus on both MSF and similar BCU performance comparisons.

There has been significant investment by the force in raising the level of awareness of officers (including special constables) and staff to improve customer service. It is apparent that the work being undertaken by the ACC (SO) is raising the profile of customer service across the force (see 'Areas for improvement'). The force also operates a quality of service unit, www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/complaint/gosu.htm, whose remit is to find out if things are going wrong, and to carefully investigate what has happened to find the best way of putting them right. The unit also monitors positive comments about service delivery to help the force learn from things that are working well. The unit aims at all stages to respond promptly and explain what has happened, why it has happened and what is being done to address it (see 'Areas for improvement').

Thames Valley Police submits its annual and monthly data returns in a timely fashion to the Home Office. Furthermore, it has significantly improved the quality and accuracy of its crime recording processes, which are owned and managed by the CRED, and the Audit Commission has raised the level of National Crime Recording Standard (NCRS) compliance from a Fair grade in 2005/06 to Excellent in 2006/07. The detail of this recording practice is also made available to the public via www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/planning/crime_rec.htm.

Work in progress

The force has seconded an experienced superintendent to the GOSE. His role is to oversee the implementation of the intelligence-led delivery of safer communities across the South East. Particular attention is being paid to compliance with the proposed national standards as the mechanism for creating more effective partnerships.

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Notwithstanding the positive comments above about the Milton Keynes and Berkshire West joint tasking meetings with partners, the force is still working on a corporate approach to joint tasking across all five of its BCUs (see 'Neighbourhood Policing').

A results analysis product has been developed to assess the impact of a particular operation and/or to provide an operational intelligence assessment. The proposed measures of success, although quantitative in nature, are intended to emphasise the qualitative aspect and will cover intelligence, enforcement and financial impact; they should provide some better understanding of cost/benefit analysis (see 'Areas for improvement').

The force continues to develop its performance management system and heads of departments – eg finance, HR and ICT – are beginning to receive assessment as intrusive and thorough as the processes used for BCU/OCU/LPA commanders.

Areas for improvement

While officers were clear about their own PDR objectives and how they were held to account, they did not understand how their contribution impacted on the BCU and force delivery plans.

While all joint operations with other police forces are costed, there should be a scoping of the costs of operational activity to address cross border crime which should then be used to inform the strategic business plan.

Notwithstanding the positive comments above about the number of mechanisms in place to tap into public opinion on policing matters, there appeared to be little evidence of officers and staff actually influencing force or BCU level targets other than comments raised through the staff satisfaction survey.

Officers and staff associations expressed concerns about the apparent pressure placed on them to drive down crime and increase sanction-based detections at the expense of other policing activity. For some this amounted to having their discretion removed, while for others it amounted to skewing activity (including community engagement and problem solving in Neighbourhood Policing) to achieve a particular target (see 'Neighbourhood Policing').

Organisational learning does take place within the force but it occurs in silos, with each specialism having its own method of capturing, recording and disseminating learning from previous activities, eg, firearms, major crime, professional standards, HR and training and development. A review has been undertaken of all critical incident reports published between 2003 and 2006; a report was submitted to the CCMT in July 2007 and it is intended that the findings will be disseminated to the force as a whole. Notwithstanding this, a consistent central co-ordinating mechanism to tie all the learning strands together is needed to ensure that future learning opportunities are not missed.

There is no evidence that supervisors and managers have been given specific training to manage performance, other than during initial sergeant and inspector development training. A training needs assessment should be carried out to ascertain the level of knowledge and a system of local training delivered to raise awareness and capability, as there is a gap in the level of knowledge of some supervisors and managers which needs to be addressed to aid sustainable performance improvement.

While the annual policing plan contains descriptive details about revenue and capital expenditure, and activity analysis in the form of time spent undertaking certain activities (see www.thamesvalley.police.uk/news_info/planning/polplan0405.htm), it appears that objectives within the annual policing plan are not subject to a costing mechanism and it is

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unclear, other than some use of activity-based costing, how cost informs decision making (see also www.tvpa.police.uk/finance/pdf/Council_tax_07_08.pdf).

An audit of PDRs indicated that by and large there was a high level of detail contained in the core responsibilities section. However, the majority of PDR objectives often lacked detail to make them meaningful, eg linking the evidence to the actions within the objective which, when being reviewed by the assessing officer, must have been time consuming and bureaucratic if an accurate assessment is to be made.

Following a visit to a BCU PG, the inspection team noted that the performance management team still struggles to support mapping of crime problems, with only a limited capability demonstrated at that meeting. The force is addressing this issue, but it was an inhibitor to that meeting and more widely the ability to drill down to neighbourhood level. It is noted that improving this situation is a project at the bid stage and is not likely to commence before spring 2008, depending on funding. The BCU has a varied picture of performance, confused by a lack of resources available and staff being abstracted to major crimes and elsewhere. Furthermore, there was little assessment of the progress of Neighbourhood Policing activity, outside of levels of crime and sanction-based detections. In addition, anecdotal evidence suggests that some officers are working excessive hours, yet there was no discussion about health and safety or working time regulations. The meeting would also be improved if there was more examination of crime management, offences brought to justice and custody performance at an LPA and BCU level.

RECOMMENDATION 2

That the force ensures performance management meetings held at BCU level are adequately supplied with performance information that will effectively enable an accurate assessment of the impact of Neighbourhood Policing.

While officers and staff were aware of the Victims Code and the Quality of Service Commitment through e-learning designed to raise knowledge, there is now a need to re-inforce this training to emphasise the customer service message for all officers and staff, as most consider e-learning to be a form of 'file and forget' learning which is yet to drive significant performance improvement (see 'Neighbourhood Policing').

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

Thames Valley Police was graded Fair in the 2006 baseline assessment for the inspection area of Protecting Vulnerable People. Over the last year, the force has sought to improve its capacity and capability within the dedicated PPUs.

The PPUs have responsibility for domestic violence, child abuse investigations, sex and violent offenders, missing persons and vulnerable adults. The co-location of these disciplines within a dedicated team is improving the communication links between them, providing a unit that brings together vulnerability and danger to manage risk more effectively and provide a higher level of service to victims.

A public protection steering group (PPSG), chaired by the ACC (SO), manages accountability and monitors progress against National Centre for Policing Excellence (NCPE) guidelines and HMIC inspection activity. There are good working relationships and sharing of information with partner agencies.

Operational accountability and control for PPUs has been devolved to BCU commanders, with strategic and policy responsibility retained centrally. The DCI public protection provides strategic direction and overview at force level.

Strengths

The ACC (SO) is the strategic lead for all the PVP disciplines. He is the chair of the force PPSG, which is held on a quarterly basis. The meeting membership consists of detective inspectors (DIs), BCU commanders and other senior managers. The group provides central co-ordination for policy, the risk register and other public protection issues.

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Strategic priorities are set, directed and monitored through the force performance group, which is chaired by the DCC and attended by all chief officers. The strategic assessment process has been extended to look at key issues and pull in different sources of information.

The police authority provides good support. Two police authority members, including the chair, attend the PPSG and are very active in the meetings. The leads have a good understanding of the subject; they support and challenge where appropriate. The force provides briefings to the police authority members and addresses the main police authority meeting on public protection issues.

The inspection team liaised with a selection of key agencies working in partnership with the force, including the probation service, victim support, social services and the domestic violence forum. A range of subjects were discussed, including the effectiveness of police participation and representation, the availability of police resources, support by the police towards the development of partnerships and joint investigation and training arrangements. In every case, partners made very positive reference to the willingness of Thames Valley Police to engage actively in partnership working. In addition, partners complimented the considerable resource and time afforded by the force to their respective agencies, for example, accommodation for the victim support service and the development of joint training with the domestic violence forum.

Work in progress

A BCU inspection process has been in place for five years which has featured elements of PVP; however, there is a new, more detailed process being developed by the DCI public protection which will use a traffic-light system to highlight vulnerable areas. Research has been conducted with other forces to look at good practice and a preferred performance model identified.

Areas for improvement

The force does not have a written accountability document which details the accountability structure for PVP. Operational accountability is devolved to BCU commanders while the strategic responsibility sits with the DCI public protection. There are BCU organisational charts and policies which detail reporting structures and guidance. An accountability framework should be developed which outlines the structure through to the ACPO portfolio holder and it should also show the links to the HQ strategic lead.

RECOMMENDATION 3

That the force introduces an accountability structure, detailing responsibilities and lines of accountability from basic command units through to the ACPO portfolio holder and links to the headquarters strategic lead.

Clear links need to be developed between the PVP disciplines to improve intelligence sharing, protection of victims and management of offenders.

RECOMMENDATION 4

That the force develops and implements a formal structure and process for sharing of information across all protecting vulnerable people disciplines.

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

Thames Valley Police has dedicated specialist staff for the investigation of child abuse. The child abuse investigation unit (CAIU) officers are BCU staff working under a dedicated BCU CAIU DI. The units are located within each BCU PPU. There is a central public protection strategic unit, which provides an overview of CAIU policy and performance.

The CAIU has 62 police officers and four police staff dedicated to child abuse investigations. The BCU staffing levels are as follows:

- Berkshire West BCU: one DI, two DSs, ten DCs
- Berkshire East BCU: one DI, two DSs, eight DCs
- Oxfordshire BCU: one DI, three DSs, eleven DCs
- Buckingham BCU: one DI, two DSs, nine DCs
- Milton Keynes BCU: one DI, two DSs, eight DCs

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The CAIU policy and standard operating procedure for child abuse identifies types of cases to be dealt with by the unit as follows:

- Interfamilial child abuse.
- Child abuse involving persons in a position of trust.
- Victims of serious sexual assault who are under 18 years old, which fall outside the family.
- Historical child abuse.
- Institutional child abuse.

Sudden and unexplained death of an infant and child murder cases are investigated by the major crime team or BCU DI, with CAIU officers in support. Offences that fall outside the remit for the CAIU to investigate are passed to the relevant BCU criminal investigation department (CID) or response team.

Strengths

The ACC (SO) is the strategic lead for child abuse investigations. He is the chair of the force PPSG, which is held on a quarterly basis. The meeting membership consists of DIs, BCU commanders and other senior managers. The group provides central co-ordination for policy, the risk register and other public protection issues; it also monitors progress against NCPE documents. Each discipline has a lead member; for child abuse, this is a DI project manager. Accountability is managed through the PPU steering group, the monthly force performance group and the fortnightly crime meetings. Accountability of staff varied across the force area. In general, there were regular monthly meetings between the DCIs and the child abuse DIs to review workloads and specific cases.

Strategic priorities are set, directed and monitored through the force performance group, which is chaired by the DCC and attended by all chief officers. The strategic assessment process has been extended to look at key issues and pull in different sources of information. Child abuse is included in the latest force strategic assessment.

Policy was last reviewed and updated in February 2007. The policy is reviewed annually and has incorporated ACPO guidance and *Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2006*. This was introduced through the project board and managed through the project process. The DCI public protection is the policy owner and has responsibility for including national guidance at the annual review or on an interim basis if it is required. Any changes to policy are reviewed at the PPSG and changes can be disseminated by the BCU leads. The DCI public protection chairs a public protection DIs group every six weeks, where performance and workloads are discussed. A separate meeting of CAIU DIs is held prior to this meeting, where specific child abuse issues can be raised and addressed.

Policy and guidance clearly states that a referral is a report alleging or suspecting that a child is, or is likely to be, suffering 'significant harm', or is otherwise believed to be a child in need, and the policy details what action needs to be taken. To ensure that all crimes against children are investigated, force policy states that the CAIU should be notified of a child that has been or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse or an incident has occurred involving a child on the child protection register. This allows the relevant BCU CAIU referral officer to ensure that appropriate action is taken. Officers are able to access the policy via the 'know zone' system on the intranet. If a new officer was to join CAIU, policy and guidance clearly advises what action to take.

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The initial risk assessment if a report of child abuse or child at risk was received would be by the control room staff, to ascertain if immediate deployment was required; otherwise it would be the patrol sergeant, inspector or DI. Those officers would be informed if the matter required immediate deployment. In cases where a fast response was not needed, then the CAIU would be informed. When a decision is taken by an officer to take out a police protection order, it will be recorded on CEDAR. They will liaise with social services. The uniformed sergeant or inspector will ratify the decision. The forms are completed on the local area network IT system and then manually copied into CEDAR.

Officers were aware of the requirement to fill out a risk assessment for domestic incidents and to include details of any child at the house. They understood the need to check on the welfare of the child and to complete details on the relevant form (DOM5), which would then be forwarded to the CAIU for onward submission to social services. A child at risk referral is recorded on CEDAR as a crime or crime-related incident. Referrals from social services are sent to the PEC for recording and are then passed on to the referral manager via the workflow system.

Each referral will have a strategy discussion by phone, where a decision will be made as to whether a strategy meeting will take place. Prior to a strategy meeting taking place, checks will be made by police to ensure that all relevant police information is available. Approximately 50% of child abuse referrals result in recorded crime. Force policy does not require a supervisor to undertake or attend every strategy discussion/meeting, although they should provide direction to staff attending. The structure of CAIUs generally allows for an investigation DS and a referral DS, and ensures a supervisor is involved in the decision-making process. The referral post will always be covered – in the absence of the main postholder by the other CAIU DS or a designated DC.

Supervisors within the CAIU are the first point of contact for a referral and this enables them to allocate the most appropriate resource to investigate allegations of child abuse. In more serious cases, the DS will take an active role to ensure a proper investigation is completed. All directions from the supervisor should be recorded, accessible and auditable within CEDAR. In some cases this will require the supervisor to be involved from the outset through the strategy meeting and then take on the investigative role. The CAIU investigation DS carries between one and three live cases (see 'Areas for improvement').

Initial case conferences are attended by the child abuse DS or DC in charge. Reviews are not always attended but written reports are submitted when attendance is not possible. Case conference minutes are kept with the relevant files to provide an audit trail. Strategy discussions take place on the initial referral by the BCU referral DS, who will decide what action should be taken and by whom. Risk is identified on the point of referral and reviewed on a regular basis. The decisions are recorded throughout the process from start until finalisation. Inter-agency guidelines are in place and are generally followed by all agencies. Any issues are dealt with by the CAIU sergeant, DCI public protection or through the local safeguarding children board (LSCB) process.

The DCI public protection and relevant DIs participate in the part eight reviews. The results go to the safeguarding board and an action plan is developed which is overseen by the DCI. Improvements in working practices are managed by the local DI and the DCI manages the strategic issues. The DCI public protection identifies child abuse cases for multi-agency review. This can be led by the police or social services. Critical incidents are managed through a robust gold group system, which leads to debriefs and recommendations (see 'Performance management'). Heads of CID and operational support lead to make sure that learning is fed into policies and intranet 'know zone' sites.

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Funding for the LSCBs varies across the force, as BCUs have responsibility for providing funding from their budgets. The LCSBs at BCU level provide the structure for effective communication between the force and partner agencies. Limited funding is provided by local BCUs to the LSCBs. Police attendance varies at these meetings across the BCUs – it may be a DI, DCI or superintendent. The DIs and DSs attend some of the LSCB sub-groups. The level of officers attending is consistent and comparable with partners; those attending are empowered to make decisions.

The hours of coverage by CAIUs varies but was generally Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm, with some cover at weekends and flexibility of duties when required. CAIU staff are not routinely used for other duties away from their core roles. When operational requirements dictate, officers assist the major crime team with family liaison roles or occasionally provide assistance for murder investigations. Job descriptions for child abuse investigators, supervisors and managers were reviewed in June 2007. The role and job descriptions are clear, meeting the actual duties of specialist officers (see 'Work in progress').

There is a formal welfare process in place which allows an individual to be referred or they can self-refer. The force has a counsellor available to discuss welfare issues on a voluntary basis – on Berkshire West BCU there is a monthly hour session for DCs and a monthly one-to-one session for sergeants. Other BCUs have one-to-one sessions for all CAIU officers if it is required.

New officers into the CAIU receive a familiarisation day, Initial Criminal Investigation Development Programme (ICIDP) course, Specialist Child Abuse Investigators Development Programme (SCAIDP), joint interview training and tier 3 interview training. A structured training programme has been developed for specialist officers and this is being rolled out across all CAIU offices. Joint investigation training is completed with social services - staff from both agencies receive training – and this is viewed as a good opportunity to develop relationships for all staff involved in child abuse investigations.

Audit and quality control are carried out throughout the investigation process, initially by the referral manager. Each BCU has a crime scrutineer who reviews the investigation at regular intervals and the HQ audit team checks CEDAR for compliance. During the fieldwork phase of the inspection, there was evidence that decisions taken in relation to action and the progress of investigations were adequately recorded on child abuse investigation files.

Work in progress

The force has a planned a child abuse e-learning package to be rolled out to front-line officers through the National Centre of Applied Learning Technology training system and they will have protected learning time in order to complete the training package. It is due to start late in 2007 and will address action to be taken in relation to notifications and referrals in cases of suspected child abuse.

Monitoring of BCU activity at force level is being developed, using a traffic-light system to highlight vulnerable areas. Research has been conducted with other forces to look at good practice and a preferred performance model identified. There is a BCU inspection process which has recently been introduced and is led by the ACC (LP). This includes inspection of the public protection disciplines. Two BCUs have been inspected to date. Each BCU will be inspected every year.

The force has had difficulty recruiting officers into detective roles, thereby limiting opportunities to get DCs into CAIUs. Posts are filled by uniformed officers who can then be developed through the ICIDP programme.

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The PDR job description and the role outlined in the policy are different; these should therefore be reviewed and aligned to ensure they accurately reflect the duties and responsibilities of child abuse investigation officers. Notwithstanding the positive comments above regarding the review of job descriptions, the PDR job roles cannot be changed during the year without closing and starting up a new PDR, which is time consuming. Work is in progress to have the PDRs reviewed and changed for 2008.

Areas for improvement

The force does not have a written accountability document which details the accountability structure for child abuse investigations. Operational accountability is devolved to BCU commanders, while the strategic responsibility sits with the DCI public protection. There are BCU organisational charts and policies which detail reporting structures and guidance. An accountability framework should be developed which outlines the structure through to the ACPO portfolio holder and it should also show the links to the HQ strategic lead.

Child abuse is not specifically included in the force policing plans or strategies. Due to the lack of police priorities and performance measures for child abuse investigations, these cannot be reflected in joint plans/strategies with other agencies.

The rationale for staffing levels was not recorded and appears to have evolved prior to resources being devolved to BCUs.

Out of hours, there is a force-wide on-call rota of DIs but not for DSs or DCs. DCs on the rota were in receipt of bonus payments; when the payments were withdrawn, the DC rota stopped and the DIs carried out that function. This has resulted in one DI being called out seven times in three months. This not meeting officer or force need at this time. The DCI public protection is carrying out a review of the on-call rota.

Notwithstanding the positive comments above regarding live cases, the effect of supervisors carrying their own workloads meant that this impacted on their ability to proactively supervise specialist officers, especially the quality assurance of cases including the monitoring of victim/suspect interviews and completion of PDRs.

Officers carry workloads of between 11 and 20 active cases. In addition, jobs come in daily and officers prioritise those cases with immediate needs, which can result in other active cases being delayed. CAIU officers felt their workloads were generally unmanageable. A review of workloads and staffing levels should be conducted to provide resilience and a more equitable spread of work.

RECOMMENDATION 5

That the force reviews the workloads and staffing levels within child abuse investigation units to provide resilience and a more equitable spread of work.

The level of knowledge of the CAIU function varies across BCUs. The level of support and knowledge provided by middle and senior managers varies across BCUs.

Staffing levels are not stipulated in policy. When resources were devolved to BCUs, original allocations were red circled for the first 12 months; now each BCU can decide on what numbers are needed and this varies across the force.

Front-line officers had not received any refresher training following their initial training programme.

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Control room staff were aware of the need to inform officers of past calls to a particular address and officer safety information and that they should also check the child protection register through checks with the CAIU or it would flag up if on the CEDAR system. Feedback from operational staff at various levels indicated that often they had to request the information, which was not always forthcoming.

Force policy clearly details when joint and single agency investigations should be carried out; however, in reality there are occasions when the report is received by police and the investigation is not reported to the CAIU or to social services. During the fieldwork phase of the inspection, officers found that the child at risk element of the domestic violence form was not always completed and/or forwarded to the CAIU. Improved working practices should be implemented to ensure appropriate action is taken.

In some cases interviews are conducted with the DS present, providing an opportunity to monitor the interview process; however, during the inspection phase the team found that, due to the workloads of officers and the multi-agency meeting attendance, supervisors rarely carried out reviews of their officers' interviews on a regular, more formalised basis.

The force has had difficulty recruiting officers into detective roles, which has limited the opportunity to get experienced DCs into CAIUs. Currently, posts are filled by uniformed officers who then go through the ICIDP programme. Consideration should be given to making the DC role within the CAIU more attractive for experienced DCs to transfer into.

Child abuse investigations are recorded on CEDAR and specialist officers felt it was not sufficient for their purposes. Consideration should be given, when funding is available, to replacing CEDAR and actively involving users such as child abuse investigators in the specification of a replacement system.

Child at risk registers are held by the force but in paper copy. Names and addresses are flagged on the intelligence system but only addresses appear on the command and control system. Access to the current child at risk register is via social services and officers found the opportunity to access the register varied, depending on which local authority they were dealing with.

The IT systems in the force are not integrated – there are standalone command and control, crime recording and intelligence systems. While the force does have a system called 'workflow', which is meant to link the systems, this is an area where improvements are needed.

The force should review the availability of child abuse management information for senior managers and how performance is monitored. There were no specific PIs for the CAIU, there was limited performance management information available for child abuse investigations and it did not appear to be used to improve performance.

RECOMMENDATION 6

That the force introduces a corporate monitoring and review process to ensure a consistent response across the force area and to provide management information which will aid the improvement of performance for child abuse investigations.

Opportunities for sharing good practice and organisational learning are not exploited (see 'Performance management'). The process for cascading lessons learned varies from BCU to BCU. Centrally, recommendations are implemented and monitored by the DCI public

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protection. Debriefs of individual cases are carried out by CAIUs, but generally for officers outside the CAIU there is no debriefing of child abuse cases.

Intelligence is entered on to the force intelligence system but links between the intelligence, crime recording and incident recording systems are not integrated, leading to the possibility of intelligence being missed.

Child abuse investigation has recently been included in the force strategic assessment. However, child abuse does not feature in the BCU NIM processes and NIM processes do not appear to inform the strategic priorities for child abuse investigations.

The sharing of information between the PVP disciplines does not have a formal structure and varies across the force. Some BCUs have co-located CAIU teams with domestic violence (DV) officers and public protection officers (PPOs), which tends to improve information sharing. While there was some evidence of missing persons, multi-agency public protection arrangements (MAPPA) offenders and DV incidents being raised at tasking and co-ordination group (TCG) meetings, child abuse investigations were not mentioned.

Protecting Vulnerable People – Domestic Violence

GRADE	FAIR
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National grade distribution

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/liaison 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 current force resources dedicated to domestic violence (DV) are: five DIs (PPU – responsibility for domestic violence, adult protection, public protection), ten DSs, two PSs, 17 T/DCs and 54.95 PCs. Each BCU has a DV unit within the PPU.

An evaluation of the *Thames Valley Police Response to Domestic Violence* was completed by the John Grieve Centre for Policing and Community Safety and London Metropolitan University in 2006/07, with findings published in May 2007. The evaluation was a detailed examination of the force response to domestic violence and recommendations are being progressed by the force.

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The evaluation found that the majority of partner agencies felt there had been a positive difference over the previous 18 months in the force response to DV. This was echoed in the findings of the HMIC inspection team, which found that strong partnership relationships had been developed through joint training initiatives, multi-agency risk assessment conference (MARAC) processes and improved communication links being established.

The force domestic violence co-ordinator is a key member of the national ACPO DA working party. Thames Valley Police benefits from this, as the force can reflect national best practice as well as making positive contributions to the national debate.

Buckinghamshire BCU ran a proactive DV operation in 2006, targeting high-risk and repeat victims. This was carried out during the Christmas period, when an increase in allegations was anticipated. Officers visited victims to provide advice and support during what was identified as the most vulnerable period. An initial review showed a drop in repeat victims or a drop from repeat incidents to a single incident. Further multi-agency operations are planned.

Strengths

The ACC (SO) is the strategic lead for DV investigations. He is the chair of the force PPSG, which is held on a quarterly basis. The meeting membership consists of DIs, BCU commanders and other senior managers. The group provides central co-ordination for policy, the risk register and other public protection issues. The ACC (SO) is a member of the joint criminal justice and partnership group, which provides direction to domestic violence responses at strategic level.

The PPSG monitors progress against NCPE documents; each discipline has a lead member – for domestic violence this is a DI. Domestic violence is included in the new strategic assessment and the delivery plan for 2007/08 under the heading 'To protect the public from the risk posed by predatory offenders'. Main tracking of delivery against the plan is via the OCU/BCU quarterly responses to the strategic co-ordination and planning department (SCAP), which reports direct to the CCMT.

Strategic priorities are set, directed and monitored through the force performance group, which is chaired by the DCC and attended by all chief officers. The strategic assessment process has been extended to look at key issues and pull in different sources of information. The force performance group reviews BCS crimes as well as priority crimes and DV. Accountability is managed through the PPU steering group, the monthly force performance group and the fortnightly crime meetings.

Management information is available weekly from HQ and a weekly spreadsheet is provided to senior managers detailing officers' arrests and files completed at local policing area level. DV performance at force level is measured on the number of cases, incidents, crimes, percentage of arrests and outcomes at court. The criminal justice board also reviews performance measures for DV. Based on the data for April to June 2007, 48% of domestic incidents result in a crime being recorded.

The DV policy is reviewed annually and has incorporated ACPO guidance. This was introduced through the project board and managed through the project process. The DCI public protection is the policy owner and has responsibility for including national guidance at the annual review or on an interim basis if it is required. Any changes to policy are reviewed at the PPSG and changes can be disseminated by the BCU leads. An interim review of policy was completed in November 2006 and at the time of the inspection it was undergoing a diversity impact assessment, which included a policy review.

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Staff were aware of the policy on DV and knew what was expected of them. They knew how to access policy via the intranet 'know zone' – awareness of this information site has been raised through BCU training days. Inspection officers were able to gain a clear understanding of the action to be taken at an incident and follow-up action required by reading policy and accompanying guidance. The PPU DI and DV supervisor have responsibility for monitoring compliance with force policy on DV. The PPU DIs meet every six weeks to discuss and address issues and they then feed this back to BCU staff. DV supervisors meet every two months to ensure good practice is shared and to foster continuity across BCUs.

A positive intervention policy is in place. Officers consider the circumstances from the available information before making a decision to arrest if appropriate. If an arrest is not made, then officers must justify the reasons why to their sergeant or inspector.

The force has strong partnership links and takes an active part in multi-agency forums across its area. In addition to the MARAC process, there are projects to help children in DV families, anger management and DV perpetrator programmes. There are DV groups within the CDRP and LCJB processes which have joint targets, including the reduction of repeat victims, increasing the incidents reported and witness care. The DV supervisors and DIs are involved at an appropriate level. A multi-agency DV group has been developed which brings together partners (statutory and voluntary) at a strategic level from across the force area. They are developing one policy to run across all organisations and inform processes such as the specialist DV courts.

MARACs have been established across the force area – two in Oxfordshire, three in Berkshire West and one each in Milton Keynes, Berkshire East and Aylesbury. MARAC meetings are generally attended by the DI or DS; officers carry out research prior to the meetings and actions are shared out. Specialist DV courts have been established in Oxford and Milton Keynes, and the CPS has become involved in the project.

Control room staff, on receiving the initial report of a domestic incident, record the details on the command and control system. If the initial assessment is that urgent attendance is required, then officers should attend within 15 minutes of the call. Control staff carry out a history check, which gives the last three months of previous incidents, and pass on those details to the responding officers. Attending officers are informed of bail conditions. The controllers also flag the incident to the DV officers and start a skeletal crime report.

All DV incidents are responded to as immediate or urgent (force standard operating procedure two). If any other type of response is more appropriate – eg, because of identified safety reasons – then the operator can seek the room supervisor's approval to deviate from the standard operating procedure. When a call has been graded as urgent, it cannot be downgraded by the operator, as it requires a supervisor to agree to that course of action, which will delay officer attendance. When a call is received in the control room that is historic – not requiring an urgent attendance – then an appointment can be made for officers to attend at a later time. In this case, the control operator must inform the room supervisor for agreement.

Monitoring of DV incidents takes place through a formal audit process of CEDAR by the CRED. Control room staff have responsibility for ensuring that flags are correctly applied on the command and control system to allow DV officers to review those incidents. The HQ audit team also checks CEDAR for NCRS/Home Office Counting Rules compliance. The Audit Commission carried out a DV audit in May 2007 to assess compliance with NCRS standards. It was graded Good, with 93% compliance.

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All operational officers have received a briefing on risk identification. The initial risk assessment is completed by the responding officer. The risk assessment form is completed by the attending officer and details are discussed with the victim, who is then asked to sign it. To ensure correct details have been obtained and appropriate action has been taken, the officer's supervisor signs the form before it is submitted to specialist DV staff.

The level of risk of a DV incident will dictate who will investigate alleged offences. DV investigators or CID officers investigate all serious and high-risk cases. The remainder are generally dealt with by the prisoner handling unit or the response officers. If a suspect for a domestic incident was outstanding, then the case would be passed from shift to shift in order to effect an arrest. Each BCU has a crime scrutineer who reviews incidents and investigations to ensure required standards are met.

The duty sergeant is responsible for monitoring initial scene attendance and investigations by the first responding officers. Supervisors were aware of their responsibilities. If officers attend a suspected DV incident and consider that arrest is not appropriate, then they will have to justify that decision and have it ratified by the duty sergeant.

Officers were aware of the action to take if a child was living in a household where DV was taking place. Policy clearly states the links between DV and direct child abuse and that the welfare of the child is paramount. Officers complete the child part of the DV risk assessment form (DOM 5) and the details are faxed to social services. If a child is on the 'at risk' register, this will flag up on CEDAR. There was understanding of the need to see the child to check on their welfare and to ask if there were children who resided at the address but were elsewhere either when the offence occurred or when officers attended.

Following initial submission, DV officers will check the risk assessment form, research previous matters and input a review on CEDAR. There is a force-wide standardised matrix which allows officers to work out the appropriate grading. High-risk cases are put forward to the MARAC process. Supervisors review and agree the risk safety plans compiled by the DV officers.

The use of victim personal statements varied across the force area. In some cases leaflets were provided to victims outlining what the statement required; in others statements would be taken by DV teams or CAIU officers. If a case went to court; then a victim personal statement would be obtained, but routinely they would not be completed.

Critical incidents are managed through a robust gold group system which leads to debriefs and recommendations. Heads of CID and operational support lead this process to make sure that learning is fed into policies and intranet 'know zone' sites. The implementation of approved recommendations made by the Pemberton review is detailed as a force priority in the 2007/08 delivery plan. Specialist DV officers would be called in to assist SIOs following a domestic homicide. Their role would be to research the background issues to the DV case, including links with partners.

DV is an agenda item at all daily management tasking meetings, which task arrests. Open incidents are reviewed and all high-risk cases are flagged up to the public protection office, which includes the DV team.

Specialist officers have sole responsibility for the investigation of all high-risk cases. Depending on capacity (which differs across the BCUs), they will also take on borderline medium-risk cases and repeat victim cases. The extent of their investigative role is limited by resources and as such a tiered response is operated, based on category of risk.

The PPU responsibilities on each BCU have been split between two DIs; this allows one to take on the CAIU and the other to manage DV, public protection and adult protection.

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While PPU staffing levels are not stipulated in policy, ownership is the responsibility of each BCU commander. When resources were devolved to BCUs, original allocations were red circled for the first 12 months; now each BCU can decide on what numbers are needed and this varies across the force. Current staffing levels were calculated from information gathered when conducting pilots on a risk assessment/risk management model.

The working hours of DV teams are generally Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm, with weekends also covered. Specialist DV cover is not provided out of hours, but there are duty CID officers available to assist with the investigation of more serious cases or to provide guidance. Specialist officers are not routinely abstracted to duties unconnected with their core function. Supervisors and managers have a robust abstraction policy which is enforced.

Supervisors review workloads on a weekly basis, although they generally sit in the same office as their team and know what workloads are being carried by officers. Supervisory levels do allow for proactive supervision of DV officers.

The DV-related role profiles and job descriptions were reviewed and amended in line with the 'Detailed Peoples Assets' section in the ACPO DV guidance implementation support plan. This was completed in January 2006 and became part of the PDR process in April 2006.

There is a formal counselling process to which staff requiring the service can be referred. Officers have access to stress counselling group meetings or can go on an individual basis if required. Meetings can be held on police premises or at unconnected venues. The process is voluntary rather than mandatory.

There is a structured DV training programme for all staff, which includes various learning methods. A half-day DV training session is given to all front-line officers. An e-learning programme 'Understanding Domestic Violence' is delivered on the BCU and consists of three 20-minute sections with a pre-test at the beginning and a scenario-based test at the end. PEC and control room staff receive a half-day workshop 'Dealing with reports of DV' delivered by CRED staff. Station duty officers receive a crib card, which provides operational guidance for call takers in DV situations.

Specialist officers complete the 'No Witness, No Justice' e-learning course, a two-day risk assessment briefing and a four-day DV course, which includes risk assessment and multi-agency responses to DV. All DV staff are encouraged to complete the ICIDP programme (see 'Areas for improvement'). The training programme is detailed in the DV learning pathway. All officers undertake mandatory diversity training. For specialist officers, an element of their training is on diversity issues.

Staff in the control room and call centre had all received DV training. Some training was via e-learning on the computer, while new members of control room staff received one day's DV training as part of their initial training course. They were clear about the action they needed to take. If staff considered there may be a link between a reported incident and DV, then it would be flagged as DV. The example a member of staff gave was the slashing of car tyres, which would be crimed as criminal damage but the circumstances were such that it might have been domestic related. They were aware that minor incidents could be the trigger to more serious incidents.

Specialist officers stated that training had helped to improve the effectiveness of the first response to DV incidents. Improvements had been identified in the standards of statements taken. During the inspection interviews, all members of staff agreed that Thames Valley

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Police would carry out an effective DV investigation and that lessons had been learned from previous incidents.

Work in progress

Following the Pemberton murder, a domestic homicide review was conducted which resulted in recommendations to the force to improve police response and investigation. The force delivery plan includes a section on police activity to protect the public from the risk posed by predatory offenders. Under paragraph 5.4 the approved recommendations will be implemented by March 2008 and progress monitored through the PPSG.

A homicide prevention strategy is being developed which will have a DV strand. This is a priority in the force delivery plan for 2007/08 under paragraph 5.6. The owner is the ACC (SO), with a target date for implementation of October 2007.

Monitoring of BCU activity at force level is being developed and will use a traffic-light system to highlight vulnerable areas. Research has been conducted with other forces to look at good practice and a preferred performance model identified. There is a BCU inspection process which has recently been introduced and is led by the ACC (LP). This includes inspection of the public protection disciplines. Two BCUs have been inspected to date. Each BCU will be inspected at least once every year.

Areas for improvement

The IT systems in the force are not integrated – there are standalone command and control, crime recording and intelligence systems. The force has the facility to use crystal reports to extract information from the various systems and a system called ‘workflow’, which moves work packages through the various IT systems but does not link them. The lack of linkages inhibits investigators’ ability to exploit information and intelligence held on disparate systems.

The sharing of information between the PVP disciplines does not have a formal structure and varies across the five BCUs. Some have co-located DV officers with CAIU teams and public protection officers (PPOs), which improves information sharing. While there was some evidence of missing persons, MAPPA offenders and DV incidents being raised at TCG meetings, the links between the disciplines should be improved.

There is a three to five-year ICIDP training plan, which was started in 2004 for all DV officers to be ICIDP trained. However, some BCUs have put this training on hold due to vacancies and long-term absences. While the target timescales are still achievable, this should be reviewed to ensure DV officers continue to have professional development.

There was limited evidence to show that problem profiles or other analytical work had been completed for DV. If an individual high-risk case was identified, then analytical research could produce relevant data. The force should increase the use of problem profiles and other analytical work to improve proactive responses to DV.

RECOMMENDATION 7

That the force increases the use of problem profiles and other analytical work to improve the proactive responses to domestic violence.

The force does not have a written accountability document which details the accountability

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structure for DV investigations. Operational accountability is devolved to BCU commanders while the strategic responsibility sits with the DCI public protection. There are BCU organisational charts. An accountability framework should be developed which outlines the structure through to the ACPO portfolio holder and it should also show the links to the HQ strategic lead.

Bail is recorded on a 'COBweb' database and is a readily searchable system. For court orders and injunctions the system has not yet been fully centralised and the information is provided either from a manual search of a hard copy file or from a Police National Computer (PNC) search. This can cause a delay in providing information to responding officers and the process should be reviewed so improvements can be made.

All DV investigations are managed on CEDAR and no other systems are used for DV purposes. Specialist DV officers and supervisors stated that CEDAR did not meet their needs for supervision and management of DV investigations (see also 'Child abuse').

Additional resources have been invested in the PPUs, but staffing levels and workloads are inconsistent across the force. For example, Buckinghamshire BCU has nine officers with 5,891 incidents reported in 2006/07, equating to an average of 654 incidents per officer per annum (monthly 54.5, daily 7.8); this compares with Oxfordshire, which has 19.25 officers managing 7,239 reported incidents in 2006/07, equating to an average of 376 incidents per officer per year (31.3 monthly and 4.4 daily). A review of resourcing levels should be completed to ensure an appropriate response to DV.

RECOMMENDATION 8

That the force reviews the workloads and staffing levels within domestic violence units to provide resilience and a more equitable spread of workloads.

DV officers have job descriptions which mainly reflect their role. However, staff felt that they were out of date and did not accurately reflect their current duties and responsibilities. Job descriptions for the PPU should be reviewed to ensure they reflect the role of specialist DV officers.

Protecting Vulnerable People – Public Protection

GRADE	FAIR
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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

Thames Valley Police has 22 dedicated public protection officers (PPOs), who are BCU staff located within the BCU PPU. The officers deal with all registered sex offenders (RSOs) and MAPPA categories 1, 2 and 3. There is a central MAPPA unit, which is jointly funded with probation. The unit has responsibility for overseeing the Violent and Sex Offenders Register (ViSOR) and the MAPPA process. The MAPPA co-ordinator is a senior probation officer.

Strengths

The ACC (SO) is the strategic lead for the public protection discipline, supported by the head of crime and DCI public protection. The ACC (SO) is the chair of the force PPSG, which is held on a quarterly basis. The meeting membership consists of DIs, BCU commanders and other senior managers. The group provides central co-ordination for policy, the risk register and other public protection issues. The force risk register considers the likely impact of specific issues and ensures that matters are considered proportionally against all other priorities.

Strategic priorities are set, directed and monitored through the force performance group, which is chaired by the DCC and attended by all chief officers. The strategic assessment process has been extended to look at key issues and pull in different sources of information.

Policies are reviewed annually and the MAPPA policy was last reviewed in September 2006. The policy and guidance detail the roles and responsibilities of all statutory and 'duty to co-operate' agencies. In reading policy and guidance, inspection officers were able to gain a clear understanding of processes and procedures for managing relevant offenders. Policy is published on the force intranet ('know zone') under the public protection domain. It includes all relevant procedures and forms. Specialist staff understand policy and guidance and it is implemented in practice.

The PPSG monitors progress against NCPE documents, with each discipline having a lead member; for public protection this is a DI project manager. Accountability is managed through the PPU steering group, the monthly force performance group and the fortnightly crime meetings.

The profile of public protection has been raised by the appointment of a project manager and with active support from the ACC (SO). The PPSG has raised awareness of public protection with BCU commanders and through training to front-line staff. The DCI public protection chairs a public protection DIs group every six weeks, where performance and workloads are discussed.

There is a structured MAPPA process at all three levels which complies with MAPPA guidance. The force is represented at the strategic management board (SMB) by the ACC (SO) or deputised by the detective chief superintendent crime support. The ACC (SO)

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launched the new MAPPAs protocols in 2007. There is recognition of the importance of providing consistent attendance at the MAPPAs meetings. The DCI public protection and the MAPPAs manager attend all level 3 MAPPAs meetings. Level 2 meetings are attended by an officer from the local BCU as well as a BCU chief inspector or superintendent.

Two level 3 MAPPAs meetings are held each month – one north and one south. Meetings are scheduled and a pre-meeting discussion takes place. Meetings are managed by the centrally based MAPPAs co-ordinator, assisted by two administrators. Probation pays for the co-ordinator and the police fund the administrator posts. The meetings are chaired by the DCI public protection and probation assistant chief officer; the MAPPAs co-ordinator is the deputy chair. Housing, social services/children's services attend MAPPAs meetings and, depending on where the meetings are held, the prisons may also send a representative. The co-ordinator and whoever raised the case will decide who should attend.

Level 1 and 2 meetings are held monthly at the same multi-agency risk management meetings. Some larger areas may hold two a month if needed. These are chaired jointly by a senior probation officer and the detective superintendent or DCI. Level 1 offenders are placed on the agenda and are discussed the first time they meet the criteria. Unless the level has increased to level 2, then they will remain level 1 and will be reviewed yearly.

The MAPPAs co-ordinator attends the meetings to quality assure the process and reviews all relevant paperwork. Attendance at meetings is measured and forms part of the MAPPAs performance management process, which reports back to the SMB on a quarterly basis. All partners are signed up to joint key PIs contained in the MAPPAs guidance document. There are 18 key PIs in the new draft. The SMB is introducing three lay advisors to review processes and files. They have not had the opportunity to be intrusive because they are still in their induction phase. There are formal joint case reviews and the co-ordinator will generally pick out the cases. Lessons learned are actioned and monitored by the co-ordinator and through the SMB. PPU staff and the MAPPAs co-ordinator meet quarterly to raise and discuss issues.

At the time of the inspection, there were 12 level 3 offenders who were not in prison, so monitoring of the level 3 meetings was relatively easy and issues could be addressed. This allowed emphasis to be placed on level 2 compliance. The co-ordinator checks attendance and the chair's style – eg, did they focus on risk? – and feedback is provided immediately after the meeting, allowing improvements to be made for future meetings.

If an offender or potentially dangerous person commits a serious or further offence, there is a formal process that is documented and signed up to. This follows a similar path to the part eight serious case reviews for child abuse investigations. The reviewing officer for police would be a DI from another BCU. As yet this has not happened and the process has not been tried. The SMB would decide if the review should be single or joint agency. If it was declared a critical case for either organisation, then probation would pass its documents on. The case would be declared a critical incident and a gold group would be established.

All police actions resulting from MAPPAs meetings are minuted and allocated. If level 3 or if additional resources are required, then it will go via the tasking process either in normal time or urgently if necessary. If surveillance is requested, then requests are normally supported. Level 2 requests for surveillance are made through the MAPPAs manager.

MAPPAs actions are reviewed at each meeting. The MAPPAs manager is informed if actions are not being followed, eg, MAPPAs subjects being re-called through warrants. A standard operating procedure was introduced so that, if urgent, a uniformed officer will complete the task or an officer from the PPU if action can take place in slower time. Officers at Berkshire West BCU have PPU team meetings once a week where a rolling log of MAPPAs actions is

reviewed.

Level 1 offenders are reviewed once a year at the MAPPA meetings. Should any concerns or intelligence be raised outside that planned review, then they can be brought to a MAPPA meeting (either ad hoc or pre-planned). ViSOR is used as a reminder for Risk Matrix 2000 (RM2000) risk assessments to be reviewed every 12 months. All decisions are recorded on ViSOR, including a summary of MAPPA minutes; a paper copy of minutes is filed with the relevant case papers.

A big trigger for the review of risk is non-compliance by an offender around alcohol, drugs or risk areas, eg children. A trigger plan may be put in place and tactical options such as surveillance considered. The DI has control of this process, which is supported by partners.

Offenders falling outside the MAPPA criteria who present a risk of harm are raised through professional meetings structured in the same way as MAPPA meetings. They are also identified on the force intelligence system and tasking process.

Risk is reviewed annually on Risk Matrix 2000. This is a static risk assessment, while OASys is dynamic. Prison intelligence is considered if available (sometimes sporadic) and the various risk assessments are considered and taken into account. If there are differences between the risk assessment levels, then they take the higher risk. If the MAPPA panel changes the risk, then the reason is justified and documented. At BCU level, the reviewing and monitoring of risk levels, reviewing actions and risk management plans are key functions of public protection supervisors and in some cases the DI. A risk assessment is completed for all MAPPA offenders and a decision is made as to what level the offender goes in to the MAPPA process.

Home visits are completed in line with national guidance: low risk – once a year; medium risk – every six months; high risk – every three months; very high risk – depends on each case and guidance from the MAPPA panel as deemed appropriate.

Officers conduct the home visits in pairs and use a pool hire car. The majority of visits are carried out by two specialist public protection officers, however some other officers may attend always in the company of a PPU officer e.g. schools officers. If a high-risk offender is being visited, then their probation officer may be informed and a joint visit could be carried out.

Officers carrying out home visits consider all available information to carry out a risk assessment prior to attendance; radios are carried and personal protective equipment may be taken. At Bletchley officers have been made aware of the risks when carrying out home visits and advised to take their personal protective equipment by their manager.

Officers completing home visits fill out a pro-forma which is then entered on to a ViSOR record within 48 hours and an intelligence form (form 72) is submitted. Home visits are generally up to date (checks by the inspection team during the fieldwork phase confirmed this), although as visits are unannounced this can cause delays.

The ViSOR co-ordinator monitors ViSOR entries to ensure timeliness and compliance. At the time of inspection, minimum standards were being met. All BCUs have administration staff who update ViSOR, freeing up staff to complete home visits. ViSOR access is available 24/7 with PPOs, some force intelligence bureau staff and 12 information retrieval bureau operators trained in its use.

BCU commanders have ownership of PPU staffing and levels vary across the force. Staffing levels were agreed when PPUs were established in April 2007. Work was completed to estimate the numbers of officers required. The DCI public protection reviewed the numbers

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and workloads and professional judgement was applied. The police authority provided the force with additional funding to assist with the growth posts.

Most BCUs have resourcing meetings to make sure there are enough staff in posts; generally PPUs do not carry vacancies, as it is recognised that this is a high-risk area. PPOs are not generally abstracted for duties away from their core functions. The DIs monitor abstractions and these are discussed regularly with the BCU DCI; the ACC (SO) also monitors abstractions. Public protection supervisors do not have responsibility for other disciplines, allowing them to proactively supervise their officers.

Workloads vary and there is an aspirational figure of around 50 RSOs per officer (although this figure increases when violent offenders are added). Supervisors are not included in the figures detailed below:

- Berkshire East – 164 RSOs and 3.5 PPOs, average = 47 per PPO.
- Berkshire West – 234 RSOs, 4.5 PPOs, average = 58 per PPO.
- Buckinghamshire – 146 RSOs and 4 PPOs, average = 36.5 per PPO.
- Milton Keynes – 138 RSOs and 3 PPOs, average = 46 per PPO.
- Oxfordshire – 319 RSOs and 6 PPOs, average = 53 per PPO.

MAPPA chairs receive a one-day multi-agency training session which includes scenarios. Officers on attachments to the PPU do not receive formal training, but their manager guides and supervises them. Some officers have been on the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre training courses – foundation and interviewing.

Welfare needs are identified and addressed by the supervisor, other members of the team or the individual. The force has a counselling scheme available to staff; this is a voluntary process requiring referral.

A robust vetting process has been introduced and the standards are documented. There are six levels of vetting – level one is recruitment vetting and level six is the highest developed vetting. Levels of vetting are considered on the basis of access to systems/information/buildings and are role specific. More sensitive posts are subject to higher levels of checking, eg child protection. Guidelines to the vetting process are included in the staff handbook. All protective services staff have been re-vetted, eg major crime. Public protection comes under the crime support department, so all staff are vetted (see 'Areas for improvement'). The procedure for enhanced vetting is clear – the individual is advised of the interview, forms (identification, personal information, associates and finance) are completed and full checks are carried out. If issues are identified, then they can be raised before the force security committee, chaired by the DCC, which sits quarterly. Individual concern is referred to professional standards. There is an appeal process.

Work in progress

National ACPO guidance has not been published, but an interim MAPPA protocol has been written with the intention of the protocol being rewritten when the guidance is agreed.

Public protection management information has not been available for BCUs other than that detailed in the annual MAPPA reports. The central MAPPA unit has been established and is producing management information, which is examined by the SMB. A standard information pack, currently in draft form, is being developed for BCU commanders.

Opportunities for sharing good practice and organisational learning are not exploited. The process for cascading lessons learned varies from BCU to BCU. Centrally, recommendations are implemented and monitored by the DCI public protection.

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Risk Matrix 2000 training has been delivered to some officers. The number of officers trained and the level of access varies across the force. All officers are due to be trained by the end of 2007. No Risk Matrix 2000 risk assessments are undertaken by untrained staff and while training is being rolled out, then support is provided if backlogs accrue.

An area of risk is considered in respect of the limited discussion for level 1 offenders, as this relies on individual agencies researching and commenting on the individuals. The force has published interim guidance for officers and this will be reviewed when the new ACPO guidance is published.

Areas for improvement

There is no written accountability document detailing the accountability structure for public protection. Operational accountability is devolved to BCU commanders while the strategic responsibility sits with the DCI public protection. While there are BCU organisational structure charts, an accountability framework should be developed outlining the structure through to the ACPO portfolio holder and showing the links to the HQ strategic lead.

Joint reviews and audits were undertaken by a panel of three, but two panel members from other organisations dropped out and only the MAPPAs manager completes the reviews. There is no process for checking the reviews. Further attempts should be made to re-establish the multi-agency panel.

An area for development would be for the MAPPAs co-ordinator, police and probation to meet on a more formal level outside the MAPPAs meetings to improve ways of working.

Management information is not widely available and is not yet used as a diagnostic tool to improve performance.

RECOMMENDATION 9

That the force makes public protection management information more widely available and this information be used as a diagnostic tool to improve performance.

There was no evidence to show that any problem profiles or other analytical work had been completed in relation to public protection.

The sharing of information between the PVP disciplines does not have a formal structure and varies across the force. Some BCUs have co-located CAIU teams with DV officers and PPOs; this tends to improve information sharing. The high-risk MAPPAs offenders were raised at BCU TCGs but officer awareness of other MAPPAs offenders and RSOs was limited.

There is no mandatory training requirement for PPOs, which has led to inconsistent levels of training provided due to BCU priorities and funding by area not HQ. Training for PPU officers should be reviewed and a minimum training standard agreed. The force is looking to run its own PPU training programme but this is in the early development stage.

RECOMMENDATION 10

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That the force reviews the training requirements for public protection officers and agrees a minimum training standard.

RSOs are flagged on the intelligence system, but they have to be re-flagged every three months and there is not always the capacity for this work to be done. There is no automatic process for PPU officers to be notified of offences involving RSOs and MAPPA offenders and unless daily searches are carried out then they are not made aware of those incidents.

Policies do not stipulate numbers of staff and while original allocations were red circled for the first 12 months from April 2006, BCUs can now fix their own staffing levels.

PPOs have job descriptions but they do not reflect the actual role. The PDR job description and the role outlined in policy are different; therefore, these should be reviewed and aligned to ensure they accurately reflect the duties and responsibilities of PPOs.

While all protective services staff have been re-vetted, detective officers on BCUs carrying out RSO visits have yet to be vetted.

Protecting Vulnerable People – Missing Persons

GRADE	FAIR
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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

Every year around 210,000 incidents of missing people are reported in the UK. About half of these are teenagers. Most people return home within a few days, but thousands do not. The Police National Missing Persons Bureau (see: www.childrescuealert.com) is a specialist police unit which acts as a centre for the exchange of information connected with the search for missing persons, both nationally and internationally. It is based at New Scotland Yard and serves UK police forces and overseas agencies. It focuses on cross-matching missing persons with unidentified bodies/persons.

This strand within PVP does not yet have its own dedicated investigative resource within the force, but roles and responsibilities are clear and the force naturally treats the investigation of missing persons very seriously.

Strengths

There is a clear lead by the ACC (SO), who has responsibility for all four strands of PVP and retains strategic responsibility for missing persons. In practical terms BCUs have operational responsibility for the management of missing persons and this is clearly laid out in the interim and undated missing persons policy and in the CRED standard operating procedure number nine. The management of missing persons cases is featured in the force PG process (see 'Performance management') and there is a degree of rigour applied alongside other areas of performance. Performance regarding missing persons is monitored centrally by the force crime management unit and is discussed at the force PG, where BCUs are held to account. In addition, several actions have been produced around BCU performance, including time taken to undertake risk assessments. Information is produced monthly and is accessible to all BCUs.

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Policy and guidance is reviewed annually to ensure it is kept up to date. It was last reviewed on 12 December 2006 but as of August 2007 had not been formally agreed and published (see 'Areas for improvement'). There is the opportunity for policy to be amended at any time. The force has adopted the ACPO guidance on missing persons, which has been incorporated into force policy and guidance. The action to be taken at an incident is clear, together with what follow-up action is required. When questioned, front-line staff (including special constables and PCSOs) knew where to find the policy (on the intranet 'know zone') and what actions would be expected of them.

The identification of risk is clearly articulated in both the draft missing persons policy and in the CRED standard operating procedure number nine and officers and staff have been trained. The initial risk assessment in the majority of cases will be undertaken by the PEC call taker and there are clear questions within the checklist and an easy-to-follow flow chart of actions. Subsequent risk is assessed by the attending officer, who has a further set of questions to ask within a checklist, and the resulting risk assessment (high, medium or low) is discussed with the duty supervisor. The review process is commensurate with risk and the policy follows ACPO guidance. The quality of the investigation is subject to several layers of review, firstly by the duty sergeant and then duty inspector at the start and finish of each shift; after 48 hours a DI will review all outstanding cases on the missing persons database. There is also a review by the missing persons co-ordinator (there is one on each BCU CIMU), who has specified actions within the (interim and undated) missing persons policy.

There is clear evidence of timely risk identification and assessment processes in place. Risk is regularly reviewed at various stages during the investigation and supervisors have the capability to raise or lower the risk, provided there is evidence to support that decision. There will be an appropriate response put in place and during group interviews all officers and staff were confident that there would be an effective investigation. The testing of compliance with risk assessment criteria and review of missing persons investigations are the responsibility of the missing persons co-ordinator, while overall responsibility for the enquiry remains with the duty supervisor (see 'Areas for improvement').

The draft missing persons policy provides the criteria and timelines for the review of missing persons. Practically, this means an initial review by the duty supervisor at the time of the report, which includes the command and control incident as well as the risk assessment and missing persons database entry. Further reviews occur during a period of duty by the duty inspector at the start and end of each shift. As detailed earlier, a DI (or nominated deputy) will review a case after 48 hours, part of this review being to consider referral to the CAIU and social services. The CIMU missing persons co-ordinator will maintain an overview of all missing person cases and will notify the National Missing Persons Bureau after 14 days.

Thames Valley Police has introduced a dedicated and networked IT system for the management of missing persons investigations – a missing persons database (see 'Developing practice'). All operational staff have been trained in its use and the IT system provides for active supervision of such cases by sergeants and inspectors on a daily basis and they describe the system as 'good' for the supervision of investigations.

There is clear evidence of missing persons being routinely considered within the NIM process. At each daily meeting (daily tasking) and at each fortnightly tasking meeting, all outstanding medium and high-risk missing persons cases are reviewed and discussed. Both are usually chaired by the LPA commander and will include the missing persons co-ordinator and police search advisor. Missing persons are also widely publicised where appropriate and agreement sought from the missing persons family; details will also be contained on the website front page (see www.thamesvalley.police.uk/index.htm).

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It is apparent from individual and group interviews that officers and staff are clear about their responsibilities for recording, risk assessment, tactical options, supervisory responsibilities and review. The policies and procedures are published and officers and staff know where to find them. The interim and undated missing persons policy and the CRED standard operating procedure number nine are clear and easy to follow.

Work in progress

There is some evidence of multi-agency work in the field of missing persons investigation and reduction. The force has signed off a protocol with Oxfordshire County Council (May 2007) and it is anticipated that this will be the pre-cursor for a force-wide protocol. On Oxfordshire BCU there is an intelligence desk for the PPU that also deals with high-risk missing persons. There is also a multi-agency meeting that focuses on young people who are repeat missing persons, with the aim of producing a multi-agency plan to reduce repeat incidents.

The draft missing persons policy places an expectation on BCUs that they should adopt a partnership approach to the problem of persons missing from the care of local authorities and mental health trusts. Furthermore, that service level agreement should be established with authorities responsible for residential establishments where persons are likely to go missing. A 'generic' multi-agency missing persons protocol is contained within the policy.

Areas for improvement

While there is a scenario sheet for officer and staff guidance there is no written accountability structure which links the front line to the ACC (SO) who is the chief officer lead for missing persons. Furthermore the lack of such a structure then places greater reliance on interpretation of the (interim and undated) missing persons policy.

The missing persons policy was reviewed in December 2006, however at the time of the report being published had not been formally agreed and published. The process for agreeing and publishing policy should be accelerated.

It is evident from group interviews of officers that they are not trained in return interviews, as detailed in the draft missing persons policy, and that in any event not all missing persons (particularly looked-after children) are subject to a return interview. This is a missed opportunity to gain intelligence and implement interventions to reduce repeat occurrences.

The draft missing persons policy does not include what action should be taken if a person is missing as a result of family pressures, eg forced marriage etc. While diversity training has taken place for all officers and staff, it is not clear whether this linked into training for the investigation of missing persons.

RECOMMENDATION 11

That the force revises its missing persons policy to include action to be taken if a person is missing as a result of family pressures, eg forced marriage etc.

Notwithstanding the positive comments made above about the review and discussion of missing persons within the NIM tasking process, it is evident that little work has been carried out to problem profile, or other analytical work used, to reduce repeat episodes – with the exception of the Oxfordshire protocol (see 'Work in progress'). Furthermore, missing persons do not feature within the force strategic assessment.

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Developing Practice

INSPECTION AREA: Missing persons

TITLE: Introduction of the missing persons database

PROBLEM:

Missing persons reports were managed using paper records held on the local police area, combined with a sometimes lengthy command and control message, holding a list of enquiries and actions. This resulted in:

- Issues in accessing information – records were held at central locations and were not easily accessible to police officers, managers or partner organisations.
- Inability to carry information forward for regular missing persons - name, descriptive details, contacts, places frequented etc were taken afresh each time.
- Supervision issues – it was difficult to check what actions, reviews and results had been completed and by whom.
- Inconsistent risk assessments across the force.

SOLUTION:

The introduction of a single computerised database for missing persons across the force providing the following benefits:

- Single point of entry into database ensuring uniform quality.
- Accessible from any standard local area network terminal in the force.
- Accessible via mobile data.
- Standard risk assessment model based on *The Management Recording and Investigation of Missing Persons 2005*, allowing early identification of high-risk cases.
- Automatic notification of duty supervisors, CIMUs, PNC, DIs, National Missing Persons Helpline, National Missing Persons Bureau and superintendent as appropriate are handled by a workflow system. Reminder notifications are sent to appropriate teams/individuals every 24 hours. Such notifications are central to the review process.
- Ability to send urgent notifications to appropriate teams/individuals.
- Clarity of actions completed and those yet to be finalised.
- Auto population of personal details of missing persons, pictures, contacts, places frequented, places found from previous records.
- Full audit trail available within the missing persons database and workflow.
- Production of performance information allowing greater management control.
- Ability to send electronically the whole or part of any database entry.
- Range of reporting tools built into the database, eg the ability to research all previous missing incidents for any individual.

The project was completed at the end of 2006. Each BCU now has a dedicated missing persons co-ordinator to manage reports and reporting and risk assessment has been incorporated in the force standard operating procedures.

OUTCOME(S):

- Monthly performance information produced, measuring performance against targets.

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- Ready identification of repeat missing persons and repeat locations involved, allowing the opportunity to manage down demand on police resources.
- Clarity of enquiries and case management.
- Ready availability of information obtained from previous enquiries.
- Service level agreements being developed for missing 'looked after' children and mental health patients.

FORCE CONTACT: DCI T Price, Force Crime Management Unit – 07970 145791 / C/I I Beckett, Access to Services – 07970 145380

Recommendations

Neighbourhood Policing

Recommendation 1

That the force continues to drive the message about the importance of Neighbourhood Policing to ensure that it becomes a philosophy that runs throughout the force and is visible in its culture.

Performance management

Recommendation 2

That the force ensures performance management meetings held at BCU level are adequately supplied with performance information that will effectively enable an accurate assessment of the impact of Neighbourhood Policing.

Protecting vulnerable people

Recommendation 3

That the force introduces an accountability structure, detailing responsibilities and lines of accountability from basic command units through to the Association of Chief Police Officers portfolio holder and links to the headquarters strategic lead.

Recommendation 4

That the force develops and implements a formal structure and process for sharing of information across all protecting vulnerable people disciplines.

Child abuse

Recommendation 5

That the force reviews the workloads and staffing levels within child abuse investigation units to provide resilience and a more equitable spread of work.

Recommendation 6

That the force introduces a corporate monitoring and review process to ensure a consistent response across the force area and to provide management information which will aid the improvement of performance for child abuse investigations.

Domestic violence

Recommendation 7

That the force increases the use of problem profiles and other analytical work to improve the proactive responses to domestic violence.

Recommendation 8

That the force reviews the workloads and staffing levels within domestic violence units to provide resilience and a more equitable spread of workloads.

Public protection

Recommendation 9

That the force makes public protection management information more widely available and this information be used a diagnostic tool to improve performance.

Recommendation 10

That the force reviews the training requirements for public protection officers and agrees a minimum training standard.

Missing persons

Recommendation 11

That the force revises its missing persons policy to include action to be taken if a person is missing as a result of family pressures, eg forced marriage etc.

Appendix: Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations

A

ACC	Assistant Chief Constable
ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ASB	Anti-social Behaviour

B

BCS	British Crime Survey
BCU	Basic Command Unit
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic

C

CAIU	Child Abuse Investigation Unit
CCMT	Chief Constable's Management Team
CDRP	Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
CID	Criminal Investigation Department
CIMU	Crime and Incident Management Unit
CPS	Crown Prosecution Service
CRED	Control Rooms and Enquiries Department

D

DA	Domestic Abuse
DCC	Deputy Chief Constable
DCI	Detective Chief Inspector
DI	Detective Inspector
DMS	Duty Management System
DV	Domestic Violence

E

EPIC Enforcement, Prevention, Intelligence and Communication

F

FCR Force Control Room

G

GOSE Government Office for the South East

H

HMI Her Majesty's Inspector

HMIC Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary

HQ Headquarters

HR Human Resources

I

ICIDP Initial Criminal Investigation Development Programme

ICT Information and Communications Technology

IPLDP Initial Police Learning and Development Programme

L

LAPB Local Area Policing Board

LCJB Local Criminal Justice Board

LP Local Policing

LPA Local Policing Area

LSCB Local Safeguarding Children Board

M

MAPPA Multi-agency Public Protection Arrangements

MARAC Multi-agency Risk Assessment Conference

MSF Most Similar Force(s)

N

NAG Neighbourhood Action Group

NCPE National Centre for Policing Excellence

NCRS National Crime Recording Standard

NIM National Intelligence Model

NO Neighbourhood Officer

NPIA National Policing Improvement Agency

NSIR National Standards for Incident Recording

NSO Neighbourhood Specialist Officer

O

OCU Operational Command Unit

P

PCSO Police Community Support Officer

PDR Personal Development Review

PEC Police Enquiry Centre

PI Performance Indicator

PG Performance Group

PNC Police National Computer

PPAF Police Performance Assessment Framework

PPI Personal Performance Indicator

PPO Public Protection Officer

PPSG Public Protection Steering Group

PPU Public Protection Unit

PSA Public Service Agreement

PSU Police Standards Unit

PURE Police Use of Resources Evaluation

PVP Protecting Vulnerable People

Q

QoSC Quality of Service Commitment

R

REG Race Equality Group

RSO Registered Sex Offender

S

SARA Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment

SCAIDP Specialist Child Abuse Investigators Development Programme

SCAP Strategic Co-ordination and Planning Department

SGC Specific Grading Criteria

SIO Senior Investigating Officer

SMART Specific Measurable Achievable Realistic Timely

SMB Strategic Management Board

SO Specialist Operations

SPI Statutory Performance Indicator

T

TCG Tasking and Co-ordination Group

V

ViSOR Violent and Sex Offenders' Register