Fitting the bill

Local policing for the 21st century

Barry Loveday and Jonathan McClory
Edited by Gavin Lockhart

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Acknowledgements

Executive Summary

Policy Exchange has already argued for police reform in three reports over recent years: *Going Local*, *Manifesto for the Met* and *Size Isn't Everything*. These reports showed that putting forces under the control of locally elected representatives fosters efficiency and that small forces perform as well as big ones.

Since our first publication in 2003, central control has tightened, further constricting the ability of the police to reduce local crime and antisocial behaviour. There are encouraging signs that the police are now being subjected to the kind of critical attention previously reserved for health and education. Both Labour and the Liberal Democrats based their May 2007 local election campaigns on fighting crime, and the Conservatives recently called for police forces to be made accountable for their performance to the communities they serve. But local, accountable forces require the freedom to manage their officers effectively and this report seeks to identify ways in which local commanders could be set free from Whitehall.

Led by Barry Loveday, one of this country's leading experts on police reform, we asked all local police commanders in England and Wales to identify factors which would improve the quality of policing. It was the most comprehensive survey of its kind for five years, and the responses it elicited were revealing. Seven out of ten local commanders believe that central targets have degraded their ability to provide high quality policing, while just under a fifth think that these targets have had no impact on the quality of policing. In other words, the majority of local police leaders believe that central targets have made citizens less safe.

Over 80 per cent of respondents are concerned by the number of officers pulled off local policing duties by headquarters' demands; our survey suggests that at any given point the average local police commander has to manage without nearly a fifth of his or her workforce. Other frustrations cited by local commanders include a lack of support from their senior management teams and limited participation by services involved in partnerships designed to serve the community.

> **❝** There is a need to counter the ever growing influence of central government over the police service **❞**

There is a need to counter the ever growing influence of central government over the police service and we make a number of recommendations which would reinvigorate local policing.

BCU Commanders must take responsibility for all resource management, including the ability to buy-in services that could support operational policing. The Government must end the system by which funds may be devolved, but the ability to determine how that money is spent is not. Local commanders should have the ability to raise funds and recover costs. Financial freedom must be balanced with responsibility for internal management issues, including abstraction rates.

There is an immediate need to address these problems and build a system of performance targets. National targets do not reflect the priorities of the public. We believe that headline rates in crime reduction and weighted detection rates should be balanced by the levels of community safety, including how safe the public feels.

There is an argument for reforming the role of local authorities in policing,

although this would require a radical change in the direction of accountability. Crime and disorder reduction partnerships are an essential tool in reducing crime, but participation by other agencies in these partnerships varies widely. Police force senior management teams regularly fail to support local commanders in these partnerships.

The primary method of determining the size and viability of local policing units should be a bottom–up process. There is currently no known methodology developed by the Inspectorate or the police service to determine the size or make up of local police units.

Reducing turnover of local commanders would enhance delivery by improving relationships with crime and disorder reduction partnerships. Both increased support from the force senior management team and better training would enhance the quality of policing.

If we want to stem the rising tide of crime, the police need reform. Of course, the tension between the demands of preventing international terrorism at national level and ensuring safer communities at local level is very real. But internal management reform provides a real opportunity for the creation of policing structures that are much closer to the communities they serve and that would also provide stable local platforms for the introduction and delivery of neighbourhood policing.

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Introduction

Policy Exchange has led the debate on police reform, publishing three influential research reports since 2003. *Going Local*[1] examined how putting forces under the control of locally elected representatives fosters efficiency. Acknowledging that the public want more control over policing, it argued that the police should be made directly accountable to mayors and council leaders. From being a small voice in the darkness, this view has acquired, if not orthodoxy, then at least a high degree of acceptance. In a recent policy report, the Conservative Party warmed to the idea of elected commissioners who would control police budgets and have the ability to hire and fire chief constables. *Manifesto for the Met*[2] offered a hard-hitting assessment of the record of the Metropolitan police and its apparent inability to make a significant impact on crime in London. Our most recent publication, *Size Isn't Everything*[3], argued that as small forces perform at least as well as big ones, and since amalgamation reduces accountability and draws resources from neighbourhood policing, the Government should abandon plans for police force mergers. Three months later, John Reid, the Home Secretary, scrapped the proposals.

Electing commissioners can be an important step towards increased accountability. But simply electing someone will not work on its own – local police chiefs also need freedom to act. A deeper understanding of the oft-quoted success of Rudy Giuliani and Ken Livingstone in fighting crime, in New York and London respectively, reveals that it was their freedom to manoeuvre, especially financially, that drove their success rather then their elected status.

We spend more on policing as a share of our national wealth than any other country in Europe, yet although the levels of some types of crime have fallen, overall rates in England and Wales are among the highest in the developed world. (Of course, comparing international rates of crime is problematic given international variations in recording processes.) Crime today is almost ten times its level per head of the population than in 1950, and almost every other country in Europe has lower crime rates and more police officers per capita. British police make an average of nine arrests a year; US police make 21. Despite increases in council tax, less than a quarter of the public think that policing in their area has improved.

> **❝** As officers have retreated into vehicles, behind screens or station doors, there is disquiet about the police service's ability to respond to the challenges of modern society **❞**

The police need radical reform. As officers have retreated into vehicles, behind screens or station doors, there is disquiet about the police service's ability to respond to the challenges of modern society. In common with large sections of the public, we believe that forces are tied up in red tape, burgeoning legislation and political correctness, and that officers are encour-

1. Loveday B and Reid A, *Going Local: Who Should Run Britain's Police?*, Policy Exchange, January 2003

2. MacGregor M, *Manifesto for the Met: Policing London in the 21st Century*, Policy Exchange, January 2005

3. Loveday B, *Size Isn't Everything: Restructuring Policing in England and Wales*, Policy Exchange, March 2006

aged to focus on easy targets such as speeding motorists rather than dealing with antisocial behaviour and local crime.[4] It is not just members of the public who are impatient with the slow speed of reform – police officers themselves are increasingly frustrated by central government targets and the loss of the traditional discretion that lies at the heart of policing by consent in a liberal democracy.

> ❝ We have seen no convincing evidence that any Government would willingly relinquish its powerful role in directing the police service from the centre ❞

This publication is the first of two reports in a new series, *Fitting the Bill*. It first investigates whether, and to what extent, increased local autonomy for the police could improve policing. The second report will examine ways in which workforce modernisation, together with greater use of the private and voluntary sectors, could improve police effectiveness. Our central thesis builds on the work of Policy Exchange on accountability and localism. We argue that the police have the most impact when organised at a local level, and that there are plenty of resources but insufficient will or flexibility within the police establishment to use this capacity properly. How do we get uniformed officers out on the street where the public wants to see them, where they are in the best position to deter crime and where they can detect it when it happens?

The Government has attempted to address high crime levels with a barrage of legislation: there have been no fewer than 50 criminal justice bills introduced in the last ten years. But as we discuss in Chapter Two, since the first "modern" police legislation was passed 40 years ago, central control over the police has become ever

tighter. Legislation passed since 1997 has continued this historical trend by further strengthening Home Office powers. There has been an astonishing rise in the number of organisations that regulate the delivery of policing and distort local priorities. Government interference with everyday policing produces a growing mountain of paperwork – the retiring chief constable of Suffolk recently revealed that his officers spent half their time tied up on paperwork for the simplest of cases. And, in the police service, excellent performance brings no exemption from the deluge of targets or controls as it does in health (foundation hospitals) and education (academies).

We have seen no convincing evidence that any Government would willingly relinquish its powerful role in directing the police service from the centre. Last year the Home Office issued guidance which argued that true delegation to the local level was already far advanced.[5] But our survey of all Basic Command Unit commanders in England and Wales suggests that this is far from being the case. Where local policing is successful, it is most often as a result of co-operation with other local authority services, not central direction from the Home Secretary.

Chapter Three describes the methodology behind our comprehensive survey of local commanders, which included an online questionnaire and regional focus groups.

Chapter Four reports the findings of the survey. These suggest that the cause of poor police performance is not just that officers' time is consumed by form filling, or that current performance management targets are stifling innovation. It is also that large numbers of officers are regularly removed from operational duties (a process termed "abstraction") because of demands from headquarters, training and illness. Good practice from the public and private sectors suggests that these problems are best solved at the basic unit of operation by the senior manager responsible. The "building block"

4. ICM, *Police Reform Survey, on behalf of the Taxpayers' Alliance*, 2-4 March 2007

5. "Delegation to the BCU", *Home Office Guidance for the Police Service*, PSU, 2006

for police service delivery is the Basic Command Unit or BCU. And although these are largely invisible to the public, they combat local crime, deliver community policing and tackle antisocial behaviour.

The introduction of BCUs was intended to reduce the traditional police hierarchy by allowing one senior officer to exercise a "span of control". But over time the units have expanded without any independent evaluation of the consequences. We believe that the unit of management needs to be reformed so that a single officer is held responsible for both the unit's performance and the number of officers on the beat. We also argue that budgetary control and resource management should be fully devolved to BCUs where the needs of the community are best understood; citizens would then be able to influence policing in order to improve the safety of their communities.

Given the tight fiscal limits imposed on them, many local authorities simply cannot afford neighbourhood policing. In Chapters Five and Six, we explain why there should be an increased role for local authorities in policing and see no reason why the Government could not change current regulations to ensure that all council tax police precept is spent within the local authority or BCU area in which it was raised.

Naturally there will be tensions around local authority involvement (and the role of local BCU commanders in local authority management teams) while commanders are still accountable and responsible to the chief constable. Common sense dictates that if BCU commanders are going to be responsive to local people, or their democratically elected leaders, then they must be less responsive to the centre. However, at least one member of the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) believes that local authorities are "notoriously weak in understanding or committing to wider issues."[6]

The position of ACPO is powerful. Either the Association's resistance must be successfully challenged or a way must be found of loosening the line of accountability that now links BCU commanders to their chief constable. This is a difficult and controversial idea, but in our view a necessary development if any localism agenda is to be sustained.

A note about terminology
A glossary, which also contains abbreviations, has been provided at the end of this report.

Police force
Currently there are 43 police forces in England and Wales (Scotland is not covered in this report). There is usually one force for each county, and one for each of a number of metropolitan areas such as London.

Each force is led by a chief constable and has a deputy chief constable and one or more assistant chief constables. These officers form their force's chief officer team, which is in effect a management committee for the force.

The force HQ deals directly with more serious crime and is staffed for this purpose to some degree.

Chief officer team
The chief officer team (COT) stands at the apex of the police force hierarchy and automatically comprises the chief constable, the deputy chief constable and all assistant chief constables. Most police forces have a core team of at least three to four officers of these ranks. Each of the assistant chief constables can be expected to have an area of special responsibility, such as operational crime or administration.

Primary functions of the COT are to:

● set the budget with the police authority
● identify and publicise the annual local policing plan

6. Private correspondence with an assistant chief constable, 23 May 2007

- monitor and inspect force performance
- ensure conformity with the national intelligence model and the police performance assessment framework
- develop a strategic plan for the force in compliance with the performance framework and local policing plan
- develop and sustain corporate strategy within the force

Basic Command Unit

The Basic Command Units are the main operating unit of police forces. There are 228 of them in England and Wales. A force will divide its territorial area into a number of BCUs, each having its own complement of officers and staff. The officer in charge of a unit, normally a chief superintendent, will be responsible to the chief constable for policing the BCU area. On average there are six units in a police force, each with ten police stations and six public inquiry desks. The average population in a BCU area is about 230,000 people.

Basic Command Units are charged with delivering community policing and tackling antisocial behaviour and other Level 1 crime. In addition they gather criminal intelligence, conduct criminal investigations and provide rapid responses to emergencies. Collaboration with partner agencies in crime and disorder reduction partnerships (CDRPs) and community safety partnerships is also centred at the BCU level. More serious crime and protective services are conducted at force level. Strategic resource management and goal setting also takes place at force level.

Although the average BCU establishment has 426 police officers and 157 civilian support staff, units vary significantly in geographic size and officer strength. Their optimum size was initially considered to be between 150 and 200 officers, but by the late 1990s this figure had increased to between 250 and 350. A growing number of BCUs have more than 1,000 officers. Some are comparable in size to small

forces. For example the Bristol Basic Command Unit of Avon and Somerset covers a resident population of approximately 406,000 people, but also contains two universities as well as a large commuting population. This is similar in size to the Warwickshire force, which covers a population of 525,500. The Bristol BCU is policed by more than 1,020 officers while the Warwickshire police force has 1,040 officers. The trend towards larger BCUs has precipitated with a reduction in their overall numbers, which fell from 389 in 1997-98 to 228 as of May 2007.

In a typical force 75 per cent of the budget is spent on frontline policing, and 60 per cent of the frontline policing budget is spent directly in Basic Command Units. The remaining 40 per cent is spent by the force in support of units.[7]

Force and BCU functions

The 228 Basic Command Units are responsible for:

- providing effective response to emergencies and calls for service
- combating local crime and extremism
- investigating crimes to bring offenders to justice
- working to reduce crime and improve community safety in partnership with other agencies
- supporting neighbourhood policing

The 43 police forces are responsible for:

- combating the more serious and specialist crime and providing protective services
- providing leadership and service to the force, including support for BCUs and neighbourhood teams
- setting strategic goals and managing performance against these goals
- managing strategic resources, including human resources
- ensuring "resilience"

7. *Moving Policing Forward – Proposals for the Future*, Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales, 2004; Warwickshire Police Baseline Assessment, HMIC, 2006

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The route to centralisation

Introduction

Despite the number of police forces falling from 180 to 106 between the middle of the 1930s and the early 1960s, the most prominent feature of policing during this period was the close link between the force and local government. Police authorities were drawn from local authority bodies and had a clear responsibility for the management and the direction of the local force. Half of the cost of policing the local area was provided in the central Exchequer grant, with the rest raised locally.

The Police Act 1964, Britain's first modern policing legislation, heralded the arrival of centralisation as the main feature of police reform in England and Wales. The Act replaced the 19th-century laws that had governed county and borough forces, as well as some metropolitan and the City of London forces, for so long.[8] The Act created the tripartite responsibility comprising the police authority, the chief constable and the Home Secretary, which forms the cornerstone of police accountability today. This chapter outlines the ways in which 40 years of legislation have ushered in an unprecedented level of central control. The power exercised by chief constables has been eroded and accountability at the local level has decreased as the Home Secretary has garnered greater control.

Police authorities

At its most basic, the function of a police authority as defined in the 1964 Act was "to secure the maintenance of an adequate and efficient police force for the area." To do so, the authority was empowered to appoint and discharge a chief constable, though such action remained subject to the approval of the Home Secretary. Additionally, the police authority required an annual report from the chief constable on the state of policing within its jurisdiction. The police authority could employ civilians for police purposes and provided all buildings, vehicles and equipment.[9] But despite having control over police resources and the ability to hold the chief constable to account, the police authority had no direct control over the policy of the force.

The Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994 altered the composition of police authorities. Membership was reduced from 25 to an average of 17 and the number of elected members fell to nine. The 1994 Act also had an impact on the management of forces: police authorities were required to set local policing objectives through engagement and consultation with chief constables and the local community.

The responsibilities of police authorities have been bolstered to some extent by the Police and Justice Act 2006. Rather than merely securing the maintenance of an effective and efficient force, the 2006 Act requires police authorities to "hold the Chief Officer of the force to account for the exercise of his functions and those of the police officers and police staff under his control." Yet the mechanisms at the dis-

8. Thomas D, "Police Act 1964", *The Modern Law Review*, vol 27 (6), pp 68-689, Nov 1964

9. Ibid

posal of police authorities to hold chief constables to account remain extremely limited. For example, in place of producing policing plans, the Act requires police authorities to deliver reports in accordance with orders given by the Home Secretary. As a result police authorities have been less involved in establishing policing priorities and setting objectives. The Act also abolished the requirement for police authorities to conduct "best-value" reviews and prepare "best-value" plans (ironically, in the interests of reducing bureaucracy). However, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) still conducts these expensive assessments centrally, where local experience is unable to influence the design of "best-value" practices for efficiency gains.

Chief constable

The Police Act 1964 placed each force "under the direction and control of a chief constable." Indeed the most important aspect of the Act was to give more power to chief constables and the Home Secretary at the cost of local control. The chief constable has sole responsibility for his force's day-to-day performance of police duties. He has no superior officers and is responsible only to the police authority and Home Secretary through his annual report. The convention of constabulary independence that the Act introduced significantly reduced the ability of local police authorities (and therefore local communities) to influence policing styles and priorities.

The Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994 and Police Act 1996 transferred control over police budgets to the chief constables, who effectively became the chief executives of their forces. However, these new powers were outweighed by those granted to the Home Office. Following these two Acts, chief constables have been required to pursue national priorities set annually by the Home Secretary.

Home Secretary

The Police Act 1964 provided the Home Secretary with a clearly defined and involved role in managing Britain's police forces. It prescribed that the duties of the Home Secretary should be exercised "in such a manner and to such extent as appears to him to be best calculated to promote the efficiency of the police."

The Home Secretary was granted three new powers: to call on the police authority to retire a chief constable; to demand a report from a chief constable on specific matters; and to initiate a local inquiry, with full rights to summon and examine witnesses. In addition, he was allowed to make regulations governing matters including officers' conditions of service and disciplinary procedures. If the Act allowed local police forces to maintain a veneer of autonomy, and left control of the local force strategy and operational priorities in the hands of independent chief constables, it nevertheless gave the Home Secretary a substantial oversight role: the holder of this office was clearly at the head of the tripartite relationship.

Some 30 years later, the Police Act 1996 consolidated previous legislation and gave the Home Secretary additional powers and duties: to promote the efficiency and effectiveness of the police; determine objectives for police authorities by order, issue codes of practice for them, set minimum budgets and require reports; give directions to police authorities where inspection has found them to be inefficient or ineffective; and call upon police authorities to require the chief constable to retire in the interest of the force.

The Police Reform Act 2002 granted the Home Secretary yet more powers, which included a duty to prepare a national policing plan each year and the power to issue codes of practice for chief constables. Most importantly, it established the Policy Standards Unit (PSU) to "deliver the Government's commitment to raise stan-

dards and improve operational performance."[10] The Association of Police Authorities vigorously opposed the 2002 Act. It argued that the legislation fundamentally damaged the constitutional position of the tripartite relationship and suggested that police authorities would be relegated to serving as local agents of the Government, and the voices of local communities sidelined.

The PSU can be used to increase central influence over chief constables as well as police authorities, further distorting the tripartite relationship. This was demonstrated during the street crimes initiative in 2002 when ten forces that the Inspectorate had judged to be failing came under the direction of the PSU.

The Police and Justice Act 2006 built on the 1996 and 2002 Police Acts, developing the Government's agenda of central control. It contained measures that included further directional powers for the Home Secretary, changes to the structure and function of police authorities through regulations, the creation of a National Policing Improvement Agency and standard powers for community support officers. The Act also granted the Home Secretary more power to intervene, for example by directing police forces to take remedial measures when there has been a "negative" inspection. Under the Act, the Home Secretary is no longer required to publish a national policing plan, and may substitute it with a national community safety plan. Although this is not a statutory obligation, it allows the Home Secretary to continue setting national priorities and strategy for police forces under the guise of a locally focused policing plan.

Responses to the Police and Justice Act 2006 have been less than positive. The Association of Chief Police Officers commented that "the change in the role of the

HMIC seems to have resulted in the Home Secretary expanding his powers of intervention without professional advice from the Inspectorate."[11]

Local co-operation between agencies

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 made some progress in fostering local co-operation between agencies such as the fire services, primary care trusts and housing authorities. Through provisions for crime and disorder partnerships, local authorities regularly carry out crime "audits" of their constituencies, drawing on focus groups, opinion polls, and consultation with social services departments. Local authorities and police can use the audits to formulate local crime reduction strategies and have joint responsibility to oversee their implementation. But the Act failed to provide sanctions in cases where an agency fails to participate in a meaningful way, which may happen if its fundamental philosophy conflicts with the community safety agenda.

> "There is a complete lack of understanding at the Home Office of demands being placed upon frontline staff"

The 1998 Act detailed the structure, duties and responsibilities of the crime reduction partnerships and created a system of co-operation with the aim of improving local crime reduction strategies, and to some degree, accountability. However, even what appeared to be an effort to empower local policing through co-operation could not escape central oversight: clause 8 of the Act gives the Home Secretary powers to call for reports from police and local authorities on the execution of their duties.[12]

10. Grimwood G, The Police Reform Bill, *Library Research Paper*, No 28, 2002

11. ACPO press release, "Bill provides support for more effective policing", 25 January 2006

12. Baber M, "The Police Bill", *Library Research Paper*, No 21, 1997

3

Methodology

Introduction

The primary aim of this research was to identify what factors hinder or enhance police performance at the level of the Basic Command Unit. We polled all BCU commanders in England and Wales and used focus groups to explore the trends we identified through analysis of the survey results. Acknowledging that the report is based on the opinions of a particular professional group, we also tested our policy recommendations with representatives from the Police Federation and former members of ACPO.

Survey

In February 2007, with the assistance and co-operation of the Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales, we carried out a survey of BCU commanders in England and Wales. According to the Superintendents' Association, there are currently 228 BCUs in England and Wales, and we sent an online survey to each commander. More than two thirds (68 per cent) responded. Such a high response rate means that the results should be reasonably representative of the views of all commanders.

The survey was created in close consultation with the Superintendents' Association and contained a number of questions that were similar to those posed in an earlier survey of BCU commanders carried out by the British Market Research Bureau in 2002. This allowed us to employ "trend" analysis of the two data sets and observe changes in the attitudes of commanders.

The aim was to ascertain and measure all the factors influencing Basic Command Unit performance. The survey's 17 sets of questions covered diverse topics including:

- decision-making responsibilities
- partnerships with crime and disorder partnerships
- demographic details of the area
- details about the respondent
- factors influencing performance
- budget control and delegation

The answers were put through a series of ordinary least squares regression tests (a statistical technique used to determine relationships between variables). This process revealed a set of statistically significant relationships that both influenced our recommendations and helped us understand how and why some Basic Command Units perform better.

Focus groups

To supplement the quantitative side of our research, we conducted three focus groups in locations chosen to reflect the diversity of Basic Command Units. The first was held in Cheshire to learn more about challenges faced in more rural areas. The second, in Birmingham, involved BCU commanders from metropolitan areas across the West Midlands. The third, in Cardiff, helped the research team understand the demands of policing a large city. Each focus group was arranged by the Police Superintendents' Association, included up to ten BCU commanders and lasted 90 minutes.

The aim of the focus groups was to consider the research findings, in particular, to explore potential solutions to problems identified by respondents. Each focus group followed the agenda below:

- introductions
- exploring questions from the survey
- evaluating policy recommendations
- questions to the research team
- comment on next steps from Policy Exchange and Police Superintendents' Association when present

Analysis of the focus groups was carried out in a systematic and methodical manner to avoid researcher bias. This process included reviewing transcripts of each focus group and analysing qualitative data by coding BCU commanders' comments into key themes.

Respondents

The average respondent reported serving as a commander for two-and-a-half years, although more than a fifth (22 per cent) had been in post for a year or less. The youngest commander was 36 and the oldest 54, while the average age was 45. Eighty-six per cent of respondents were men and 14 per cent were women.

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BCU Commander Survey 2007

Summary of the findings

Performance management, with its "top-down" targets, has increased bureaucracy and stifled innovation, distracting police from focusing on the safety of the communities they serve. Local commanders lack the control over resources to ensure that the police service is as effective as possible and that decisions are taken as close to the point of delivery as feasible. The support among BCU commanders for delegation of control is greater now than it was five years ago.

Reducing turnover of local commanders and increased support from the chief officer team would improve relationships with CDRPs. The level of "abstractions" – that is, the proportion of BCU posts that are considered non-operational – remains a barrier to delivery. While training is regarded as sufficient, there is a need to ensure that commanders understand their responsibilities before they take up their posts.

Performance Management
Background

Although performance management first concentrated on financial and human resource criteria, its application has been progressively expanded.[13] Essentially, it has become synonymous with centralised organisational control within an established set of objectives – "an integrated set of planning and review procedures which cascade down through the organisation to provide a link between each individual and the overall strategy of the organisation."[14]

The management editor of *The Observer* has vividly described the results of centrally driven performance data: "Despite its professed dedication to market disciplines, New Labour is the most micro-meddling administration in history, creating detailed specifications and prescription for everything from school lesson planning to the way documents are processed or calls answered in local government offices. The results are disastrous, full of perverse consequences that make the public sector harder to manage, and raise rather than cut overall costs. Ministers as managers are making things worse, not better."[15]

The police performance assessment framework (PPAF), published by the Home Office, consists of 23 qualitative baseline assessments and 32 quantitative performance indicators. These are combined to form seven performance areas: local policing, reducing crime, promoting safety, providing assistance, investigating crime, citizen focus and resource use.

The Government has not adequately responded to criticisms of the PPAF: that it measures the wrong targets, that it measures too much and that the data is of questionable quality. Nor has it recognised that the continual application of targets set centrally may impede the delivery of local public services. The Government has reduced the number of performance measures applied to police forces while suggesting common measures to capture the interdependence of public services. However, a strong residual commitment to central direction through performance targets continues to guide its approach.[16]

13. Smith PC and Goddard M, "Performance Management and Operational Research: a marriage made in heaven?" *Journal of the Operational Research Society*, vol 53, pp 247-255, 2002

14. Rogers S, *Performance Management in Local Government*, Kogan Page: London, 1999

15. Caulkin S, "How Labour turned the UK into a Soviet tractor", *The Observer*, 23 April 2006

16. Interview with Maltby P, Cabinet Office, October 2006

The variable quality of performance data and the difficulties of interpreting it indicate that a much more sophisticated approach is needed to achieve improvements in performance within the police service. Measuring crime reduction is an important way for a community to ensure that the police are accountable, but targets should accurately reflect local priorities.

Our survey shows that BCUs are impeded from meeting the street-level needs of their areas by the number of targets and performance measurements they face. A culture of targets and reporting requirements has replaced operational flexibility and common sense policing. A shocking 71 per cent of respondents said that national, i.e. Home Office, reporting requirements were having a negative impact on the quality of their policing, while nearly a fifth (17 per cent) thought that national reporting requirements have had no impact on the quality of policing in their BCU (Figure 1).

Changing targets can shift priorities on a whim. Government-driven agendas, which require immediate attention and action, keep BCU commanders' priorities in constant flux, making it extremely difficult to manage their units effectively. Each day brings a new urgent priority to an issue that someone has just discovered.

> "So many targets are irrelevant to local demands"

Respondents also lacked confidence in force HQ reporting requirements. Only 40 per cent felt that these had a positive impact on the quality of policing in their area. Open-ended comments from respondents were extremely candid and gave a scathing account of the harm that targets can have on policing. One BCU Commander complained that his chief officer team did not understand his problems under the present performance regime: "None of them have worked [in a BCU commander post], therefore they do

Figure 1 How would you describe the impact of national (Home Office) reporting requirements on the quality of policing in your BCU?
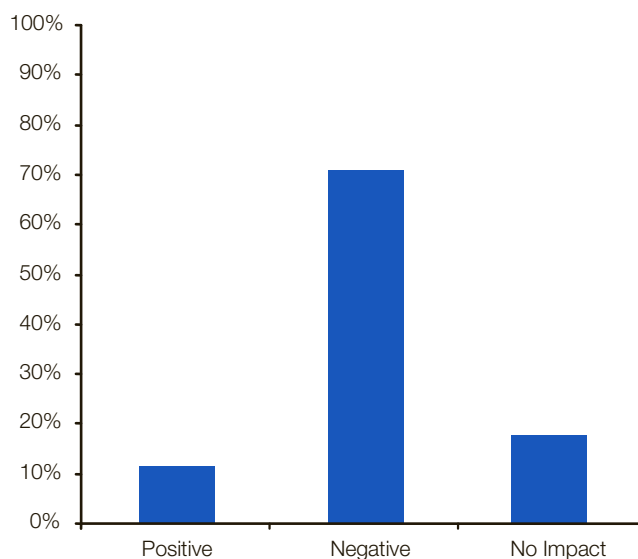
BCU commander survey 2007

not understand the balancing act between targets such as sanctioned detections, neighbourhood policing, serious crime investigation etc. They do not give practical support, apart from criticising when the figures are not as they wish. The system is so unsophisticated it is worthless." Another said: "as long as the bottom line is detections no matter how they are achieved, the problems are going to continue. How can one murder detection equal one shoplifting detection?"

Other commanders also highlighted the obsession with reporting requirements: "My organisation is completely focused on targets. My value is reflected in a small number of figures for my division, which have become the defining factors between success and failure. Any views which offer an alternative approach are not listened to."

> "We get battered all day about daily performance scrutiny"

The overall view of participants was that, in principle, performance management was not a hindrance to effective delivery, but that its current form was unhelpful. The overbearing influence that the centre wields has effectively tied the hands of commanders. Reporting requirements have led to an imbalance between central directives and local priorities. "Performance management, which can deliver great things, has strayed into being counterproductive as we push towards more and more national standards," said one commander.

Performance measurement schemes are often arbitrary: "Characteristics of such schemes tend to be that they are incomplete (rarely capturing all acknowledged aspects of performance), prolix (comprising numerous indicators of performance) and opportunistic (measuring what is measurable rather than developing new

systems for performance measurement purposes)."[17] This is where centrally-set targets for policing falter: they measure what they can, not what they should. For performance management to truly be effective it will need to be restructured with a bottom-up approach, incorporating the demands of local communities.

> "Johnny Wilkinson would have difficulty converting a shot at the posts, as they keep moving all over the place!"

Even the most finely-tuned performance measurement system can prove dysfunctional if it is not embedded within an organisational environment that encourages appropriate strategic responses.[18] If implemented incorrectly, performance management can have unintended, and often negative, consequences.[19] Four of these are currently plaguing the police forces of England and Wales.

The first is *gaming*, a well-established phenomenon within public services that has been recognised, and deplored, by the Audit Commission. It means that the application of particular targets causes distortions in operational priorities that negatively affect communities.[20]

The second, *tunnel vision*, occurs through "concentration on areas that are included in the performance indicator scheme, to the exclusion of other important unmeasured areas."[21] *Tunnel vision* reflects the extent to which local demands on policing may be left out of the performance management regime and subsequently are not being addressed by the local police.

Measure fixation is the "pursuit of success as measured rather than as intended."[22] As explained by one of our focus group participants, *measure fixation* can lead to police officers chasing performance targets

17. Smith P and Goddard M, "Performance Management and Operational Research: a marriage made in heaven?" *Journal of the Operational Research Society,* vol 53, pp 247-255, 2002

18. Milgrom P and Roberts J, *Economics, Organization and Management,* Prentice Hall: Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1992

19. Smith P, "On the unintended consequences of publishing performance data in the public sector", *International Journal of Public Administration,* vol 18, pp 277-310, 1995

20. Seddon J, *Freedom from Command and Control: A Better Way to Make Work Work,* Vanguard Education: Buckingham, 2005

21. Ibid

22. Smith P, Ibid

any way they can by criminalising petty incidents that would otherwise not need police involvement.

The fourth, *myopia*, is the concentration on short-term issues to the exclusion of longer term considerations. As one respondent said: "There is a challenge in reconciling the pressure for short-term quantitative performance success required by the Home Office and the longer-term solving of problems wanted by the local public."

During focus groups BCU commanders regularly highlighted that national targets did not reflect the priorities of the public. We believe that headline rates in crime reduction and weighted detection rates should be balanced by the levels of community safety, with focus on how safe the public feels. In many wards, "beat" meetings help officers to understand the concerns of the local community. BCU commanders need to use these to inform how team performance should be measured.

In the face of such criticism, it is surprising that the performance measurement regime has not been overhauled. We believe that the system is failing our police, keeping them from delivering the level of policing of which they are capable. As the survey reports, it is having a negative impact on police service delivery. There is an immediate need to build a system of performance targets that encompasses a strategy sympathetic to local policing demands.

Performance management has an impact on police culture

Many respondents blamed performance management for the development of a more negative police culture. In the 2007 survey 9 per cent fewer BCU commanders agreed with the statement "Staff in my force are encouraged to put forward new ideas and innovation is encouraged" than had done so in 2002. Nearly a fifth (18 per cent) of BCU commanders in 2007 dis-

agreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.

Forty-one per cent of BCU commanders disagreed that "Staff feel able to challenge the way things are done." Again, the regulations and procedures that govern much of the bureaucracy that police officers have to put up with could be stifling creative thinking. Over the past five years, staff culture has become more stagnant, with innovation and individual problem solving taking a backseat to central directives and procedural bureaucracy.

Abstractions

The number of non-operational posts or "abstractions" that BCU commanders face on a weekly basis poses a significant barrier to efficient human resources management. We found that a striking 85 per cent of respondents saw abstraction rates as problematic. One said: "I have a small BCU which makes it hard to deal with abstractions. It kills me. Some of the bigger BCUs don't take such a hit with abstractions." According to respondents' estimates the average commander has to manage without 19 per cent of the workforce at any given time: 5 per cent sick, 5 per cent HQ requirements, 5 per cent training and 4 per cent vacant posts.

Absence due to sickness can be a sensitive issue. Frontline officers face physically demanding tasks and at times risk life and limb; maintaining their health and fitness is of paramount importance. However, there may be insufficient incentive to encourage officers on restricted duties to take on full shifts and it is estimated that £243 million a year is spent paying officers a full-time salary when they are working part-time due to sickness.[23] As one of our respondents said: "What doesn't help is the fact that if you do want to come back for four hours a day, you'll get exactly the same rate of pay as officers who are working 10-12 hour

23. Barney K and Widdup, E, "Police Sickie Bill Revealed", *Evening Standard*, 11 April 2007
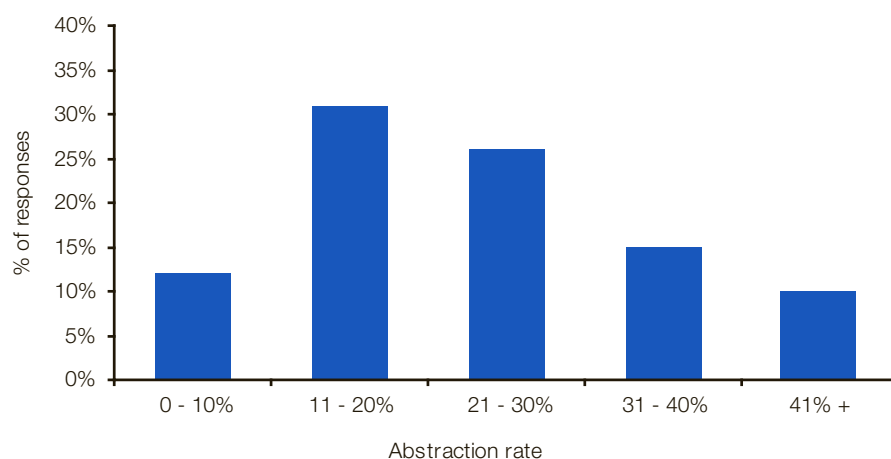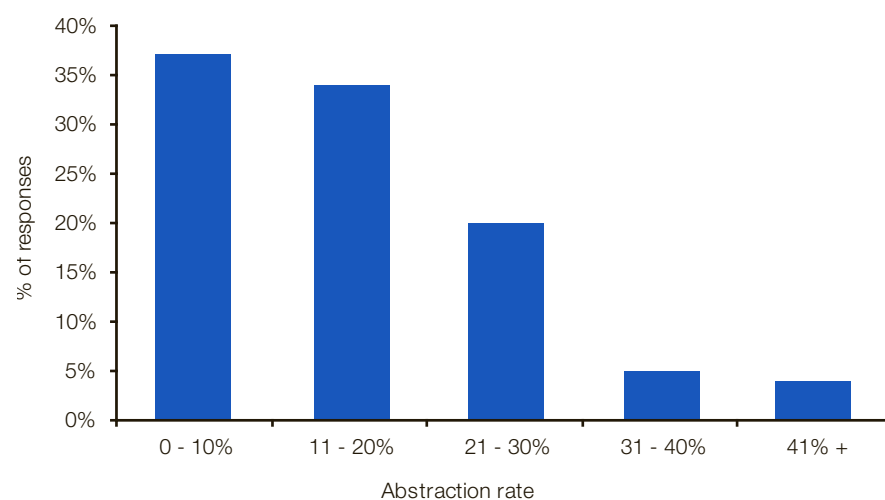
Figure 2: Reported abstractions 2002[24]

BCU commander survey 2002

Figure 3: Reported abstractions 2007

BCU commander survey 2007

days." Another felt that the issue of officers on restricted duties could be managed so that BCUs took less of the impact.

A recent article in the *Evening Standard* reported that the financial cost of sickness abstractions for the London Metropolitan police totalled £36 million a year, with officers "signed off on conditions including stab wounds, gunshot injuries, and broken legs as well as insect bites, colds and vertigo."[25] It is difficult to strike a balance between fair treatment of wounded and sick officers and the efficient management of police human and financial resources.

A substantial proportion of abstractions arise from force HQ requirements. Force HQs commonly take officers from BCU and temporarily reassign them to other BCUs or specialist units to meet central directives and to deal with Level 2 and Level 3 crime, as during the Suffolk murders in December 2006. When major crimes occur, demanding a substantial

24. 6% of survey respondents did not answer the question

25. Ibid

increase in police man-hours, BCUs will be stripped of (usually) more senior officers, such as inspectors. In relation to local or national emergencies abstractions are an accepted feature of policing, but anecdotal evidence suggests that they are often unrelated to such incidents and are more closely linked to perceptions of policing needs at force HQ.

Further analysis reveals that some progress has been made in combating extreme levels of abstractions; respondents reporting abstraction rates of 31 per cent or higher have decreased by 16 per cent since 2002 (Figures 2 and 3). However, the problem persists, with no easy solution in sight.

A better system of consultation and communication between HQs and their Basic Command Units could go a long way towards alleviating untimely abstractions. However, this would require increased levels of control and/or input from BCU commanders on staffing and workforce responsibility. The Government could enhance commanders' powers if they held their own budgets and were allowed to charge other sections of the force (or external organisations, such as the courts, which are seen to be especially inflexible) when officers were pulled away from response or patrolling. In short, commanders should be more responsible for managing their staff. CompStat was famously used in New York to provide focus on issues in each neighbourhood.[26] We suggest that a similar management system that encourages local focus should be used to reduce abstractions.

Devolving budgets, resource distribution and control
Devolving budgets
Our survey found that nearly two thirds (63 per cent) of BCU commanders believe they have too little control over resources, increasing the strain on them as they try to meet the demands of their local community (Figures 4 and 5). There is a need to balance local, force, regional and national issues, but we believe that local commanders could provide higher quality policing if they were given greater control over how they spent their budget.

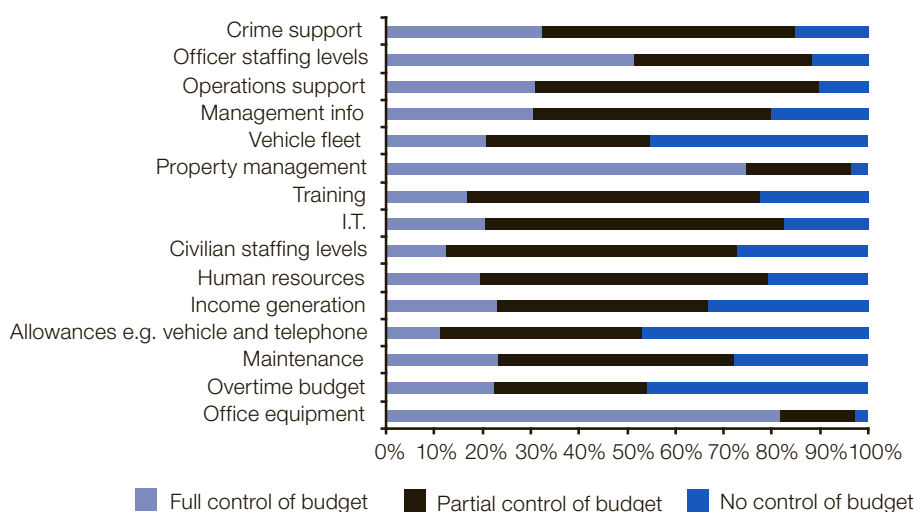> "I'm in charge of 750 cops, but I can't trade in a car for ten or so bikes"

Basic Command Units typically control overtime budgets and various (minor) running costs, such as office equipment. These represent a relatively small percentage of the total budget. Where budgets for police pay are devolved, this is usually accompanied by tight central control over staff numbers.

The 2002 survey identified that some commanders had been delegated responsibility for BCU budgets. These respondents welcomed the greater scope it gave them to focus resources without having to obtain permission from headquarters. However, as most of the budget went on wages, and with little control over officer staffing (which generally remained with headquarters) there was not much money left to allocate at their discretion. This situation continues today.

One of the most striking differences between the 2002 and 2007 survey results is the change in desired levels of budget control. Both surveys asked respondents to identify the level of control they had for 16 different budgetary areas. They were then asked if they thought they should have more, less, or the same amount of control over those budgets. In 2002 the majority of respondents were content with the amount of budgetary control they had, but in 2007 the majority wanted more control (Figure 6). When compared with the responses gathered five years ago, 28 per cent more respondents thought that greater budgetary con-

26. CompStat is the New York City police department's accountability process. It involves weekly crime control strategy meetings to increase the flow of information between the agency's executives and the commanders of operational units, with particular emphasis on crime and quality of life information.

Figure 4: Which of the following do you control the budget for?

Crime support
Officer staffing levels
Operations support
Management info
Vehicle fleet
Property management
Training
I.T.
Civilian staffing levels
Human resources
Income generation
Allowances e.g. vehicle and telephone
Maintenance
Overtime budget
Office equipment

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

■ Full control of budget ■ Partial control of budget ■ No control of budget

BCU commander survey 2007

Figure 5: Do you feel you have the right number of delegated budgets?

No

Yes

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
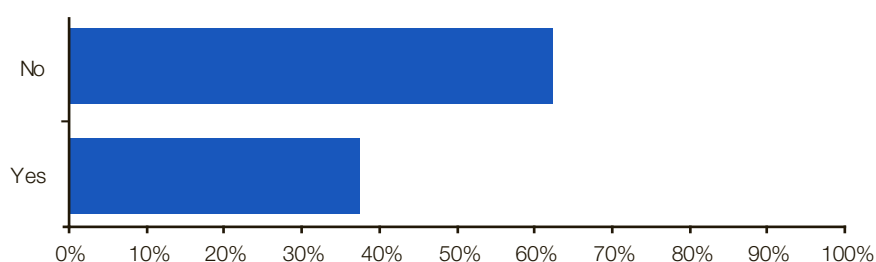
BCU commander survey 2007

trol would enable them to improve the quality of policing in their area: the need and desire for delegation is greater now than it was five years ago. The current lack of flexibility was illustrated by one commander who asked his force if he could give up a couple of cars and receive the money equivalent in bicycles. The reply was "No you can't. It's not possible." As he said: "I'm in charge of 750 cops, but I can't trade in a car for ten or so bikes."

This notable shift in attitude could reflect the increasing demand placed on the local delivery of police services under the neighbourhood policing initiative.[27] As the programme gains momentum, BCU com-

manders are realising that greater flexibility and budgetary control is required for the effective delivery of neighbourhood policing. More generally, 80 per cent of respondents thought that the balance of resources between HQ departments and Basic Command Units was wrong. "HQ is a growing monster," said one respondent. "Rather than supporting divisions we have got into the state that divisions support the support functions. We have lost control of what is important."

Open-ended comments from respondents gave deeper insight into the current levels of dissatisfaction with budget delegation and resource distribution. One focus

27. Travers T, "Policing and Public Order" *Local Government Studies,* Vol. 32, (3), pp 341-356, 2006

group participant offered this assessment: "Officers are protective of HQ resources with BCUs being the first port of call for budget cuts. The frontline gets thinner with HQ growing and little scrutiny on improving efficiency at HQ."

A number of BCU commanders pointed out the crucial link between effective management of a Basic Command Unit

and budgetary control. One said: "I am effectively the CEO of a medium-size business, with 850 staff, a budget of £36 million (only £8 million devolved), responsible for reducing crime, reassuring communities and improving the number of offenders brought to justice. With a truly devolved budget, I would be much more efficient and effective than I am at pres-

Figure 6: Would less control, the same level of control, or more control lead to improved BCU performance? 2002 and 2007
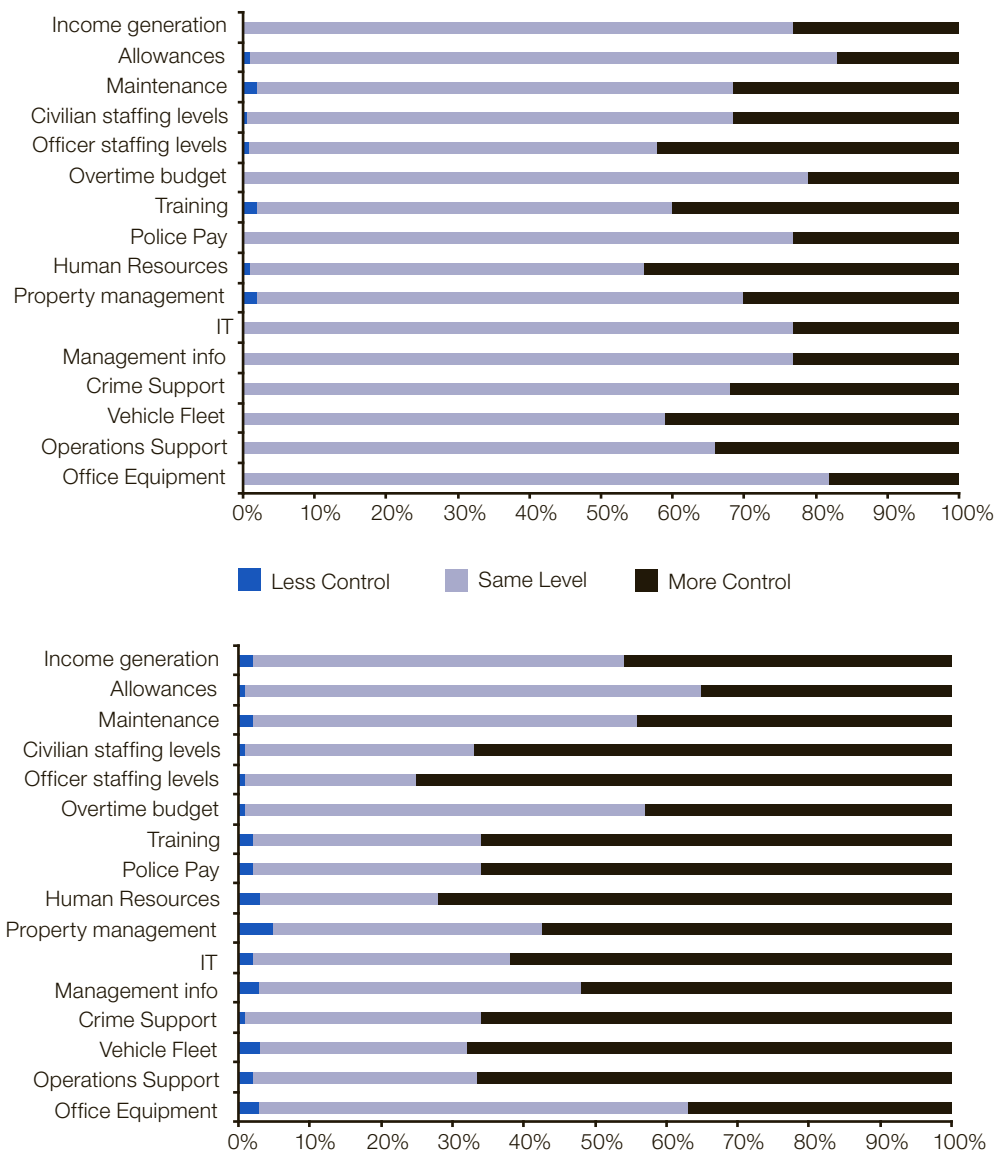
ent." Even where budgets have been delegated, difficulties remain. Another commented: "While the BCU has devolved budgets, our ability to make them balance is difficult, e.g. devolving the salaries budget but giving no control over the postings of police officers to my BCU."

> "We've been successful because we have been given the freedom to operate"

We argue that budgetary and resource management should be devolved to Basic Command Unit level, where the needs of the community are best understood and where the police can have the greatest impact on Level 1 crime. We recommend that BCU commanders should have one budget for all the activities for which they are responsible. They would be free to vary staff numbers (uniformed or civilian), overtime, vehicles (to swap cars for bicycles if they wanted) and other equipment usage, as long as they kept within their budget.

BCU funds

One way of giving BCU commanders greater financial freedom and flexibility would be allowing them to charge for policing events such as concerts, sporting fixtures and entertainment districts. The changes to alcohol licensing laws in November 2005 have increased the demand for night-time policing and put greater strain on BCU salary budgets, as more officers are needed to fill overtime slots during the early hours of the morning. Bars and clubs in concentrated areas should shoulder some of this financial burden.

> "If we want funds to improve the service we have to run understaffed"

The night-time economy needs to be viewed in the wider context of policing major events, such as football matches and concerts. As one focus group participant commented on charging for increased police presence: "We should be able to charge for policing inside as well as outside of events. It needs to be pragmatic, not a shoe-string operation."[28] There are legal restrictions that must be considered, but by allowing Basic Command Units to raise funds when providing increased police services for specific areas and events, commanders would have increased budget flexibility, affording better service delivery.

Figure 7: Have you received adequate financial training to manage your delegated budget?
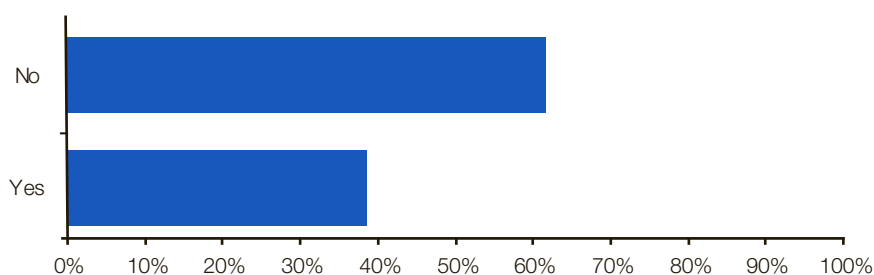
BCU commander survey 2007

Financial training

Chief superintendents have not had adequate financial training to make the most effective use of delegated budgets. This is an issue that requires immediate attention. Nearly two thirds (62 per cent) of survey respondents reported that they had not received proper financial training to manage their budgets (Figure 7). As recently as 2002-03, only 1.5 per cent of all police training was delivered to officers with the rank of superintendent or above.[29]

Staffing and flexibility issues
Flexibility to modify staffing levels within an agreed budget

Seventy-eight per cent of respondents reported that they did not have the freedom to vary the proportions of civilian and uniformed staff in their Basic Command Unit because of force-wide restrictions (which, in turn, often emanate from the Home Office). Comparing this response with the results of the 2002 survey suggests that control over staffing mix is tightening; five years ago 63 per cent of BCU commanders did not have the freedom to vary proportions of police and civilian staff. BCU commanders should have the flexibility to modify their staffing levels within an agreed budget so long as they increase the effectiveness of their force. Giving them the flexibility to modify their establishments within a total budget would allow them to meet local demands and improve community safety more effectively.

Staffing and bureaucracy

The ability to provide the best staffing is further hampered by regulations, such as health and safety legislation. One respondent commented on the lack of discussion about the effect of health and safety regulations, citing both their negative impact on "the willingness of staff to protect the public and perform their duties" and "the amount of time taken in doing risk assessments."

Another commander said that the require-

ments of the Disability Discrimination Act and providing growing numbers of officers with specially created restricted service jobs, "left frontline numbers depleted." As neighbourhood policing gains momentum there will be an increased demand for frontline officers, and if commanders lack the flexibility to staff their units accordingly the programme will fail.

> "If I could change the mix of my staff, I could be more effective"

BCU commanders face further regulation in the form of codes and guidance from the National Centre for Policing Excellence that are designed to create a universal standard of service delivery. According to one respondent, the standards that the codes attempt to uphold were fine in principle, but commanders "are not resourced to do everything to those high standards."

Development goals and coaching
Induction

The 2007 survey results identify a clear lack of development and training objectives for new BCU commanders. Nearly half (49 per cent) of respondents believed that they did not receive an adequate introduction for their role as a commander and 48 per cent of respondents thought that their objectives were not discussed fully with them when they took up their post. Just under three quarters (72 per cent) of respondents felt that "their development and training objectives were not discussed fully at an early stage." There is also a lack of continuity within units when a new commander assumes control; 77 per cent were not given the opportunity to shadow the previous commander for a meaningful period before they took up their post.

29. Howlett Bolton A, "Recruitment, Training and Motivation of the Police", in Sheila Lawlor (ed) *Policing Matters: Recruitment, Training and Motivation*, Politeia: London, 2005

Figure 8: How satisfied are you with the training and development you have received for your present job?
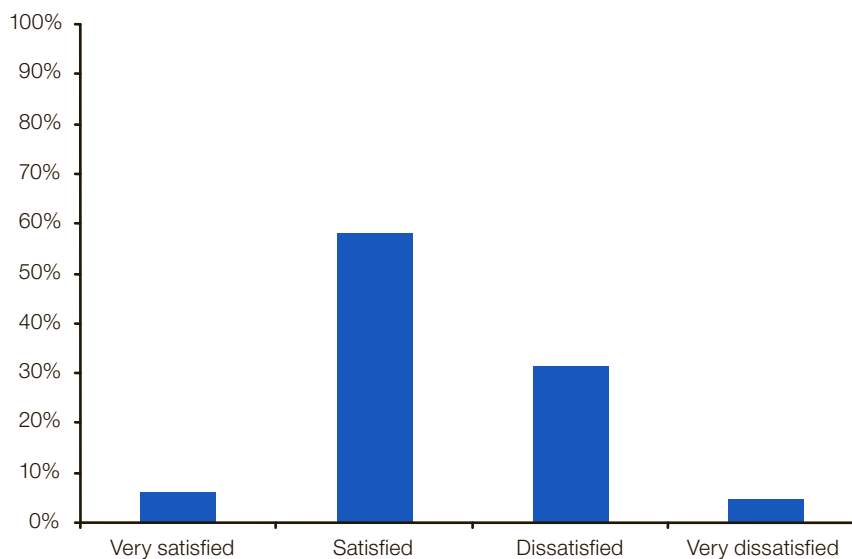
BCU commander survey 2007

Coaching and mentoring

The majority of commanders were satisfied with the training and development that they had received (Figure 8). However, in open-ended questions, respondents mentioned the lack of training, mentoring and supportive coaching from police force HQs. One respondent thought that his chief officer team should arrange "mentoring for new commanders by someone who is experienced in the role." If the amount and quality of training and mentoring were to be increased, we believe that BCU commanders would be better prepared to deliver improved management of their units, and thus a higher quality of service delivery.

Minimum tenure agreements

The issue of turnover in BCU commander posts needs to be addressed. In our focus group discussions there was support for minimum tenure appointments for commanders of three years.[30] We believe that these would provide greater stability in community policing and better relation-

ships between the police, citizens, local authority, and CDRPs.

The lack of continuity in BCU management staff undermines team stability. This is compounded by the fact that BCU commanders do not have the freedom to select or replace their management teams. Given such freedom, they would be better positioned to adjust their staff according to the skills and personality types required.

Support from chief officer teams
Relationship with COT
Improving chief officer team support is a fraught issue; problems with abstractions, budget delegation and overall operational support have strained relationships between Basic Command Units and force headquarters.

One respondent said bluntly: "There is a complete failure at chief officer level to understand the complexity of BCU management. The only interest is robbery targets." Another commented: "Chief officers seem to have limited grasp on the amount and complexity of BCU work."

30. Focus group: Crewe Police Station, April 2007

The target-driven culture has fuelled the uneasy relationship between BCU commanders and their chief officer teams. One respondent expressed the need for "a less adversarial style of performance management." Within COTs, there has been a failure to understand and address the discrepancies between local priorities and HQ directives. Several thought that there was an asymmetry between priorities at BCU and HQ levels, which continued up the chain of command, becoming even more skewed at the level of the Home Office.

We believe that huge gains could be made from improving the level of communication, co-operation and mutual understanding between BCU commanders and their chief officer teams. All the more so since comparison of trends in the 2002 and 2007 surveys shows that support for commanders has fallen in a number of different ways over the past five years.

In the 2007 survey, BCU commanders identified the need for more regular, positive and informal contact with chief officer teams; 80 per cent of respondents met with a member of their COT only once a month or less. With such infrequent communication, BCU commanders are unable to relay information on what is happening at street level to HQ officers who, in conjunction with the police authority, are the officials responsible for setting targets and objectives, and distributing resources.

Many commanders thought that members of their chief officer team should spend more time at local police stations and attend public meetings in order to better understand the demands and pressures that commanders faced. One respondent commented that "[It's] not very often that I get to

have a chat and explain the BCU's issues in anything other than a formal meeting structure." Others suggested more brief and informal contact, as well as meetings with adjacent BCU commanders to aid collaboration and response to Level 2 crime.

COT experience
Many chief officers have had no recent experience – or indeed no experience at all – of running a Basic Command Unit. It is estimated that less than 20 per cent have had experience running a BCU.[31] One respondent suggested that there was a need for the chief officer team to "take time to understand BCU commanders' jobs" and to treat them as "experts in our field while valuing our contribution to strategic discussions." Lack of collaboration reduces the impact local commanders can have on force strategy. More than a third (37 per cent) of BCU commanders reported having "not much" or "no" freedom to set their operational priorities, and 58 per cent had "not much" or "no" influence on force strategies and policies.

> "Chief officers seem to have limited grasp of the amount and complexity of BCU work"

The level of support BCU commanders receive from their chief officer teams is evidently not satisfactory. The Association of Chief Police Officers needs to re-evaluate the situation in order to improve channels of communication and co-operation between force HQs and their Basic Command Units.

31. Private communication with the President of the Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales, January 2007

5

Partnership policing, citizen focus and neighbourhood policing

Summary

CDRPs are an essential tool for reducing crime, but the degree of participation among agencies varies. Chief officer teams regularly fail to support local commanders in these partnerships.

Citizen focus

According to Paul Evans, head of the Home Office police standards and crime directorate: "Citizen-focused policing means reflecting the needs and expectations of individuals and local communities in police decision making, service delivery and practice."[32] The approach is designed to improve both public confidence and the satisfaction of users of the service, while also increasing public involvement in policing. Some indication of the cultural change contemplated by this initiative is reflected in the demand to put public satisfaction at the centre of all police activity.[33]

Citizen focus is therefore very closely linked to the implementation of neighbourhood policing. The Home Office wants every electoral ward in the country to be covered by a dedicated neighbourhood policing team by 2008. Since April 2007, every ward will have seen increased patrolling, better local information and a focus on confidence and reassurance.[34]

Two trends in crime prevention

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 was the first stage in the integration of local services through partnership arrangements. More recently, local strategic partnerships (or boards) have been introduced to encourage greater integration of local agencies. Additionally, local area agreements require local "service leaders" to share information and resources to develop and deliver services to the community. However, as well as this trend towards the "municipalisation" of policing (bringing the police service into greater co-operation with local government), there is another trend that is moving in the opposite direction – towards protection of the state against international threat.

Role of the local authority

Local authorities are ready to foster greater co-operation between local agencies and the police. The Local Government Association argues that the reform of public services cannot be achieved from the top down, and that the degree of central control exerted over public services erodes local democracy and inhibits innovation and enterprise among frontline staff.[35] It emphasises what it calls the "place-making" role of the local authority, encouraging councils to "form strong partnerships – across the public private and voluntary sector – and work with local people and partners to set and deliver the vision for their area."[36]

This co-ordination of service delivery would include the voluntary and commu-

32. *National Community and Safety Plan 2006-2009*, Home Office, 2006

33. Ibid

34. Ibid

35. "Closer to People and Places: a new vision for local government," Local Government Association, 2006

36. Ibid

nity sector. The LGA recommends that the next generation of local area agreements should involve a contract between the local public service delivery partners and their community – led by the local council and "deploying the totality of public resource for the area".

The 2007 Lyons review outlined a distinctive vision of locality that establishes a "sense of local identity and belonging". This "place-making" role is about creating areas that are "attractive, vibrant, prosperous and safe," a requirement that will, of course, involve the local police service. Subsequently, community safety looms large within future local authority strategy. A 2006 report for the Department of Communities and Local Government identified factors that influence perceptions of local government among residents: "First of all, it appears they focus in on quite passive experiences of services – what they see and pass by in their day-to-day life: issues like litter, graffiti, crime, parks, traffic and so on."[37]

There has been a belated recognition within local government of the importance of *perceptions* of personal safety among residents and the links between those perceptions and antisocial behaviour. Successive local crime audits have demonstrated the effects of minor crime and antisocial behaviour on the lives of residents.[38] The same audits have also identified the immediate value of the police in identifying both the local problems and often also the means to address them.[39]

Types of Crime

The prevalence of Level 1 crime, coupled with the fear of crime among local residents, suggests that irrespective of demands arising from Level 2 crime, there will be a continuing need for further investment in visible policing. In both the 2002 and 2007 surveys, BCU commanders were asked to identify types and prevalence of offences within their areas, and to indicate whether offences of varying types conformed to the national average or not.

The data collected provides a very useful insight into the challenges faced by BCU commanders. In both 2002 and 2007 a significant number of commanders reported that the incidence of both

Table 1: Prevalence of crime in BCU areas, 2007 (%)

	Above average	Average	Below average
Volume crime	34	36	30
Serious/violent crime	31	24	45
Drug dealing	22	48	29
Race/hate crime	14	33	53
Witness intimidation	6	30	62
Organised criminal networks	16	32	52
Gang warfare and related killings	10	6	83
Alcohol-related disorder (eg from nightclubs,pubs)	39	50	10
Domestic violence	31	62	6
Traffic offences including road traffic accidents	15	68	17
Antisocial behaviour	33	63	4

Table 2: Prevalence of crime in BCU areas, 2002 (%)

	Above average	Average	Below average
Volume crime	33	31	34
Serious/violent crime	34	25	39
Drug dealing	28	42	27
Race/hate crime	14	25	58
Witness intimidation	10	30	56
Organised criminal networks	17	28	52
Gang warfare and related killings	14	10	72
Alcohol-related disorder (eg from night-clubs/pubs)	30	52	16
Domestic violence	28	61	8
Traffic offences, including road traffic accidents	15	64	18
Antisocial behaviour	29	59	10

37. "Perception of Local Government in England, Key findings from qualitative research: 2.5", Department of Communities and Local Government , 2006

38. Loveday B, Button M, Fletcher R and Blackbourn D, *Crime and Drugs Audit Isle of Wight, Safer Communities Partnership Board*, Portsmouth University, 2004

39. Ibid

alcohol-related disorder and antisocial behaviour were higher than the national average within their areas. Level 1 crime continues to be the primary problem for most units, while for many the incidence of serious and violent crime and organised criminal networks is well below the national average.

The data collected in the 2007 survey identifying types of crime which confront BCU commanders shows similar trends to the 2002 survey.

Neighbourhood policing

Neighbourhood policing, police community support officers and street wardens provide a limited response to the challenge of Level 1 crime. However, the Home Office has decided not to fund the expansion of support officers (to 24,000), so alternative funding sources will need to be found. Some local authorities are already providing their Basic Command Units with the resources to employ more support officers.[40]

Local funding of visible policing is likely to increase and raises questions about accountability and responsibility for police services. In the future, all BCU commanders (and their staff) will be subject to oversight from local scrutiny committees. These are likely to prioritise local problems and judge the adequacy of local policing and may be less prepared to accept the current level of centrally determined police officer abstractions. Where the local authority is a significant funding body, this may present an important opportunity to improve the system.

Police leadership at the local level is often a crucial element in sustaining crime and disorder reduction partnerships. Recent experience suggests that BCU commanders will need to become an integral part of the local authority management team if crime reduction and community safety are to remain clear priorities for all

local service providers. This is not a new proposal. Back in 1972, the Bains report suggested that the chief constable should become a member of the local authority chief executive's management team.[41] (This idea was rejected by the Association of Chief Police Officers.) We believe that this local linkage or integration should be revisited in the interests of the local community – and not least the council tax payer who increasingly asks what level of service is being received in return for higher bills.

A further challenge to local policing arises from the planned break-up of the Home Office. One potential problem could relate to the status accorded to high-level crime along with the fight against terrorism, which will be a priority within the reconfigured Home Office. This could affect the ability of police forces to sustain Level 1 initiatives. Participants in our focus groups believe that police officers may increasingly be "pushed up" the crime hierarchy to respond to terrorism and serious and international organised crime.[42]

A closer link between the local authority and the BCU commander

As the implications and costs of the neighbourhood policing initiative become better understood, HQs and local authorities will need to be more involved in financing and determining the level of resources allocated to police.

> "My BCU covers a county council and eight local authorities, all with a slightly different approach"

Michael O'Byrne – a former chief constable – has suggested a number of strategies to increase local accountability. These could extend to involving local government members in the selection of their

40. Focus group: Cardiff Central Police Station, April 2007

41. "The New Local Authorities: Management and Structure [Bains Report]", HMSO, 1972

42. Focus group: Cardiff Central Police Station, April 2007

BCU commander and using local council tax to help fund the Basic Command Unit, perhaps by 10-20 per cent.[43] It is essential, if the accountability is to be real and not cosmetic, that the local government unit has some ability to shape the style and content of local policing: "In my experience," he writes, "policing works best where there is a clear link between the BCU and the local political unit."[44]

Although not at BCU level, the Mayor of London has agreed significant increases in the local precept to accommodate the Metropolitan Police Commissioners' safer neighbourhood strategy that has proved to be particularly resource intensive. In Middlesbrough, the elected mayor has employed more than 80 locally funded street wardens and established the city authority as an integral part of the law enforcement and crime reduction network.[45] The Government should change financial regulations so that the council tax police precept can be spent within the local authority area or BCU in which it was raised.

For effective policing, a close link between police and local authority is required. While the police can identify problems that may generate antisocial behaviour, it will be the local authority that has the resources to respond to them. Since 1998 successive crime audits have highlighted the importance of social factors in both antisocial and criminal behaviour, and the significant role that

can be played by the local authority in dealing with this behaviour.[46]

If BCU commanders are to be responsive to local people (or their democratically elected leaders) then it follows that they must be less responsive to the centre. At present they are still accountable and responsible to the chief constable and any development that threatens this vertical structure would be emphatically opposed. Because the Association of Chief Police Officers represents the most senior policemen in the land its position is very strong. Either ACPO's resistance must be successfully challenged or a way must be found to loosen the vertical accountability that currently ties BCU commanders to chief constables.

Effectiveness of crime and disorder reduction partnerships

Most commanders (72 per cent) in the 2002 survey described the degree of co-operation with local crime reduction partnership as the most important influence on BCU performance after staff competence. In 2007 this figure rose to 81 per cent, revealing the growing importance of these partnerships in local police service delivery and their potential impact on BCU performance. A review of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, completed in 2006, came to the same conclusion and influenced the drafting of the Police and Justice Act 2006.

Figure 9: What impact does your CDRP strategy and action plan have on your role as a BCU Commander?
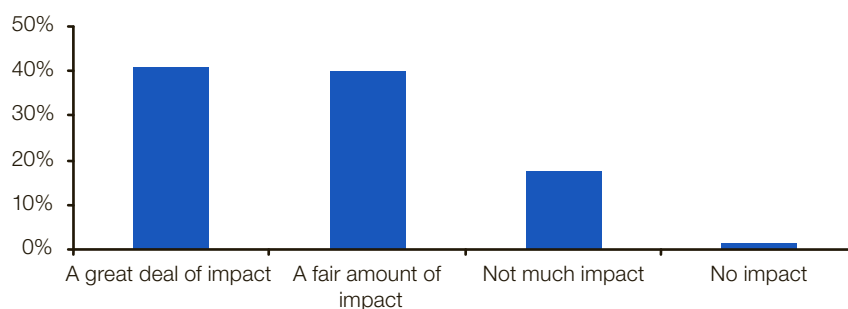
BCU commander survey 2007

43. O'Byrne M, *Changing Policing: Revolution not Evolution*, Russell House Publishing: Lyme Regis, 2001

44. Ibid

45. Mallon R, "Raising Hope Initiative", Report for Middlesbrough Council, 2006

46. Loveday B, Button M, Fletcher R and Blackbourn D, *Crime and Drugs Audit Isle of Wight, Safer Communities Partnership Board*, Portsmouth University, 2004

The survey found that 80 per cent of respondents felt that their CDRP action plan had a "great" or "fair" impact on their role as a BCU commander (Figure 9). Although lower than reported in 2002, this is an encouraging figure. It reveals that BCU commanders give time and consideration to delivering policing within the context of their crime and disorder reduction partnerships. They enable commanders to develop policing strategies that take account of local factors that would otherwise be overlooked. For the successful implementation of neighbourhood policing such activity will need to be maintained and improved.

The responses above gauge the extent to which respondents believe CDRP partners have fulfilled their roles. Ten years on from their creation, some CDRPs are still being poorly utilised. Yet the growing number of positive responses indicates their potential.

> "I have four CDRPs to deal with. They vary considerably on how effective they are"

Symbolic participation in CDRPs

Other responses called attention to problems of participation, with only a small core of agencies (police, fire brigade, local authority) genuinely contributing and others merely attending meetings. While it makes sense that the police should be the driving force in these partnerships, they are often left to go it alone, which curbs the effectiveness of partnership policing.

> "Some agencies are better than others. The partnership is still developing, but relies upon personalities"

Figure 10: Which of the following plays a role in your CDRP?

% of BCUs in which each partner appearing on vertical axis plays a role in CDRP
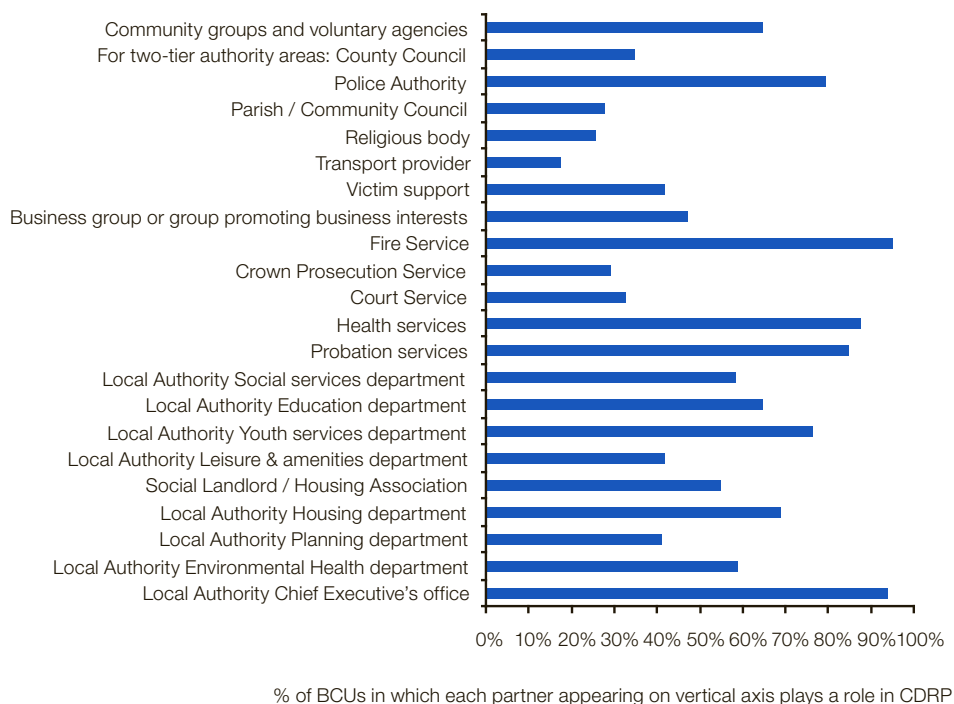
BCU commander survey 2007

Respondents felt that crime and safety was not a priority for a number of CDRP agencies. Those that have a poor track record of participation can be seen in Figure 10. One respondent's comments reflected the challenge of crime reduction for agencies other than the police: "Engagement and co-operation of all the key agencies in jointly improving areas of significant deprivation is required. The rationale for this being that my high crime levels exist in huge pockets of deprivation where income is low, education is poor, housing is of a low standard and aspirations are non-existent. Without a clear commitment to making the whole better, crime will remain disproportionately high."

To reduce crime effectively requires a concerted effort from all public service providers within a community, and the partnerships were designed to bring as many agencies as possible into the process.

> "The local authority, probation and fire service are significant players but health and others are still bit players"

The role of COT

The 2007 survey results indicate that chief officer teams are also failing crime and disorder reduction partnerships. Nearly 80 per cent of respondents reported a lack of support and interest in CDRP strategies on the part of their chief officer team (Figure 11). One respondent commented: "Not all of them have performed the role of a BCU commander in the past, or worked under the requirements of the Crime and Disorder Act – what I feel is missing is a better understanding from them of the difficulties we face in getting partners on board."

This lack of interest illustrates the gap between force HQ and local policing priorities. As neighbourhood policing moves forward, crime and disorder reduction partnerships will prove increasingly valuable; the 2007 survey indicates a positive start with areas of weakness that need to be improved upon.

BCU boundaries and partnership policing

As the primary representative of BCU commanders, the Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales argues

Figure 11: To what extent did your chief officer team show an active interest in helping to draw up CDRP strategies?
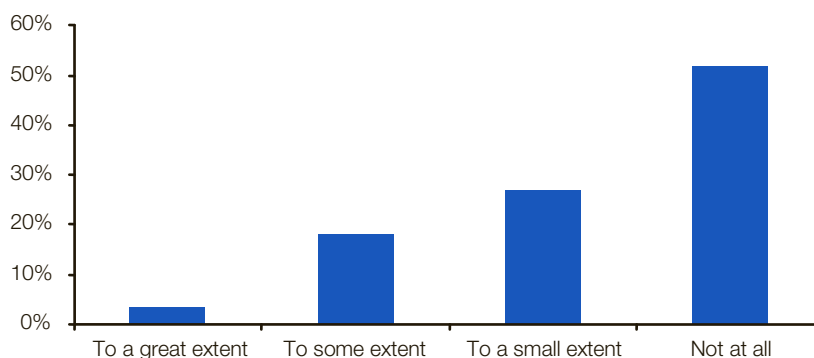
BCU commander survey 2007

the case for increased partnership policing with some strength. In a recent policy statement the Association set out its core requirements for successful policing. Prominent among these are that local policing should take place in partnership with other agencies and, where possible, their boundaries should be shared. "The requirement to engage in partnership working makes 'coterminosity' the most critical single factor in determining whether a BCU is likely to deliver effective local policing."[47]

A number of respondents complained about the extra management time that had to be expended because their Basic Command Unit covered several crime and disorder reduction partnerships. One said: "Where BCU commanders are required to negotiate with multiple partnerships that in turn are required to work with more than one BCU commander, an inevitable confusion follows in respect of resourcing and responsibility. It is not unheard-of for a BCU commander to have to work with two or more partnerships whose strategic aims are at best misaligned and at worst conflicting."

Another reported: "We have merged three district-based CDRPs into one which is totally coterminous with my BCU boundary. The result has been 60 per cent fewer meetings for me and my staff to attend and a more focused co-operation on achieving targets."

Clear lines of responsibility are best achieved with one BCU serving one CDRP. But at the time of writing there are 375 crime and disorder reduction partnerships and only 228 Basic Command Units, so it is inevitable that many will have to deal with more than one partnership. However, matching up the boundary of one with the other is seldom done. Chief officer teams unilaterally set the Basic Command Unit boundaries and little progress has been made in matching them with CDRPs. Within one north western force, a BCU is responsible for two unitary authorities within its boundary, while within the non-metropolitan counties, BCUs are frequently expected to cover at least two CDRPs. When policymakers consider viable Basic Command Unit size they must take these difficulties into account wherever practicable.

47. *Moving Policing Forward – Proposals for the Future*, Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales, 2004; Warwickshire Police Baseline Assessment, HMIC, 2006

6

Basic Command Units: identifying viable size

Summary

No methodology has been developed by the Inspectorate or the police service to determine optimal size for a BCU, nor has the impact of BCU size on spans of control and managerial effectiveness. Burgeoning BCU size will impede service delivery. We believe BCUs should be built through the amalgamation of a number of viable neighbourhood policing units.

> "I am not convinced that big is beautiful. My BCU remains one of the best performers in an extremely demanding environment: it is the smallest in the force"

Early determination of BCU size

At first it seemed that where possible, the size of a BCU should reflect the population served by the local authority to which it was linked. Yet this principle was not applied across all forces. As Michael O'Byrne has noted when the Audit Commission proposed the concept of BCUs the ideal number was reckoned to be between 150 and 200 police officers. "By the late 1990s the ideal number had become for most forces between 250 and 350 police officers. Some forces have BCUs of over 400 officers and at least one force has BCUs of around 1,000."[48] Any consensus on an ideal number quickly broke down. It appeared that, as with police forces in the immediate past, Basic Command Units would steadily increase in size.

So far no methodology has been developed by the Inspectorate or the police service to determine optimal size for a unit, nor of the impact of BCU size on spans of control and managerial effectiveness. Thus it would seem that the determination of BCU size is based primarily on personal and professional judgement. Exercise of this judgement is currently a top-down process, whereas it should be primarily a bottom-up process, based on functional responsibilities. One respondent who had served as a lead staff officer on BCU inspections, commented: "I am not convinced that big is beautiful. My BCU remains one of the best performers in an extremely demanding environment: it is the smallest BCU in the force."

Although the perception of what would be an ideal size for BCUs was to later change, in the wake of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 some members of the Inspectorate appeared to accept that, where possible, the size of a BCU should reflect the population served by the local authority to which it was linked. As an HMIC report for South Wales police noted in 2000: "It will be seen that BCUs vary in size from Merthyr (164 staff) to Rhondda (427 staff). Coterminosity with local authority areas, to assist implementation of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, requires this variation in size to be retained, with management structures designed to match local requirements."[49]

48. O'Byrne M, *Changing Policing: Revolution not Evolution*, Russell House Publishing: Lyme Regis, 2001

49. O'Dowd J, *Report of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary,* South Wales: 2.2, 2000

Determinants of managerial effectiveness

Introduction

The responses of BCU commanders make clear that there are managerial and service delivery issues that deserve consideration in determining BCU size, other than the need for shared boundaries and input from the local authority. These are:

- managerial visibility and BCU size
- managerial hierarchies
- demands for "corporacy"

Managerial visibility and BCU size

As our respondents identified, expanding BCU size undermines the very principles Basic Command Units were designed to encourage and erodes their original purpose: to foster closer, more immediate supervision by one supervisory officer at a local level. If they get bigger then managerial visibility will diminish. There may be a case for modifying the current rank structure to enable police officers to progress within the ranks, not just between them.

Managerial hierarchies

As the size of BCUs increase, so does the need for the delegation of operational management. One result of large increases in BCU size can be an extension in the chain of command, further removing the command team from those who are immediately responsible for delivering police service. In this situation, the BCU will reproduce managerial problems that it was designed to overcome. The repercussions have been clearly identified by one BCU commander who observed: "Anything over 500 officers in my view becomes difficult to manage effectively and BCU teams tend to replicate COTs, with operational management moving down to chief inspector or inspector level."

If the current pressure to create larger Basic Command Units continues unabated, then police hierarchies, which have caused such difficulty in the past, will con-tinue to be an institutional obstacle for police forces in England and Wales.

Demands for corporacy

"Corporacy" is the requirement placed on all officers to reflect the shared management standards, objectives, and priorities developed within the chief officer team. As a means of identifying the overall strategy, unifying the aims and aspirations of the organisation, corporacy is useful. However, many chief officer teams (and the Inspectorate) regard it as a vital method of ensuring that BCU commanders conform closely with centrally determined policy. Corporacy, in this context, becomes an important means of exercising central oversight. Moreover, it can undermine any movement to effective managerial delegation by eroding the local discretion BCU commanders exercise. Corporacy can discourage innovation as effectively as centrally imposed targets.

In this sense, it can be seen as the antithesis of decentralised command, as its purpose is to reinforce the primacy of chief officer teams. Together, the impact of extended chains of command and demands for corporacy can be expected to remove many of the characteristics that originally favoured the development of BCUs. Corporacy may also undermine the growth of effective partnerships at local level, if centrally determined policy fails to coalesce with local crime priorities.

Confusion in determining BCU viability

The Police Superintendents' Association has argued that a BCU with fewer than 400 staff has insufficient flexibility to cope with fluctuating demands arising from "response policing" (24-hour emergency call-out). This represents a significant increase on the numbers originally envisaged by the Audit Commission. However, the association added: "The current trend to create increasingly large BCUs concerns us. BCUs already exist which contain

1,400 staff and there are very real proposals at the present time to create one with approaching 2,000 staff. It is questionable whether the BCU commander can provide the visible direct leadership style that has been identified as being a very real enabler in terms of BCU performance."[50]

> "A BCU should not be constituted on officer numbers alone, we need a much more mature debate on this matter"

The Superintendents Association felt that the process of determining "best" BCU size should "emanate from the amalgamation of a number of neighbourhood policing units which are themselves inherently viable, e.g. policing sectors based on local authority wards or other self-governing communities."[51]

The recommendation of the Association for a minimum staffing level of 400 deserves serious consideration. It remains (other than its commitment to shared boundaries) the only proposal providing a pragmatic approach to size and offers a great deal more than the current incrementalism. Determining BCU size on the basis of neighbourhood policing units could provide a useful baseline for this exercise. Moreover the importance being given to the neighbourhood policing initiative, which is ward based, could provide a further justification for adopting this approach. Combining neighbourhood policing units offers a useful approach to spans of control and managerial visibility.

> "I believe BCUs with 250-600 officers are most viable with the structures we currently employ"

The current method of determining BCU size continues to generate confusion, even among BCU commanders. Our survey data found no professional consensus as to what constituted a viable size for a BCU, with opinions ranging from 250 to 800 staff. One commander who thought units were becoming too big, said that there was "a distinct advantage" to knowing all members of the workforce by name.

Current determinants of BCU size have proved to be arbitrary and should better reflect management capability while also being, wherever practicable, anchored within shared local authority and partnership boundaries.

50. *Moving Policing Forward – Proposals for the Future*, Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales, 2004; Warwickshire Police Baseline Assessment, HMIC, 2006

51. Ibid

7

Recommendations

Police reform in Britain has reached a critical juncture. The option of police force amalgamation seems increasingly untenable. In its place, effective internal management reform could provide a real opportunity for the creation of policing structures that are linked to the communities they serve, providing a stable local platform for the introduction and delivery of neighbourhood policing. If this can be accomplished there is a good chance that the long-term trend of police withdrawing from the community could be reversed. Evidence from both our survey and focus groups suggests that there is a need to counter the extent of influence central government holds over "local" policing. We believe that this can be best achieved by strengthening and enhancing the role and responsibilities of BCU commanders.

With a national police force establishment of approximately 140,000 it appears that forces are still finding it difficult to sustain the quintessential police function: the neighbourhood patrol. There are a number of factors that impinge on policing, not least the bureaucratic demands of recent legislation. However, the inability of BCU commanders to support visible patrols is derived in no small way from manpower demands emanating from force HQs. The 2007 survey reveals the instability of available police manpower at the BCU level. And while the worst excesses of police abstractions identified in 2002 have been curbed, there is still plenty of room for improvement with BCUs experiencing average officer abstractions of nearly 20 per cent.

The inability to provide a stable local police presence can be best combated by effective delegation of manpower responsibilities to BCU commanders, and implementation of a funding system that encourages local authority investment. These reforms could serve as a brake on the upward movement of police officers to more specialist duties, providing a reliable level of manpower and visible policing that has not been experienced for more than 30 years.

This report forwards a number of recommendations that can be divided into two categories: changes to local forces and changes to the environment in which those forces operate.

Recommended changes to local forces

- **Greater managerial responsibility should be devolved to BCU commanders**

  Budget responsibilities should be fully devolved to BCU commanders. They must manage all resources, including buying-in services to support operational policing. The Government must end the current system in which a budget may be devolved, but control over how the budget is spent is not. Compared with the responses gathered five years ago, 28 per cent more respondents thought that greater budgetary control would enable them to improve the quality of policing in their area. We recommend that BCU commanders should have one budget for all the activities for which they are responsible. Their task would then be to spend no more than that budget sum. They would be free to vary staff numbers, uniformed or civilian, overtime, vehicle and other equipment operation. BCU commanders should also be able to vary their staffing mix between sworn officers and police staff, free from constraints imposed by the Home Office.

- **BCU commanders should have the ability to raise funds and recover costs**
Some progressive BCUs will recover costs from major events, such as concerts, and the night-time economy entertainment sector following changes to licensing laws. Others will part-fund officers together with local bars, clubs or shops. However, community events should not become impracticable due to policing costs. Pragmatic charging would help to ensure that communities retained a visible policing presence in their localities.

- **BCU Commanders should be responsible for staff abstraction**
Financial freedom must be balanced, "CompStat" style, with responsibility for internal management issues, including abstraction rates. BCU commanders should be held to account over the level of abstractions. There should be compensatory payments to the BCU for HQ abstractions, which would help to stabilise visible policing. Commanders should also be able to charge other parts of the criminal justice system for abstracted staff.

- **Comprehensive training is needed for local commanders**
If more responsibility is to be devolved to BCU level, the local management teams will need improved management training. For example, just under two thirds (62 per cent) of commanders felt that they had not received adequate financial training to manage their budgets. As recently as 2002-3, only 1.5 per cent of all police training was delivered to officers at the rank of superintendent or above.[52]

- **Minimum tenure agreements should be put in place**
BCU commanders currently have performance related pay. However, introducing standard minimum tenure agreements – where staff agree to serve in a given locality for a period of time –

would encourage greater stability of the local management team by reducing turnover. This stability would also enhance the impact of local partnerships.

- **Greater support is needed from chief officer teams**
Our survey suggests that chief officer teams need to re-evaluate the level of support offered to local commanders in many forces. This is not simply about understanding BCU priorities, which is difficult because many members of the teams have not been BCU commanders themselves, but is also about ensuring that local commanders are prepared for their role. Greater recognition within chief officer teams of the crucial role of Basic Command Units is needed and should be reflected in selection criteria for promotion within the police service.

Recommended changes to forces' operating environment

- **Performance management changes are required**
In principle, performance management does not hinder the delivery of local policing. However, the current system of targets and the emphasis placed on sanctioned detections does: 71 per cent of BCU commanders said that Home Office reporting requirements had a negative impact on the quality of policing. Local targets should therefore reflect local needs and should be set by those who work within the local BCU and who are closest to the community. We believe that headline rates in crime reduction and weighted detection rates should be balanced by measurements of levels of community safety, including how safe the public feels. In many wards, "beat meetings" help officers understand the concerns of the local community. BCU commanders need to use such meetings to decide how the performance of their team should be measured.

52. Howlett Bolton A, "Recruitment, Training and Motivation of the Police", in Sheila Lawlor (ed) *Policing Matters: Recruitment, Training and Motivation*, Politeia: London, 2005

- **Reform is required to improve the effectiveness of CDRPs**
In the 2002 survey, the majority of BCU commanders (72 per cent) described the degree of co-operation with local crime and disorder reduction partnerships as the most important influence on performance (after staff competence). In 2007, this figure rose to 81 per cent, revealing the growing importance of CDRPs in local police service delivery and the potential impact they have on BCU performance. However, there needs to be a clearer relationship between local authorities and Basic Command Units: local government members should be involved in the selection of their BCU commander and we should explore ways in which council tax could help to fund the local BCU. We see no reason why the Government should not allow the council tax police precept to be spent within the local authority or BCU area in which it was raised, rather than go into the general police pot. The 2007 survey also suggests that the support of chief officer teams for crime and disorder reduction partnerships is insufficient.

  Basic Command Units should be aligned wherever possible with the local authority and other public services. CDRPs were designed to bring as many agencies as possible into the process of crime reduction, but our research suggests that this "cross service" participa-tion is not always happening. When policymakers consider viable BCU size, they must also consider redesigning BCU structures so that, wherever practicable, there is one crime and disorder reduction partnership per Basic Command Unit.

- **Structural changes are needed to increase spans of control**
The Government and police service should adopt a much more imaginative approach when determining the number and size of Basic Command Units, with the aim of reducing their size. Extended chains of command and administrative hierarchies should be reduced immediately by reviewing current criteria determining BCU size and using neighbourhood policing units as building blocks. Current determinants of BCU size have proved to be rather arbitrary and should better reflect management capability while also being anchored within shared local authority and partnership boundaries. There may also be a case for modifying the current rank structure to enable police officers to progress within the ranks, not just between them.

We agree with the Treasury that there needs to be "a step change in productivity" to deliver the performance required of the police service.[53] Police management needs to match the needs of 21st-century communities.

Devolving control fits the bill perfectly.

53. "Delivering a Step Change in Police Productivity", HM Treasury, 2006

Glossary

Abstractions: the BCU posts that are considered non-operational. Reasons for abstraction include sickness, training, vacant posts and secondments to HQ.

ACPO: Association of Chief Police Officers. Members are chief constables, deputy chief constables and assistant chief constables.

Association of Police Authorities: national association representing the interests of all police authorities in England and Wales.

BCU: Basic Command Unit. Geographically based operational police unit. See page 10

CDRP: crime and disorder reduction partnership. An alliance of organisations required by statute to generate strategies within their area. Includes police, fire service, NHS, local authority departments, legal agencies and voluntary agencies.

Community safety partnerships: partnerships between local agencies to identify and respond to crime and disorder within their local authority area.

COT: chief officer team. A team of officers at the force level, comprising chief constable, deputy chief constable, and assistant chief constables.

CPS: Crown Prosecution Service. Responsible for prosecuting criminal cases.

Crime Levels: *Level 1*: local, high-volume crime characterised by antisocial behaviour, vandalism and petty theft. *Level 2*: more serious crime such as murder or organised crime. Level 2 crime often operates across police force borders. *Level 3*: terrorism and international crime that transcends national borders.

HMIC: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary. Examines and improves the efficiency of the police service in England and Wales.

LAA: local area agreement. An agreement between central and local government plus other key partners setting out local area priorities.

LGA: Local Government Association.

LPA: local policing area. Geographically based operational police unit which is coterminous with local authority boundaries. Same as a BCU.

Local policing plan: annual plan that is jointly prepared by a police authority and police force and sets out priorities, targets and strategy.

Mixed economy team: a team of police officers that usually incorporates a sergeant, police constables and community support officers. The teams are most associated with neighbourhood policing.

National intelligence model: an information-based deployment system and cornerstone for the management of law enforcement operations in England and Wales. NIM identifies patterns of crime and promotes a co-operative approach to policing, which requires the participation of other agencies and bodies.

National police training: all courses provided for police officers of every rank.

Neighbourhood policing initiative: a programme aimed at putting more police officers out on patrol to increase police visibility and tackle quality-of-life issues that often cause distress. These can include graffiti, rowdy neighbours, vandalism, off-road motorcycling, speeding and littering.

NPIA: National Policing Improvement Agency. A new agency created to support self-improvement across the police service and to drive forward programmes outlined in the national community safety plan.

OCU: Operational Command Unit. Synonymous with Basic Command Unit.

PA: police authority. An independent body with responsibility for the appointment of chief officers, finance and monitoring the performance of the force.

PCSOs: police community support officers. Civilian members of staff who wear a police-style uniform. Their main functions are to provide a highly visible police presence in public areas and to deal with low-level nuisance and anti-social behaviour.

PPAF: policing performance assessment framework. Developed by the Home Office and the Inspectorate to measure and improve performance across key areas of police work.

PSA: public service agreement. A statement of intent of the service provided.

PSAEW: Police Superintendents' Association of England and Wales.

PSU: Police Standards Unit. Provides support to forces and Basic Command Units to help them meet the desired levels of performance.

Resilience: preparedness, in co-operation with other public services, to deal with major unexpected crises such as terrorist acts.

Scrutiny committees: local government bodies with four primary roles: holding local decision-makers to account; undertaking reviews of council services and policies; undertaking reviews to develop council services and policies; and considering any other matter that affect the county borough.

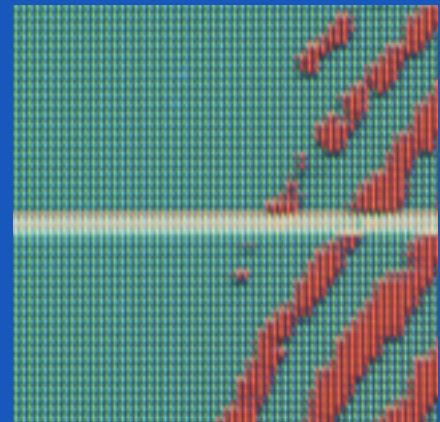**SPI**: statutory performance indicator.

Two-tier authority: these include county councils and district councils. In two-tier authority areas there is a split of service responsibilities between the two types of council.

Unitary authority: a single-tier local authority that is responsible for all local government functions within its area. It may carry out additional functions that are usually performed by higher authorities or national government.

Policy Exchange has argued for police reform in three reports over recent years: *Going Local*, *Manifesto for the Met* and *Size Isn't Everything*. These reports showed that placing forces under the control of locally elected representatives fosters efficiency and that small forces perform as well as big ones. Since our first publication in 2003, central control has tightened, further constricting the ability of the police to reduce local crime and antisocial behaviour.

But there are encouraging signs that the police are now being subjected to the kind of critical attention previously reserved for health and education. Both Labour and the Liberal Democrats based their May 2007 local election campaigns on fighting crime, and the Conservatives recently called for police forces to be made accountable for their performance to the communities they serve. But local, accountable forces require the freedom to manage their officers effectively.

Fitting the Bill investigated whether, and to what extent, increased local autonomy for the police could improve policing. Led by Barry Loveday, one of this country's leading experts on police reform, the research team asked all local police commanders in England and Wales to identify factors which would improve the quality of policing. It was the most comprehensive survey of its kind for five years, and the responses it elicited were revealing.

policy exchange