



2003/2004 INSPECTION

British Transport Police





2003/2004 INSPECTION
of the
Transport Police



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British Transport Police

A REPORT BY HER MAJESTY'S
INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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2003/2004 INSPECTION

I Executive Summary

1.1 This Inspection of British Transport Police (BTP) has taken place at a significant time in the history both of the Force and the arrangements for its governance. The Force, already the closest fit in role and function to the 43 Home Office and eight Scottish police forces, has over the last two years acquired even wider jurisdiction and powers as part of the police reform process. It has emerged from a Department for Transport consultation paper as the police service provider of choice for the transport industry, and survived proposals to integrate the policing of London Underground within the Metropolitan Police Service.

1.2 The Police Committee, who commissioned this report, is itself in transition and is within a year to be succeeded by a statutory Police Authority reflecting the accountability arrangements to be found elsewhere. It is a good time to take stock of what has been achieved and the challenges remaining as the Force enters this new era.

1.3 For the first time the Inspection was jointly undertaken with HM Inspectorate for Scotland and covered Great Britain.

Performance

1.4 HM Inspector was last in the Force two and a half years ago. Much required attention and a busy agenda was set by a report containing 22 recommendations. Performance since that time has broadly improved with evidence of a rigorous performance culture everywhere to be seen. Management information now drives activity with chief officers holding BCU and departmental commanders to account on a weekly and monthly basis. Whilst crime has risen it has stayed in line with levels across the 43 forces in England and Wales and when the impact of the new National Crime Recording Standard is stripped out, the increase is less than two per cent.

1.5 The Force is part of the Street Crime Initiative involving ten other forces and achieved the best results of all. Robbery was reduced by 32% and detections raised to 26%. A similar pattern of improvement applies to vehicle crime. However, theft of passengers' property, not a force priority, has soared by 30% and the detection rate at 2.5% is derisory. Violent crime, beyond robbery, is also a worry although a 20% increase in level has masked an 11% increase in the marker of crimes detected.

1.6 Overall there is scope to improve detection rates and recent investment in forensic facilities needs now to be reinforced to improve crime scene management and drive-up results. The Force has now acquired primacy over Home Office forces in respect of certain murder investigations committed upon the railway after discussion with the local Chief Constable. Its record in clearing up the most serious offences is very good and there is professional competence and confidence. But capacity has been diluted by the several protracted investigations into serious rail crashes and incidents. There is a need to review respective roles and responsibilities between BTP, the Health and Safety Executive, and the Rail Accident Investigation Branch, once it is operational, so that police investigative skill is deployed only when it is appropriate and essential.

Structure and Strategic Direction

1.7 Published corporate plans and strategic documents are of a very high standard. Short, readable and impactful they offer a model to many although target-setting would convey greater meaning if baseline figures were also to be published.

1.8 The development of an agenda for 'complementary policing' is imaginative and modern. Initiatives like Travel Safe and the payment by train operators of a bounty to specials evidences the commitment to reassurance policing. The proposal by the Department for Transport of a Railway Safety Accreditation Scheme is another example of where the Force supported by the Police Committee has pushed hard to be included in the national arrangements to harness and better regulate private companies providing aspects of security across the network.

1.9 HM Inspector visited the newly amalgamated Western BCU. This merger of two small BCUs was carried forward with commendable speed and has created a viable unit in operational and financial terms. Staff were found to have broadly come to terms with the new structure.

Relationships with the Industry

1.10 During the four Inspections carried out over nine years, HM Inspector has seen a steady improvement in relationships between the Force and the Train Operating Companies and others within the industry that it serves. This has been essential as in the late nineties trust and respect were at lamentably low levels. The previous and current Chief Constables worked hard at this and the emphasis that officers now place on investigating assaults upon staff - including spitting - is testimony to the commitment to public and staff safety.

1.11 This sense of greater harmony is sadly not reflected in the levels of financial support train operators are inclined to provide. With the sole exception of London Underground which sees policing as central to its public safety agenda, train operators are loath to fund the Force to the required level and the consequences of this will be further examined below.

Human Resources

1.12 Policing is a people business and the Police Committee has invested heavily in recruitment over the last year. In 2002 the Force reached a police strength of 2,186.5 officers - the highest in recent history since losing the responsibility for policing the docks. At a time when both Government and public want to see the Service deliver reassurance, such growth is pleasing.

1.13 British Transport Police has historically been anomalous in its pension and conditions of service. This has handicapped transfers to and from other forces and added cost to the operation. The passage of the Police Reform Act 2002 has presented an opportunity to bring the Force into line and whilst this is a strategically sound goal it is, in the short term, producing complex and protracted negotiations affecting the individual contracts of police officers and police staff. Throughout the Inspection the unsettling impact of these negotiations was evident and there is a real need to accelerate their conclusion.

1.14 The human resources function at HQ and on BCU is 'vulnerable' and there is clear scope for improvement. Communication with HR across the organisation is poor. On-going negotiations are time consuming, and are detracting from the provision of the HR service. HR should re-focus its energy to

supporting the operational activity. There needs to be a strategy/policy forum which can provide consultation and feedback to HR.

1.15 Where race and diversity are concerned corporate provision, intrusive management and ownership seem lacking. There is real scope to further involve SAME, BAWP and GPA. There should be an HR plan to meet and address *Dismantling Barriers* and the *Gender Agenda*. There are claims of poor and inequitable practice around the filling of some vacancies in police staff posts. The PDR system lacks credibility with varying levels of use. There is no central co-ordination or management of the PDR system for police staff. The Force is apparently not meeting its legal requirements in several HR activities, for example ECHR and Data Protection compliance. Whilst the reduction in absence levels has been a success story for the Force there is a need to retain the focus lest sickness levels creep up again.

Financial Resources

1.16 Government remains committed to the ‘user pays’ principle whilst providing some measure of subsidy for policing to the train operators who collectively fund the Force. The industry is itself going through a difficult period in operational terms and against this background the Police Committee has the difficult task each year of securing a budget. Home Office forces have seen funding settlements ‘topped up’ in the last year by significant rises in precept - a facility not available to the Police Committee.

1.17 The specialist inspection of the finance function identified concerns about appropriateness of Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) status to the new Police Authority who mimic others rooted in local government. Liability of the authority - and thus the Force - to VAT is another issue requiring urgent clarification, as is the role of ‘Treasurer’.

1.18 The Force has calculated ‘start up’ costs associated with the proposed Authority to approach £900k initially, with further sums carried forward into 2005/06. HM Inspector recalls that the Home Office allocated £3m ‘new money’ to each police authority created by the Police and Magistrates Courts Act 1994. Against that precedent the Department for Transport should be urged to provide similar provision which otherwise must come off the operational budget.

1.19 The most important finding is that the Force has continued to lack a comprehensive business planning process which links operational planning and procurement through a medium-term financial plan. This was a recommendation three years ago and despite some intervening attempts to adjust spending scenarios to available funding remains a pressing priority. The Police Committee may take the view that this is the single most pressing issue likely to confront the incoming Authority.

Information Technology and Communication (ITC)

1.20 HM Inspector was asked to examine the arrangements in place to safeguard the continuity of BTP’s core business and the protection of ITC equipment and systems in the event of criminal/terrorist attack or natural disaster.

1.21 In summary little has been done and there is an urgent need to put in place the proposals in the body of this report. It is the function of the force executive, the Chief Officer Group, to determine those mission critical activities where continuity must be maintained. The IT department must then configure

systems to guarantee this whilst at the same time designing technical fallback to protect equipment from attack. A Programme Board connects the two.

1.22 Specialist inspections of the above areas have served to reinforce more general concerns about the infrastructure of the Force and the failure of project management to successfully address this. A number of reviews, including Best Value Reviews, have been initiated over the last three years focusing on key issues such as responding to calls from the public (call handling), control rooms, crime management and recording, criminal justice, scientific support and the future structure of ITC. Relevant departments have lacked the capacity to undertake these studies robustly and some have drifted. Those brought to the Police Committee for decision have grounded upon the rock of insufficient funding or were judged inadequate and unpersuasive. Budgetary constraints and the consequent inability of the Force to assemble and then adhere to a 3 - 5 year business plan - underpinned by secure funding - has compounded the problem.

1.23 The consequence has been that solutions to key questions have been delayed and the Force is left with an infrastructure that is impoverished and inadequate. Examples abound. At the time of the Inspection, call handling was in acute crisis whilst crime management, including recording and allocation for investigation, had moved forward little in three years. The force infrastructure requires most urgent attention. The incoming Police Authority is likely to be charged with the general duty of monitoring responses to calls for service and publishing force performance. Time is running out to put these things right.

Conclusion

1.24 The Force has moved forward on many fronts since last subject of inspection. Vivid leadership and tougher accountability for performance is evident. So too is the marked improvement in absence management, dialogue with the industry and recruitment leading to higher levels of available policing. But other areas of risk have opened up.

1.25 The infrastructure is groaning. Call handling and ICT generally need more money and attention and the capacity to manage projects and change has the methodology but not the people. A robust process of business planning matched by some consistency of funding is highly desirable. Finally, there is a real need urgently to conclude the negotiations around pay and conditions. Bringing BTP into line with forces elsewhere is an admirable aim but there is growing evidence of an adverse impact not just on morale but on numbers. Some challenges then for a force that is doing well and one that HM Inspector is pleased to certify is, by Home Office standards, both effective and efficient.

II Introduction

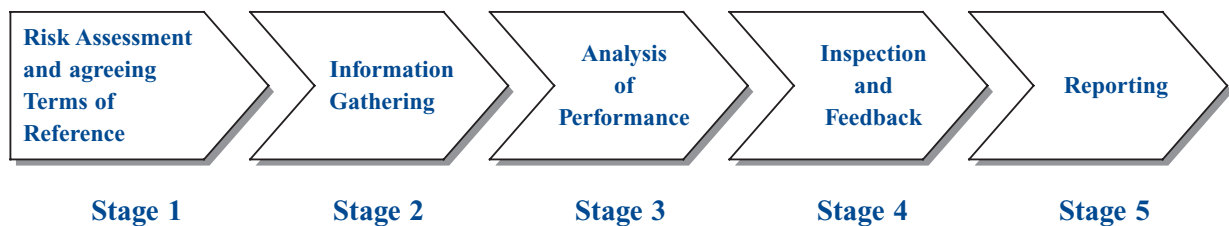
2.1 The Inspection of the British Transport Police was conducted between 20 - 22, 27 and 30 October 2003 by Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, Mr Peter Winship, CBE, QPM, MA (Oxon) at the invitation of the Police Committee.

2.2 Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) has a statutory duty under the provisions of the Police Act 1996 to report to the Home Secretary on the efficiency and effectiveness of the 43 police forces in England and Wales. With effect from 1 July 2004 the Railway and Transport Safety Act 2003 provides Her Majesty's Inspector with a statutory responsibility to inspect the Force on the grounds of efficiency and effectiveness and report to the Secretary of State for Transport.

2.3 The 2003/04 Inspection of British Transport Police was a focused examination conducted jointly with staff from HMIC Scotland who were able to ensure that consideration of the Scottish BCU was made in the proper context of policing in Scotland. Her Majesty's Inspector was requested to comment specifically on:

- managing performance
- crime management and detections
- human resource management
- IT business resumption planning
- finance and resources

2.4 The inspection methodology consisted of the following stages:



2.5 Formal inspection visits were made to police headquarters in London and the BCU headquarters of London Underground (Broadway) and Western (Birmingham). A number of detailed interviews were held with staff and representatives of the staff associations, the railway industry, and other agencies that have dealings with the Force. Members of the inspection team, consisting of staff drawn from HMIC South and HMIC Scotland (as well as specialists for crime, finance, information technology and personnel) had previously visited the Force during the preparatory phase of the Inspection. This involved gathering and analysing data on visits to a number of headquarters departments, the scientific support unit at Baches Street and to London North, London Underground, Western and Scotland basic command units (BCUs).

2.6 In the pre-inspection phase, contact was made with the Central and Regional Rail Users Consultative Committee, the Crown Prosecution Service, Forensic Science Service, Forensic Alliance,

London Regional Passengers Committee, the Police Complaints Authority and Victim Support. The previous Inspection conducted in June 2001 made 22 recommendations. Details of those recommendations and the progress made by the Force are given in Appendix A. Her Majesty's Inspector found much to commend the British Transport Police in its continued development. Particular items of good practice are highlighted in Appendix C.

2.7 Following the signing of a protocol between the British Transport Police and the Home Office¹ the Force now deals with all crimes on the rail network in England and Wales, from murder, subject to agreement with the local Chief Constable, to fare evasion and drunkenness and a host of other incidents including all rail accidents, fatalities and suicides. However this investigative role does not extend to the investigation of acts of terrorism. The legal process differs in Scotland, with a distinct role for the Procurator Fiscal in relation to the investigation of crime. Consequently, the local force maintains primacy in the senior investigating officer role into the enquiry of certain incidents including rail crashes, but it is the Procurator Fiscal who is in overall control. Whilst British Transport Police does not police a residential population it is charged with the safety of some 5 million passengers daily and over 100,000 railway staff. More than 81,545 notifiable criminal offences are reported annually², and the Force deals with over a million other calls for assistance from the public.

¹ Source – Home Office Circular 25/2002

² Source – British Transport Police Annual Report 2002/03

III Performance Management

Holding Basic Command Units (BCUs) to Account

3.1 Within BTP, Basic Command Units (BCUs) are known as areas. Each BCU produces a local policing plan in support of the force plan. BCU commanders have to make sure that their plans are tailored to meet local need. Given BTP is a national force which covers diverse communities across three countries Her Majesty's Inspector considers this approach wholly appropriate in ensuring that the correct balance is achieved in delivering national and force targets as well as locally determined priorities.

3.2 Progress against these various targets are subject to monthly review at the force management team (FMT) meeting chaired by the Chief Constable. At this meeting BCU commanders are held to account for the performance against the targets set in the plan. To support this meeting monthly performance figures are produced by the performance monitoring unit (PMU). The nature of this meeting is both robust (in terms of BCU commanders accounting for specific performance outcomes), and supportive as the members of the chief officer group (COG) collaborate together to identify solutions to difficulties that BCU commanders face in improving performance and attaining the targets set. The pre-inspection team had the opportunity to attend an FMT meeting and found that there was an appropriate balance between the degree of intrusive supervision exercised by members of COG in examining performance outcomes, and the support offered to BCU by them in seeking to identify and overcome issues that inhibited performance improvement. Her Majesty's Inspector applauds the use of telephone conferencing for this part of the meeting which has reduced cost with staff no longer having to travel to headquarters to attend this meeting.

3.3 Members of COG visit BCUs on a regular basis as part of a structured internal inspection programme. Working to a predetermined agenda the members of COG meet with BCU management teams (AMTs) and explore performance outcomes with them. The members of COG then 'star burst' across the BCU, meeting with individual members of staff as a means of promoting visible leadership and improving communication. This should be seen as good practice.

3.4 The pre-inspection team explored elements of BTP's performance culture with staff at the London Underground, Western and Scotland BCUs. There was abundant evidence of progress in introducing an effective performance management framework within BTP and clear leadership by members of COG in following up performance outcomes. One area of concern was highlighted however, in the use of personal performance indicators. BTP attempts to 'benchmark' performance at the London Underground and Scotland BCUs by using a set of personal performance indicators. These indicators are quantitative assessments of contributions to the policing plan and force objectives (eg the number of intelligence reports submitted). Staff were universally critical of how this process was currently being managed within the Force. Whilst all staff interviewed accepted the need to measure individual contribution, they felt that the simple reliance on 'numbers' was counter-productive and a more sophisticated approach could now be adopted that included individual indicators that were role specific and included both quantitative and qualitative assessments of performance. Whilst BCU commanders were alive to this issue there was no corporate approach to managing this aspect of performance management with BCUs introducing their own systems and practices. Her Majesty's Inspector considers that the Force needs to address this situation.

Crime Strategy

3.5 The British Transport Police Strategic Plan sets out the Force's aims for 2003 - 2006 with departmental strategies providing the mechanisms for delivery. In the 2001/02 inspection report Her Majesty's Inspector recommended a new crime strategy be formulated that supported the new long-term force strategy. Within this framework, the force crime strategy for 2003 - 2006 focuses on supporting geographical policing areas (BCUs) to improve performance in crime reduction, prevention and detection and sets out the following priorities:

- promote an intelligence-led approach to all our operational activity throughout the implementation of the National Intelligence Model;
- enhance crime scene management, in particular the use of DNA and fingerprints, to detect offenders;
- implement the effective analysis of crime and the briefing and tasking of officers to enhance problem solving, reduce crime and increase crime clearances;
- ensure effective financial investigations are completed throughout the Force;
- develop partnerships and plans with the railway industry and other agencies to reduce and prevent crime and the fear of crime;
- ensure our customers are engaged in determining operational priorities within our tasking framework.

3.6 The detective chief superintendent has overall responsibility for crime strategy, crime policy, direction and command of crime-related matters, and provides guidance, support and expertise in the investigation of major crime and is the director of intelligence. He is accountable to the assistant chief constable (crime). BCU commanders have local accountability for crime and are answerable to the deputy chief constable for their performance. It is the view of Her Majesty's Inspector that British Transport Police has made significant progress towards achieving its strategic aims, this will be covered in more detail in Chapter IV.

Crime Recording and Investigation

3.7 In the 2001/02 inspection report Her Majesty's Inspector reported on each BCU having its own crime management centre (CMC) that handles the recording and monitoring of reported crime. CMCs tend to be staffed by a blend of police officers and police staff and open during office hours Monday to Friday. This position has not changed since the previous Inspection.

3.8 The detective chief inspector (DCI), as crime manager, is responsible for the efficiency and effectiveness of the CMC. Each centre operates to the many policies within the Force on the recording and investigation of crime. Crime is recorded on a computerised crime recording system (PINS). All crimes are subject to the minimum standards of investigation set down in force policy which have been recently refreshed. Crimes are allocated by CMCs to either uniform or detective officers according to the seriousness of the offence.

3.9 In a separate exercise to the compliance audit in paragraph 3.51, the pre-inspection team examined 120 allegations of crime from all BCUs in the following categories: violence against the

