Core business: An inspection into crime prevention, police attendance and the use of police time

Findings of the inspection of the British Transport Police
4-11 April 2014

Contents

Background and context

1.1.   Police forces across England and Wales have been successful in reducing crime and anti-social behaviour. In the last ten years, crime (exluding fraud) has reduced nationally by 40 percent. In the British Transport Police area up to the end of 2013/14 crime had fallen by 38 percent in the ten years since 2003/04, which equates to 30,052 fewer crimes being reported each year. In the latest available data, for the 12 months to December 2013, the force recorded a 6 percent decrease in overall crime compared to the previous 12 months.

1.2.   Unlike Home Office police forces the BTP does not receive a central government policing grant and are funded primarily by the train operating companies (TOCs), freight companies, London Underground and Network Rail. Consequently they are not part of the Government's 2010-15 spending review. However there is an expectation from the funding providers that the force will make significant efficiency savings despite the anticipated expansion of the railway network and the associated increase in demand for policing services.

1.3.   This inspection has examined, on behalf of the public, how well forces are continuing to carry out their main role of preventing crime and anti-social behaviour, including how they investigate crimes and bring offenders to justice. It also examined how well forces are freeing up time so that staff can focus on these primary policing functions.

1.4.   There are some very clear links and overlapping areas across these three areas of policing. Preventing crimes and incidents from occurring not only improves the service to victims but also reduces demand on police resources. How well the police are able to respond to calls for service from the public will influence the likelihood of detecting the crime and preventing repeat incidents from occurring. Freeing up police time means that the police can respond to calls from the public in a better way, improve the quality of service when they attend incidents and gives them more time to prevent crime.

1.5.   In carrying out this work, HMIC collected data and reviewed a number of documents from each force before making a four-day visit to every force. We interviewed members of staff, including senior leaders and front-line staff, as well as examining a sample of cases. In addition, HMIC commissioned an independent survey and also worked with focus groups to assess the public's views on their expectations in relation to Home Office police forces

attendance to crimes and incidents. Further information is available as an appendix to the thematic report. [1]

1.6.   The broad scope of this inspection examines many of the principal roles and responsibilities of the police. The national thematic report makes a number of recommendations for the service. Each individual force reports also make recommendations for the force and the locally elected policing body to address.

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[1] Core Business An inspection into crime prevention, police attendance and the use of police time, HMIC, 2014, www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmic.

How good is the force at preventing crime and anti-social behaviour?

2.1.   Preventing crime is not an easy task, but it should be at the heart of what the police do. Rather than reacting to reports of crimes, the police should be predicting proactively when and where crimes are most likely to occur and be taking action to prevent them happening. This style of policing requires efficient analysis of information and intelligence to identify trends and increases in crime, with early action taken to deter, disrupt or prevent further offences being committed. Preventing crime includes educating potential victims of the risks and making the crime more difficult to commit, either through greater security or the increased likelihood of being caught. Investigating crimes and bringing the offenders swiftly to justice so that they cannot commit further offences is also preventive policing.[2]

2.2.   During this inspection, HMIC looked for evidence that forces have plans in place to prevent crime and that those plans translate into action by their officers and staff. We looked for evidence that the force is examining information to predict where crimes and anti-social behaviour are likely to occur and taking clear preventive action.

2.3.   We have looked at how well forces manage regular, anticipated crime problems, such as theft of property from people in crowded places, as well as how they respond to unpredicted increases. The inspection has looked for clear structures at force and local levels to manage and measure preventive activity and how good practice is identified and shared. We looked at the investigative process, to make sure that offenders are brought to justice and also how well the force identifies and monitors those people they want to arrest or interview. In addition, we looked for evidence that staff clearly understood their role in preventing crime and that opportunities to educate victims and communities were not missed.

Planning and the way decisions are made

2.4.   Governance is provided by the British Transport Police Authority (BTPA) as the force does not have an elected Police and Crime Commissioner. Although constitutionally different, the role and responsibilities of this local policing body are broadly similar to the role of the Police and Crime Commissioners.   The

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[2] HMIC acknowledges the significant contribution that other organisations can make in preventing crime, however, for the purpose of this inspection HMIC has focused exclusively on the police contribution.

BTPA have set the following strategic objectives for the 2013-19 policing plan:

- keep the transport system running through a 20% reduction in lost minutes due to police related incidents;

- maintain a safe and secure railway through a 20% reduction in crime;

- promote confidence in the use of the railway by increasing passenger confidence by 10%; and

- deliver value for money by achieving these outcome within the current mid-term financial plan.

2.5.   There is a strong commitment by Chief Officers and the BTPA to prioritise prevention, which is reflected in the Policing Plan and demonstrated in their operational activities.

2.6.   There is an effective governance structure in place to oversee force performance. The Service Excellence Board, chaired by the deputy chief constable, has a broad view of force performance including analysis of the call volumes and service delivery of the call handling centres, and the levels and timeliness of police attendance at crime and incident scenes. The information presented at this meeting is collated and the outcomes, along with any commentary or observations are reported to the Police Authority on a quarterly basis.

Plans to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour

2.7.   In this inspection, HMIC looked to see if forces are able to develop plans to recognise and prevent regular, predictable increases in crime or anti-social behaviour. Such plans might include preparing for increases in crime targeted at students at the beginning of term, or anticipated increases in disorder in some towns and cities, for example, around Halloween.

2.8.   The force has had significant success in reducing crime, with recorded crime falling by 11% since 2010/11 and achieved a sanction detection rate of 28.3%. Most notably as the national leads for combating conductive metal thefts, they have reduced cable theft by 72% over the last two years.

2.9.   As part of the force restructuring programme the force has retained its level of specialist crime prevention resources and is developing a more consistent approach to the services they provide by passing line management responsibilities to an inspector at headquarters.

2.10. Dedicated architectural liaison officers are involved in the delivery of the national 'Secure by Design' (SBD) programme. This is a national police initiative to guide and encourage those involved in the design and building of new developments to consider crime prevention measures as part of the construction plan.

2.11. The force employs dedicated Counter Terrorism Security Advisors (CTSAs) to provide specialist advice and guidance in the field of counter-terrorism; and general crime prevention advisors (CPAs) who are available to work with police teams across the organisation.

2.12. However, operational staff that we spoke with were unable to explain how crime prevention specialists fitted into the new policing model, or how they could access their services when needed. Those officers that had used CPAs, for advice on target hardening and physical crime prevention measures, were complimentary about the service and recognised the benefits of their involvement in reducing the risk of repeat victims and locations.

2.13. The force makes funding available for crime prevention activities and initiatives from internal budgets or when necessary via the rail industry, Department for Transport (DfT) and charitable organisations. Access to this funding is routed through the tasking processes which are chaired by an Assistant Chief Constable or the Head of Crime.

Responding to unexpected increases in crime and anti-social behaviour

2.14. All forces in England and Wales have a broadly similar system to target the less easily anticipated short-term increases in crime. A structure is in place, at both force and local area level, to identify emerging problems and task resources to undertake particular activity; such as analysing the problem, proactively gathering further intelligence or directing resources to education, disruption or enforcement activity. This is known in forces as the Tasking and Coordinating (T & C) process. Daily Management Meetings are held on a daily basis allowing the force and each local policing area to react to new information, with a fortnightly meeting held to plan and direct force-level resources to those issues that impact most on force priorities.

2.15. The BTP daily management meetings were found to be effective at driving activity to prevent crime. This was most noticeable in the co-ordination of activities for travelling football supporters and the delivery of a predictive patrol plan which has been designed in the London area.

2.16. Operational police officers have access to a combination of daily intelligence products which are supported by a well-organised and directed tasking approach to the daily management meetings. HMIC were told how the briefing material had improved considerably but could benefit from the inclusion of information from neighbouring forces at a local level. The force has recently introduced a 24 hour intelligence team to work alongside the control rooms and provide timely information to officers attending and managing incidents.

2.17. Intelligence sharing ahead of large scale public events and the deployment of resources to prevent crime at potentially troublesome locations was excellent. This was especially prevalent in the management of multiple sporting events where fan movement is tracked and managed on a risk basis.

2.18. The force responds positively to ASB calls and has developed effective partnership arrangements with railway industry staff. This relationship has been enhanced through the development of response hubs at a number of mainline stations where rail staff and the police manage incidents together in accordance with local service level agreements. In some areas, additional funding is provided to the BTP by the train operating companies through a provision called Enhanced Police Service Agreement (EPSA). These arrangements attract additional policing activities which may include interventions to avoid fare dodging or assist rail staff with joint revenue enforcement operations. This provides additional levels of visibility for policing which reduces criminal opportunity.

2.19. The force has introduced a social media 'pod' within the first contact centre and established provisions for text and email reporting of incidents. With over 5000 reports in the last 6 months this is a developing method to access to services which is welcomed by staff and the public. It offers a discrete contact option where passengers can notify the police of emerging problems or crimes in action to enable a timely policing intervention.

Neighbourhood preventive policing - problem solving

2.20. The development of the neighbourhood policing model for the police service in England and Wales in the 1990s introduced a problem-solving ethos: to identify the root cause of a problem, and address the issues quickly to prevent further problems or crimes. This was primarily a community policing tool, aimed at neighbourhood teams, to manage issues that were raised by the public. Most forces adopted the 'SARA' (scan, analyse, response and assessment) problem-solving approach. To support this approach officers and staff based in neighbourhoods received problem-solving training and each force was encouraged to develop a database on which to record its problems, activity and results.

2.21. HMIC found that officers in the BTP were able to articulate a clear understanding of preventative policing. There were a number of areas where the force activity had a greater emphasis on prevention, specifically: counter terrorism; theft of passenger property; violent crime related to sporting events; and metal theft.

2.22. The force is also the national lead for dealing with mental health issues and has developed a comprehensive suicide reduction plan (Operation Avert) which is supported by a multi-agency approach to early interventions and triage at street level.

2.23. The force has established dedicated resources to deal with specific crime problems and those teams are held accountable for reducing crime levels in those areas. The reduction in cable theft offences is an outstanding example of how the force has used these dedicated resources and a structured approach to problem solving to achieve a 72% reduction over the past two years.

2.24. The PCSOs and Rail Community Officers (RCOs) that we spoke to were well informed and felt empowered to solve problems, spending over 80% of their time patrolling and being visible to the public. They also felt that the powers they have are appropriate to fulfil their roles

2.25. The force intelligence bureau (FIB) is building an appetite for developing predictive policing, and has developed a small number of products for the force's priority crime areas. For example, Operation Wiggins which was designed to reduce cycle thefts and Operation Magnum which focuses on reducing the theft of passenger property.

2.26. Within the BTP there is a strong ethos of partnership working which is driven by well established links with the train operating companies. However, these companies are independent corporate bodies and as such are not subject to the legal responsibilities of statutory organisations, such as local authorities, the fire service and the police. These agencies are required, in law, under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, to demonstrate that they are work together and contributing resources to reduce crime.

2.27. Despite the force portraying a proactive approach to crime prevention, we found no evidence on incident or investigations logs, including those that were unattended, of crime prevention advice being offered to victims and there was no policy requirement to record it.

2.28. The force should examine the control room decisions of non-attended crimes to ensure that opportunities to prevent further crimes through preventative action or advice are not lost.

2.29. The force has a clear corporate problem solving process which is supported by a bespoke recording system. Problem Solving Plans (PSPs) are agreed, designed and actioned locally the neighbourhood teams so there is a potential lack of consistency and prioritisation at divisional and force level. This was compounded by the failing IT system which meant that at the time of our inspection staff were having to store information locally on paper records. As a consequence, knowledge of local problems and the identification of best practice could not be shared across the organisation during this period and the control room staff had no visibility of local plans or initiatives.

Prevention training

2.30. The force has enhanced the national modular training package on crime prevention for initial recruits, doubling the amount of training which is outlined in the national training programme, but there is currently no plan to improve the knowledge and understanding of officers already in service.

2.31. Specialist staff such as CPAs and CTSAs are well-trained and up-to-date with a broad range of knowledge including the principles of designing out crime in conjunction with local authorities.

What happens when crime and anti-social behaviour occurs?

3.1. The public contacts the police for many different reasons. They report crimes, anti-social behaviour, suspicious incidents of concern for the welfare of others, or sometimes they simply contact the police for advice.

3.2. When a member of the public contacts the police, an incident log is created on the force's system, often known as the command and control system. This is done usually by a member of staff working in the force's control room or call-handling centre. These logs are classified as either:

- crime incidents, where there is information that a recordable crime has been committed; or

- non-crime incidents, which are other issues that the public report to the police, such as anti-social behaviour, lost property or reports of missing persons.

3.3. In most forces these incidents can be identified through sub-categories, such as a crime incident that relates to the burglary of a dwelling.

3.4. The way in which police forces respond to these calls for service from the public has changed, particularly over the last few years. Some forces have a policy to attend all crimes and incidents, while other forces choose to either screen out a particular type of crime, which is then dealt with without police attending, or to assess the crime or incident against specified criteria to determine whether an officer will attend or not. This means that a member of the public can receive a different response from police forces for the same incident, depending upon where they live.

3.5. In 2013/14, there were 185,908 incidents recorded on BTP's command and control system. Of those incidents, 23% (or 43,643) were recorded as being crime related and a further 20% (or 37,651) were reports of anti-social behaviour. The remaining 56%[3] (104,614 incidents) include many different types of incidents, some of which the police believe are the responsibility of others to resolve. Some of these are a concern for the police service in relation to the demands being placed upon it, and are discussed later.

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[3] Due to rounding may not total 100%

Responding to crime and incidents

What the public think

4.1.   Whilst there is clear consultation with the rail operators and the BTPA in monitoring attendance performance and the availability of resources, there was little evidence of public consultation about the timeliness and police deployment to incidents and crimes. Incidents that are recorded as a non-attendance by police are not routinely monitored to ensure that the recording is accurate and that non-attendance was an appropriate response.

What incidents does the force attend?

4.2.   Police attendance to reported crimes is managed differently from force-to-force and, at the time of reporting, may not have been requested by the victim.

4.3.   The BTP was unable to provide HMIC with the number of incidents recorded on its command and control system, where the police attended, for the 12 months to 30 November 2013. This was because the attendance information was not recorded as part of the incident closure information on the computer system, making retrospective searching more difficult. The force recognises that this is essential management information and is working to improve the capability of its command and control system and to record the incident response in a way that can be easily extracted.

4.4.   In the BTP, police attendance is guided by a graded response policy which is outlined in the Operators Manual for force control room and contact centre (May 2010). This is a well established policy and appears to be generally well understood by staff within the control rooms and contact centres. This manual also provides guidance on the levels of response and initial actions required for specific incident types to give a degree of consistency in the approach of this national police service.

4.5.   The timeliness of the police attendance is determined by the call takers, who prioritise the incidents in accordance with the graded response policy. The policy sets out 4 levels of response: immediate (arrival within 20 minutes); priority (arrival within 60 minutes); scheduled (attended within 48 hours) and a resolution without response, which includes telephone advice or referral to another agency. The control room operators are expected to make their assessment based on the circumstances which have been reported.

4.6.   If a member of the public wishes to report a crime or incident on the railway network they can do so via a dedicated non-emergency number (0800

405040), a dedicated text number (61016) or chose BTP from the 101 interactive voice recognition (IVR) option.

4.7. The force is not part of the national emergency 999 system or the police 101 national non-emergency programme as a primary routed option: calls received by local police force are transferred to the BTP national call centre or one of two control rooms based in London and Birmingham. As forces across England, Wales and Scotland use different command and control computer systems, the ability to electronically transfer reported incident, from one system to another, was only available within 9 of the 44 police forces.

4.8. If the call is an emergency, the force receiving the call may deploy its own resources, but this is not always the case. Therefore any delay in the BTP receiving the information may hinder the responsiveness of police action and delay the arrival of resources to the scene.

4.9. Once the details of the incident have been recorded and the level of police response selected, the incident is passed electronically to the control room, staff allocate and deploy resources to deal with the enquiry.

4.10. The technology systems within the control room assist operators to identify the most appropriate resource to respond to a specific incident.

4.11. The force has invested in an Automatic Resource Location Systems (ARLS) and a mapping system which shows the position and availability of officers across the network. This system has been recently improved by adding several overlaying information systems, including the positioning of all railway emergency access points. This greatly assists the timeliness of the response to emergency calls as control room staff can now see and direct officers to the scene via the quickest access route. Performance against all response grades is excellent with 93% compliance for immediate and 99% for priority responses during the year to December 2013.

4.12. The inspection found that the full benefits of the technology are being undermined due to a reliance on officers to use their Airwave radios, (which utilise GPS positioning software) to book on and off. Compliance by officers using their Airwave radios to provide status updates on commitments would assist in reflecting their availability and inform the deployment picture.

4.13. The ARLS system is most effective in the London area where there are 9 clearly defined patrol sectors each with designated response resources. It is less effective in other areas, where police resources tend to be grouped together around major stations and transportation hubs. The force needs to ensure that it uses its knowledge and understanding of demand to better inform patrol plans in areas outside of London.

4.14. Control room operators receive training to help them to assess threat, harm and risk, as well as identifying vulnerability. Staff are also trained and encouraged to apply the national decision-making model (NDMM) to situations when it is not entirely clear whether to send an officer or not or in determining the speed of response. New staff undergo a comprehensive learning and development curriculum, which has been internally developed by the force. The modules within this are closely linked to the National Contact Management Learning programme which has been designed by the college of policing.

4.15. Control room staff are encouraged to 'task not ask' by directing specific resources to incidents rather than asking if anyone is available to go. This should ensure that the closest, available and suitably-trained resource provides a swift response to the incident. We found that control room staff and patrol officers are aware of the 'task not ask' principle and the purpose behind the force's approach to directing the right resource to the incident. A range of specialist resources support the response patrols and local neighbourhood teams to deal with predictable demand and unexpected critical incidents.

4.16. Irrespective of their specialism the force expects all officers firstly to be general patrol officers unless their skills are needed for a particular purpose or incident. We found most specialist teams were committed to this policy including firearms officers, specialist crime teams and dog handlers.

4.17. As part of the inspection we examined 100 such incidents and found several examples whereby incidents had been resolved by officers from other forces or where officers reported an incident from the scene that was recorded as a 'non-police attendance'. This suggests that that there is a significant level of under-recording of police attendance for calls for service.

4.18. The main examples of non-attendance were reports of damage to vehicles, which had been parked for a long time on railway station car parks also where the incident had been reported to the local police force and officers from that force had attended and dealt with the issue. Although recorded as non attendance by police, many of these incidents showed consideration for any investigative opportunities and potential solvability through a referral to the scenes of crime officer, or a request to for the station staff to check the CCTV footage.

Identifying vulnerable and repeat victims

4.19. It is important for forces to be able to identify, at the point of initial contact, whether a caller or victim is vulnerable, either as an individual or as part of a vulnerable community. This is particularly important for forces because the nature and extent of a person's vulnerability should determine the skills and knowledge necessary to deal effectively with any given situation..

4.20. Repeat and vulnerable victims are identified through a questionnaire on the NSPIS command and control system and a flagging process on the crime recording system.

4.21. The force carries out regular audits in accordance with National Standards for Incident Recording (NSIR). Control room supervisors are required to conduct weekly reviews to check that appropriate questions have been asked by call takers to identify vulnerable and repeat callers. The NSPIS system assists, in part, with the identification of repeat callers as the system automatically identifies telephone numbers and addresses which have been previously inputted. The system does not however automatically identify repeat callers by name. All staff that we spoke to within the control room understood the definition of a repeat victim as someone who has reported crime or anti-social behaviour more than once in the last 12 months.

4.22. Whilst the force contact centre, through questioning attempt to identify repeat and vulnerable victims, there was limited evidence to show that police response to such victims was any different. Operational officers that we spoke too believed that they would not ordinarily be informed if a person they were dealing with was a repeat or vulnerable victim. Furthermore, information searches conducted within the Crime Management Unit (CMU), when reviewing recorded crimes, are limited to BTP internal systems. This creates a risk of potentially valuable information from other forces being missed. The transient population of rail passengers and the lack of connectivity with other police forces make it difficult to link incidents and identify repeat victims. As a consequence there was little evidence that repeat and vulnerable victims are prioritised or received an enhanced service. This requires improvement.

How incidents are monitored and checked

4.23. Monthly performance reports to chief officers are comprehensive and contain some force level graded response data, details of ASB incidents and the levels of vulnerable and repeat callers.

4.24. The force has also been working with Cambridge University to introduce a 'Directed Patrol Planner,' in the London area, which is monitored through the force's tasking processes and is reviewed as part of the daily management meetings to ensure that the process is adequately resourced.

4.25. Staff in those areas have been briefed regarding the hot spots within the patrol plan and are required to patrol these areas at specified times. For review purposes, officers update the plan with information including how long they spend patrolling these areas and what activities they have been involved in during that time. This process will enable the force to better understand the impact of the pilot in terms of crime reduction. Early indications are that this intelligent use of visible resources is having a positive effect and is preventing and reducing levels of crime.

How does the force investigate crimes?

5.1.   The force utilises a crime investigation process that is based on solvability and the mitigation of risk and harm. Whilst the force does not attend the scene of all reported crime, we found no evidence to suggest that investigative opportunities were being missed through demand filtering or screening processes.

5.2.   Crime is recorded by telephone in a national crime recording centre based in Cardiff. Staff there record the details and categorise the crime in accordance with the National Crime Recording Standards (NCRS). They are not trained investigators and do not carry out any telephone based enquiries at this stage.

5.3.   The decision to investigate a crime is made later in the process by staff at the Crime Management Units (CMUs) who are empowered to close or direct investigations, where appropriate, based on the threat, risk and potential solvability.

5.4.   Some forces use PCSOs more widely to support investigations, often taking a lead role in responding to issues of anti social behaviour (ASB), theft and minor damage offences. In the BTP we were pleased to find that this was not the case. There was no evidence to indicate that PCSOs were being inappropriately used to investigate crime or carry out other duties which distracted them from their core role.

5.5.   We found evidence that trained and skilled resources are being allocated appropriate enquires.

5.6.   The force would benefit from a review of the standard operating procedures for crime investigation and management following the reorganisation and amalgamation of CMU's. This would ensure that preventative measures are considered as part of all crime enquiries. We found that the force uses a 9 point standard investigation plan for crime enquiries, but the records showed a poor compliance with these specific points. We found that officers were able to bypass this section of the system without completing it. As a consequence, the crime prevention opportunities were not being recorded or actioned. This would be improved by mandating the fields within the crime system.

5.7.   We found some evidence that sergeants monitor their officers' investigations, tracking timeliness and offering guidance where appropriate.

5.8. There is a disconnection between the BTP crime investigations into the theft of passenger property and the train operating companies handling of lost property. The police do not have access to the industry's lost property systems which means that property may not be reunited with its owner who may have reported it stolen.

5.9. We saw examples of how local officers were developing "work around" solutions but these were often time consuming and laborious. For example, in Manchester we saw how lost property lists were faxed to the neighbourhood team who were allocating an officer to compare the items against recent crime reports. In London we also found that a detective was spending a whole day each week visiting the lost property stores to carry out similar enquires. The force needs to recognise these inefficient processes and work with its partners to develop more sustainable automated processes to free up officer time.

Bringing offenders swiftly to justice

5.10. Police forces, and important partners such as local authorities and the National Offender Management Service, use a nationally recognised structure to manage their most prolific offenders. This is known as the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) structure.

5.11. This framework allows the police and other local organisations to work together:

- to ensure that the offenders whose crimes cause most damage and harm to communities are managed in a co-ordinated way;

- to resettle them as they are released from prison, to pursue opportunities to deter them from getting back into a life of crime; and

- to catch and convict them where it is evident that they have returned to criminal behaviour.

5.12. The force informed HMIC that it does not have an Integrated Offender Management (IOM) programme or an intervention plan due to the nature of the policing environment and the absence of a residential population.

5.13. Despite not having a formalised IOM programme, the intelligence units were assisting home office forces by tracking and analysing the travel habits of prolific offenders across the railway network. These however are inconsistent and usually only actioned by request. Some patrol officers explained how they were tasked to carry out activities relating to specific individuals of interest, but that these activities are not co-ordinated by a structured intervention approach.

5.14.   The majority of officers were aware of certain 'regulars' in their policing areas who they knew due to direct contact or having seen their photograph at the stations. This suggests that the force is not managing the risk from known repeat offenders.

5.15.   There is some corporate recognition of this and as part of the restructuring programme, a Superintendent has been appointed to introduce and lead an offender management programme. This is seen as a positive preventative measure.

5.16.   Every police force needs a systematic way to bring offenders swiftly to justice. This will include those people who are named as a suspect for a crime but have not yet been arrested or interviewed, as well as those who have failed to answer their police or court bail. As part of this inspection we asked forces to identify the number of people who they wanted to arrest or interview that the force had recorded as outstanding on 30 November 2013.

5.17.   The data provided by British Transport police indicates that the number of outstanding people for all crimes recorded in the 12 months to 30 November 2013 was as follows:

Open investigations on unsolved crimes with a named suspect not on police bail	50
Outstanding "failed to appear" on police bail to a police station	117
Outstanding court warrants	1564
Listed as "wanted" on the police national computer by British Transport Police	655

5.18.   During the inspection HMIC examined a small number of cases where there was a named outstanding offender who has been circulated as wanted on the Police National Computer (PNC) and found the investigations had been closed on the system. This meant that the managers were unable to view or track what activity had been undertaken to trace wanted persons as it no longer features on the officer's workload.

5.19. The PNC Bureau monitors the periods in which such people are shown as wanted by the force and they request periodic reviews from the officers in the case or their supervisor. However these reviews are to justify the need for the wanted marker to remain, not to challenge what activity has been done to locate the offender.

How is the force freeing up time to focus on core policing?

6.1.   In these continuing austere times, in order to make accurate decisions about how to provide efficient and effective policing, it is imperative that forces fully understand the demands placed upon them. This inspection examined the extent to which forces fully understand the demands placed upon them; publicly reported demand and routine process activity, as well as proactive policing.

Understanding demand and use of resources

6.2.   The BTP provides a national policing service to the railway infrastructure, with responsibilities extending across Scotland, Wales and England including the London Underground system. The railway hosts over 6 million passengers and moves 400 000 tonnes of freight per day across a rail network which includes 2804 stations.

6.3.   Since 2008, passenger numbers have increased by almost 50%, with further increases of 16% predicted by 2019. In response, the force has identified efficiency savings of £16.8m through an organisational restructuring programme, which equates to 6% of the annual budget between 2011 and 2015.

6.4.   The force, in part, understands the demand for its services through a range of activity monitoring processes that it has completed both internally as part of the restructuring programme and externally through work with Cambridge University, and have allocated resources accordingly.

6.5.   The change programme provided an examination of the work of all police functions and included a comprehensive look at the working week of all staff across the organisation.

6.6.   As a result, the force introduced a new operating model, designed to better match resources to demand and in doing so, align the three divisional areas and eight sub divisions to the boundaries of the main train operating companies to enhance partnership working. Savings from this process have enabled the creation of 208 additional police officer posts for deployment in key locations.

6.7.   The development of response hubs in the London area also highlights a clear commitment to better match resources with demand. The new policing model has been complimented by a more flexible shift system for officers which has the late shift being extended to finish at 0300 to better meet demand.

Understanding front-line performance and workload

6.8.   Performance and workload data is captured through automated systems and is readily available to supervisors and managers through the 'points' system. Yet HMIC found that qualitative information on individual and team productivity is scarcely used. There was limited evidence that officer workload was being tracked and monitored to ensure that resource allocation is based on demand and capacity. The average workload of officers from different operational departments is not compared. This will make the continual assessment of matching resource against demand difficult and may result in some areas to be over burdened or conversely under-utilised.

6.9.   Although the directed patrol plan in London (Operation Beck) is based on analysis which put police officers in the right place at the right time, there is limited evidence that the effectiveness of this directed activity is assessed.

6.10.   A measurement of the productivity of all staff activity should be developed across the entire range of functions to improve service delivery and help identify opportunities to free-up time.

Freeing up time – non-police tasks

6.11.   The force has undertaken preliminary work to analyse demand in order to identify tasks that could be better carried out by another service. At the time of inspection, HMIC were made aware that work was being undertaken to examine the issue of functions regarded as non-police tasks.

Organisational change to free up time, including IT and digitisation of criminal justice files

6.12.   The railway network has an extensive CCTV coverage which in London is monitored by a centralised CCTV Hub (Alpha –Victor). Operators there have developed effective systems to help the police by reducing officer time in managing CCTV evidence for crime investigations. On request CCTV images are seized and the evidence capture recorded in a useable format, this then is accompanied by a statement of evidence. This process is completed without any police involvement and the product is then passed to the police.

6.13.   The force has a risk based decision making process for dealing with fatalities on the rail network and for the management of suspicious packages across the railway estate. The main drive behind this is has been a number of factors: increased understanding of the cost and disruption caused by railway or station closures; increasing number of incidents involving vulnerable people; and the continuing potential for criminals to to target the railway network and passengers. Using this approach has enabled the force to reduce the

average number of minutes for dealing with unexpected deaths from 113 to 76. This represents not only a significant benefit in terms of officer time but also for the efficiency of the network.

6.14. Similarly the force has invested in developing the knowledge of general patrol officers and specialist police search advisors when dealing with suspicious packages to avoid unnecessary closures.

6.15. The chief officers and the BTPA have expressed a firm commitment to improve the IT infrastructure and provide an integrated technology system to support operational officers and reduce wasted effort through bureaucratic processes. The five year technology plan to achieve this has recently been reviewed and additional capital funding provided to accelerate the delivery time to two years.

6.16. Although the force expressed a clear commitment to build technology systems which maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of police operations, the current IT infrastructure is poor and has lacked development during the last two years.

6.17. Primary systems such as the crime recording system, the command and control system and the duty management system are not connected or interfaced which leads to significant wasted time through making multiple entries of the same information.

6.18. The force is working collaboratively with Cambridgeshire with a view of adopting their already developed integrated crime, custody and case management systems.

6.19. HMIC welcomed the decision to accelerate this programme as existing IT provisions are not joined up and lack functionality.

6.20. There were some concerns that the force needs to do more to place the needs of the frontline practitioner at the heart of these developments. The continued use of focus groups and other means of consultation will be key in ensuring that developments compliment corporate needs and the end users requirements.

6.21. We heard several examples of where officers were frustrated by duplication of effort or slow laborious processes. For example when dealing with a person who is believed to be suffering from mental illness officers are required to complete four different forms containing similar information. This includes a Form 434, a force intelligence report, a suicide prevention plan and a risk assessment from the command and control system.

6.22. HMIC is also aware that the force is discussing the electronic case management system with its supplier. This facility is important because the current practice requires operational officers to construct paper court files and photocopy each page three times before posting the completed files to the FMU at Birmingham.

6.23. When asked, officers were generally unable to give an example of recent changes to processes which had freed up officers time.

6.24. The force restructuring has generated savings and made efficiencies, however HMIC could not identify if the full range of business benefits had been comprehensively captured. Whilst some benefits were seen through cashable savings, opportunities to reduce bureaucracy or free up police time had not been fully quantified.

6.25. As a consequence, the force cannot accurately identify the amount of time freed-up by its structural and workforce changes. Future efficiency plans need to extend across a broader range of functions and should include a specific and measurable focus to freeing-up police time and improve the productivity of officers on the street.

Mobile technology to assist front-line officers

6.26. The force has previously invested in a mobile data platform which provided a reasonable level of functionality and access to systems at street level with Email and intelligence in briefer format. These 400 mobile data terminals (MDTs) operating on devices provided by Beat Systems, were allocated to staff in frontline roles. Unfortunately, these devices are widely considered as impractical, with patchy coverage, and usage has fragmented over time to a level where there are very limited operational benefits.

6.27. HMIC found an example in one of the London response teams of only one officer from a team of 34 still using the MDTs as part of their daily duties.

6.28. The force has expressed a real ambition to mobilise, its workforce through a "police station on a tablet" approach which is supported by a location specific briefing and intelligence product. To realise the true benefits of such an investment any future developments must include improved monitoring of the devices, better functionality and an evaluation of time freed up for reinvestment.

Recommendation

HMIC recommends that the force should progress the development of mobile data technology to ensure it makes best use of resources and meets officer needs.

Conclusion

7.1.   The British Transport Police has a strong focus on preventative activity. The governance arrangements are clear and link the strategy to operational activity.

7.2.   The force has some well established longer-term prevention initiatives in place with funding available for future initiatives. The daily management structure provides an opportunity to dynamically respond to unanticipated increases in crime or ASB.

7.3.   Whilst the force has a problem solving database, its effect could be enhanced by: wider use; regular evaluation; and supported by refresher training. Training in crime preevention should be extended from the specialist staff who are well trained to those officers and staff who are regularly in contact with members of the public.

7.4.   The force has an incident response policy that is understood by staff, although there is a need to improve the response to vulnerable or repeat victims.

7.5.   The force has recently reshaped its crime management structure and will need to ensure there is a clear process in place to consistently manage and investigate crime across the organisation.

7.6.   There is a need for the force to develop a clear integrated offender management strategy and a process that works with partners to reduce reoffending.

7.7.   Whilst the force does understand some aspects of the demand for service they face, there is a need to improve how it uses this knowledge and accounts for officer and staff time.

7.8.   The BTP have identified structural changes and processes that have been utilised to meet the financial challenges and are collaborating with Cambridgeshire Police to progress new joint systems such as crime recording and management.

7.9.   The force continues to identify process changes to free up time, which will include the use of practical, functional mobile technology by frontline staff. As this work is undertaken the force should ensure it identifies and measures the savings for reinvestment.

Good practice or innovation

7.10. The force has introduced a social media 'pod' within the first contact centre and established provisions for text and email reporting of incidents. With over 5000 reports in the last 6 months this is an improving method to access to services which is welcomed by staff and the public. It is a way that passengers can use to notify the police of emerging problems or crimes in action to enable a timely policing intervention.