

g E O F F I S E R R Y A S S O C I A T E S

MERSEYSIDE POLICE

INITIAL EVALUATION OF THE PROBLEM
SOLVING APPROACH

May 1999

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Geoff Berry
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MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

The original report outlining the proposed Problem Solving (PS) approach for Merseyside Police recommended that the approach should be evaluated post-implementation, to assess its value and impact. It was agreed that the evaluation should comprise two phases, the first taking place approximately six months after the final operational area "went live", the second some six months after the implementation of PS across the whole of the organisation. This report details the findings of the first phase of the evaluation.

While it is impossible to prove that PS has caused a particular change, by utilising a diverse range of data from a number of sources, the evaluation compiles a "basket of measures", which, taken together, might indicate the impact of the PS approach adopted by Merseyside Police. It is noted, however, that it is still very early in the life of PS and that possible impacts are only just beginning to emerge. The second stage evaluation will seek to verify (or refute) these findings.

In relation to recorded incidents, while it is difficult to arrive at an accurate total incident figure, there does appear to have been a reduction in recorded incidents of disorder since the implementation of PS (down 6% on the year to March 1999). Incidents of juvenile disorder, however, have risen over the same period.

As for the impact of PS on crime, it would appear that early signs of some effect might be emerging, specifically in relation to crimes of violence, vehicle related crime and certain types of damage. It is recognised however, that levels of recorded crime can be affected by many factors and that the precise impact of PS in generating these reductions is almost impossible to assess. There is some evidence that the implementation of PS, particularly the establishment of EMU's has had a negative effect on detection rates, though they seem to have recovered as PS has become established.

After early suspicion it appears that PS is being increasingly accepted as a valid approach by both the public and members of the Force. Failure to market the approach properly, early in the implementation process adversely affected the credibility of the Force and the PS approach, but it appears that the public now accept the approach as a more effective way of working, once it is explained to them.

There is much anecdotal evidence which suggests that operational officers view the IMU in particular as a major aid to managing demands on their time, more effectively. This is reinforced by data, which suggests that since the implementation of PS, there has been a 12% reduction in deployment of officers, with a 25% reduction in deployments to minor disorders. PS also seems to be generating an increased sense of professionalism and pride in providing a better quality service, particularly in relation to IMU staff. It is also clear that PS is facilitating more effective multi-agency working.

The level of understanding of the principles of PS is impressive. The extent to which PS is embedded into officer's routine ways of working is, however, less clear. While PS has been "lifted off" in the Force, it seems that many officers still have to make the "leap of faith" and commit fully to the approach.

Since the implementation of PS, there appears to have been a significant reduction in the number of non-urgent calls received by the DCCs, with an associated increase in the quality of service provided, as perceived by the public. Early indications from the IMU's also suggest a very high level of public satisfaction with the quality of service provided. Apart from isolated problems with a high proportion of incoming calls remaining unanswered (now addressed), call handling performance in the IMU's has been impressive. Issues have been identified, however, with respect to the validity of the data used in calculating one of the Pis relating to IMU performance, which must be resolved speedily.

A simple activity sample exercise has identified a significant shift from the time officers are deployed to general patrol time, since the inception of PS. In addition, following the adoption of PS officers appear to be spending an average of an hour per shift longer out of the police station, than they were prior to PS.

As with any fundamental change in methods of working, the approach is taking some time to bed down. Essentially though, the implementation process has run relatively smoothly, especially considering the complexity of the project, and for this the implementation team deserve much credit. There are, however, a number of organisational issues that need to be addressed if problem solving is to continue to develop in the Force. A number of recommendations are put forward in relation to these issues, which centre around the following broad areas:

- *Structures:* The staffing of IMUs; the integration of functions in the IMU; geographical (or sector) based policing; the role of the Tasking and Co-ordinating Group; the role of the analyst and the future of joint IMU's.
- *Systems and processes:* The role of supervisory officers in PS; the efficacy of the SARA and PAT models; the collection of intelligence; the relationship between the IMU and the DCC/switchboard; PS and the planning process; the role of the local authority liaison officers and the measurement of IMU performance.
- *Training:* Generally perceived to be relevant and of a very high quality a number of issues have emerged around the staffing of the training; the training of supervisory officers; nominations for training; future training needs and the management of the training programme.
- *Information Technology:* The need to press ahead with the Force wide network and the management information system.
- *Human resources:* The need to incorporate PS into the performance review process; PS and career development and succession planning of key roles under PS.
- *Other issues:* PS and performance indicators; the need for co-ordination of PS after implementation is complete and senior officer commitment.

Overall the Force should be greatly encouraged by the early findings of this evaluation. PS does seem to be starting to have an impact on some crime and incident types, workloads and working patterns such that, already, the public of Merseyside is beginning to perceive a better quality of service from their police Force. The second stage evaluation at the end of this year will explore the extent to which the impact has been sustained and whether or not the organisational issues, some of which are pressing, have been addressed.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Work should proceed as soon as possible on the production of the 16-hour work based training package. This package should be "rolled-out" across the Force as soon as practicable, once developed. (Section 3.3.2)
2. Steps should be taken as soon as possible to establish means by which PS successes can be publicised both within and outside the Force. This will support the marketing of the approach and increase its' level of acceptance as an effective method of working. (Section 3.3.2)
3. The implementation team and representatives of MIA should meet as soon as possible to agree the basis for collecting data in relation to the speed of response PI. (Section 3.4.2)
4. Staffing of the IMU's must be maintained at a level, which allows them to provide their complete range of services to the required quality. Vacant IMU posts should be filled as far as possible. In addition, every effort should be made to fill IMU posts with suitably qualified and experienced officers. (Section 4.1.1)
5. Chief officers should explore the integration of functions within the IMU during area visits to ensure that it is taking place. Force co-ordinators should also consider this issue during their reviews. (Section 4.1.2)
6. All intelligence officers should attend a day's seminar to explore issues surrounding their integration into the IMU structure and how these issues can be addressed. (Section 4.1.2)
7. The Tasking and Co-ordinating Group should be led by the Chief Inspector (Operations) and meet on an agreed regular basis (at least monthly). (Section 4.1.4)
8. The Tasking and Co-ordinating Group must ensure that rigorous processes are in place to manage the progress of problems and refuse to accept "no progress" reports unless there is a valid reason. (Section 4.1.4)
9. IMU supervisors should take all possible steps to manage analysts workload and attempt to create enough time for them to carry out analysis work. As a rule of thumb, it is suggested that analysts should spend at least half of their time analysing data. (Section 4.1.5)
10. The role and responsibilities of analysts should be clearly defined, agreed and communicated to all areas. These should reflect the central role of analysis. (Section 4.1.5)

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11. A training needs analysis should be carried out to identify current skills levels of analysts, the skills which they should have in order to carry out their job successfully and an outline of training that needs to be provided to fill any skills gaps. Steps should then be taken to provide necessary training as soon as practicable. (Section 4.1.5)
12. No decision about the future of Lower Lane IMU should be taken until the recent changes have been given an appropriate opportunity to have an impact. A further review of the performance of the IMU should be carried out in July, and decisions about its' future taken based on that review. (Section 4.1.6)
13. No other IMU's should be allowed to merge until the review of Lower lane IMU in July, has been completed. (Section 4.1.6)
14. The implementation team and IMU supervisors should work together to develop an agreed and acceptable methodology to enable effective assessment of problems to take place. (Section 4.2.2)
15. All IMU's should work towards the preparation of SARA and intelligence packages using the SARA format. This will help to reduce confusion and increase standardisation of approach. (Section 4.2.2)
16. Processes should be established to ensure that all IMU staff are kept up to date regarding the progress of SARAs in the area. (Section 4.2.2)
17. The role of the intelligence inputter and intelligence officer should be reviewed with a view to encouraging more high quality officers to carry out the role. (Section 4.2.3)
18. Intelligence staff and call handlers should spend a period of time with each other (perhaps a day), so that each can understand the others requirements. They should develop mutually agreed means by which intelligence can be gathered by call handlers and fed to intelligence officers. (Section 4.2.3)
19. Area management teams should consider IMU performance on a monthly basis to ensure that the IMU is operating as effectively as possible. (Section 4.2.7)
20. Decisions must be made promptly regarding the adoption of a three-hour training package for civilian support staff and the most effective means of delivery. (Section 4.3.1)
21. Steps should be taken to re-package and re-commence the supervisory officers training as soon as practicable. The package must make clear what is and what is not included and what is expected of those attending. (Section 4.3.2)
22. The number of operational officers, territorial and non-territorial, still to receive their basic problem solving training programme should be identified as soon as possible. Dependent upon the numbers identified, steps should be put in place to provide this training as soon as practicable. (Section 4.3.3)

23. The implementation team should liaise with MDT as soon as practicable to explore not only the development of the 16-hour work based training package (recommendation 1), but also the means of managing and co-ordinating its' adoption, effectively. (Section 4.3.4)
24. Consideration should be given to the incorporation of some problem solving input into the induction package for civilian support staff joining Merseyside Police. (Section 4.3.4)
25. Consideration should be given to the feasibility of delivering future training using local area facilities. (Section 4.3.4)
26. External trainers used to support problem solving training should be carefully selected, well briefed and tightly managed to ensure that they deliver the material to a satisfactory standard. (Section 4.3.5)
27. The implementation team and representatives of the HR department should explore means by which the IMU can be used to create and support career development opportunities. (Section 4.5.2)
28. The HR department should develop processes to ensure effective and seamless succession planning for IMU supervisors and local authority liaison officers (Chief Inspector posts). (Section 4.5.3)
29. The implementation team should meet with representatives of MIA to revisit the issue of Pis to ensure that they reflect problem solving and encourage members of the Force to work in an effective problem solving way. (Section 4.6.1)
30. Active consideration should be given to the establishment of an internal problem solving consultancy unit to co-ordinate and manage the continued development of problem solving in the Force, following the completion of the implementation process. (Section 4.6.2)
31. Efforts should be made to heighten the visibility of chief officer's commitment to problem solving. To facilitate this, it is suggested that consideration should be given to how a problem solving approach can be incorporated into the operation of Force Strategy Group meetings. In addition, policy documents should incorporate a SARA format as far as is possible and chief officer visits must probe the extent to which problem solving is being adopted in the area/department visited. (Section 4.6.3)
32. Consideration should be given to repeating area command team workshops to ensure that local problems in the operation of problem solving (if any) can be identified and solutions explored.(Section 4.6.3)

1. BACKGROUND

The original report outlining the proposed Problem Solving (PS) approach for Merseyside Police recommended that the approach should be evaluated post-implementation to assess its value and impact. During the implementation process, it was agreed that the evaluation should focus on two core areas, namely:

- The impact that the approach has had on Force performance.
- The relevance and effectiveness of structures and processes established to support the operation of PS.

It is suggested that a third area, although implicit in the above two areas, emerged in its own right during the year. With the advent of the need to demonstrate "Best Value", it was felt that the evaluation should also attempt to identify how the PS approach represents value for money.

Due to the complexity of adopting such a fundamental shift in organisational philosophy, the implementation process has been relatively lengthy. The need for prompt evaluation is also recognised, however, in order that early changes can be made to the approach where appropriate. For this reason, it was decided that the evaluation should be split into two phases.

The first phase would cover the adoption of PS at an operational level, and would take place approximately six months after the final operational area "went live" with PS. This report outlines the findings of that evaluation. It is noted, however, that the final area did not "go live" until January 1999 due to unavoidable delays caused by the rebuilding of the main police station in the area.

The second phase of the evaluation will take place at the end of 1999, some six months after the intended "live" date for the whole organisation.

It is also noted that an early review of the operation of Incident Management Units (IMUs) took place in December 1998 to identify any issues emerging from their implementation. A number of recommendations were made in that report and they have been re-visited as part of this evaluation.

Finally, knowledge and awareness of the PS approach and the structures and processes to support its' operation, is assumed. It is not, therefore, intended to describe or outline the approach in this report.

This report, therefore, outlines the findings of an evaluation of PS in an operational context, approximately six months after its' implementation in the territorial areas of the Force. A number of recommendations are made which seek to enhance and promote the effective and efficient operation of PS in Merseyside Police.

2. METHODOLOGY

The strength of any evaluation rests on a clear understanding of the objectives of the programme, project or approach which is being evaluated. From the original PS report it is suggested that the aims of PS are:

- To deliver a more effective service at a local level.
- To make best use of available resources
- To use partnerships effectively, where appropriate, to solve problems
- To tackle the causes as well as the symptoms of crime, disorder and community safety problems.
- To engender good community relations
- To provide valued internal support to all staff.

It could be argued, however, that as PS is an underlying philosophy for the force it seeks to facilitate the achievement of all of the objectives for the force. As such, it can be measured by considering the current Pi's and targets for the force.

It is almost impossible, however, to identify exactly what impact PS has had in the achievement of a particular objective or associated target. It is equally problematic to prove that PS has *caused* a particular change in a specific measure or PI. However, by utilising a diverse range of data collected from a number of sources, this evaluation seeks to compile a "basket of measures", which, taken together, might *indicate* the contribution of PS as an approach to the operation of Merseyside Police. The main sources of data for this evaluation are now considered.

2.1 Crime and incident data

The data currently available from the Command and Control and ICJS systems was utilised together with information from the Performance Indicator reports. Changes to the territorial structure of the organisation and to the Home Office counting rules in March and April 1998 respectively have, however, prevented the completion of any meaningful comparisons with the position prior to that time in relation to crime. For these reasons, crime data has primarily been analysed for the period from April 1998 to March 1999.

2.2 Activity Sampling

To assess the impact of PS on deployments a limited activity sampling exercise was carried out in two areas of the force. Officers in St. Helens and Knowsley were requested to note down their activity using a simple seven variable coding system. A period of seven days was chosen for the exercises, one in November for the pre-implementation exercise and one in March for the post-implementation exercise. Each shift was broken down into half-hour periods and officers were requested to enter the relevant code for the predominant activity in each period.

Problems with the value and accuracy of such exercises are well documented. It was felt, however, that keeping the exercise simple would reduce the extra burden on those being asked to take part. As a result, it was hoped that the results would be more valid.

2.3 Officer and staff perceptions

A 5% sample of officers by rank up to and including Inspector and Detective Inspector were surveyed by questionnaire in relation to their perceptions of the impact of PS and the effectiveness of its' operation in practice. The sample was chosen at random by the HR/Personnel department.

It is disappointing to note that only 14% of those issued with a questionnaire responded, though it should also be noted that 35% of Sergeants responded. The response rate of just 9% of PCs is particularly disappointing.

Clearly due to the small numbers of responses it is impossible to disaggregate the survey findings by rank or location. Similarly, the survey is not of a statistically significant size on which to put forward any recommendations. It can, and has, been used, however, to reinforce or confirm views emerging from other parts of the evaluation.

Senior and Chief officer perceptions have also been gathered through an extensive interview process. Most area commanders and chief officers have been interviewed together with other appropriate individuals, including representatives of the Police Federation and the Training Department.

In addition, all IMU supervisors and a cross section of IMU staff have been approached for their views and comments.

2.4 Case Studies

Case studies have been used to offer evidence of the effectiveness of PS in dealing with actual problems. Such cases have been gathered through discussions with officers and support staff, particularly the IMU managers.

2.5 Call handling data

A range of data has been produced by the Radio and Telecommunications Department at Headquarters, which seeks to identify the impact of PS on calls to Merseyside Police.

3. IMPACT OF PROBLEM SOLVING

3.1 Incidents

While there is a wealth of incident data available from the Command and Control system, it is difficult to identify an accurate picture of the total number of incidents in the Force as many incidents are often given a number of incident codes. For example, a burglary in a dwelling, where damage was caused on entry would receive two incident codes for the one incident. As a result, under the current system one incident may be counted twice or even three times, which will clearly skew the data.

For this reason, pure total incident figures have been discounted from the analysis. However, it is possible to ascertain trends in total incident traffic by looking at a number of other indicators. Clearly the crime data outlined in section 3.2 suggest trends in relation to crime related incidents. The majority of other incidents are likely to fall into the broad category of disorder. Therefore, by looking at incidents of disorder and the levels of crime it is possible to develop a broad understanding of the underlying trends in the Force, prior to and after the implementation of PS.

3.1.1 Incidents of Disorder

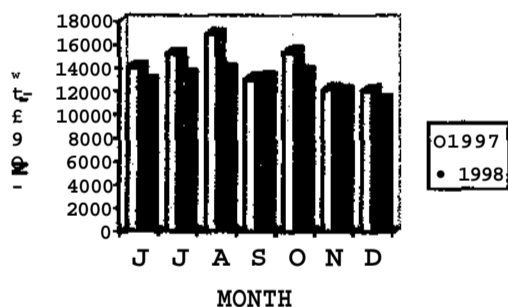


Figure 3.1: Disorder incidents, June to December 1997 and 1998.

Figure 3.1 clearly shows that in the period June to December 1998, the number of disorder incidents was lower in every month than in the corresponding period in 1997. From a PS perspective this would appear to be encouraging as the first area went live with PS in June 1998. An even more encouraging picture is painted when the overall trend for such incidents over the last twelve months, is plotted.

Figure 3.2 below shows that the general trend in disorder incidents has been downwards over the last twelve months, but that this trend has become more pronounced during the later part of 1998. Indeed in the twelve months to March 1999, there has been a 6% reduction in such incidents compared to the same period in 1997, which translates to 10,000 fewer incidents.

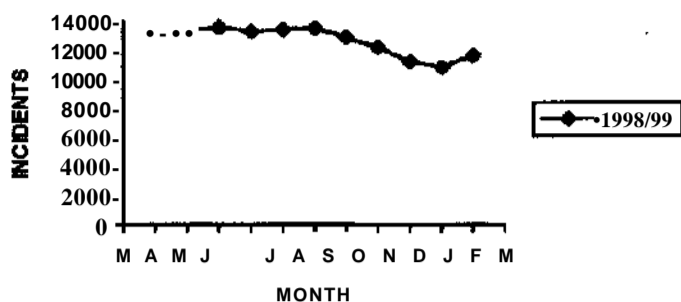


Figure 3.2: Incidents of disorder, three month moving average March 1998 to March 1999.

While it is impossible to assess the impact of PS on this data, it is interesting that the downward trend has been seen to accelerate since the implementation of PS commenced. In addition, it is generally held that a PS approach is particularly effective against incidents of disorder. The downward trend does seem to have stalled however during the early part of 1999.

The second stage evaluation at the end of this year will revisit this data in an attempt to identify if the reductions in such incidents have been maintained or whether or not they have returned to previous levels. If such reductions can be maintained (over 1000 incidents per month, year on year), then clearly this is a significant saving in resource time.

There is a view that juvenile disorder or Youths Causing Annoyance (YCA) is a particularly pressing problem and one that can be affected significantly by a PS approach. The analysis therefore goes on to consider such incidents.

3.1.2 Juvenile disorder

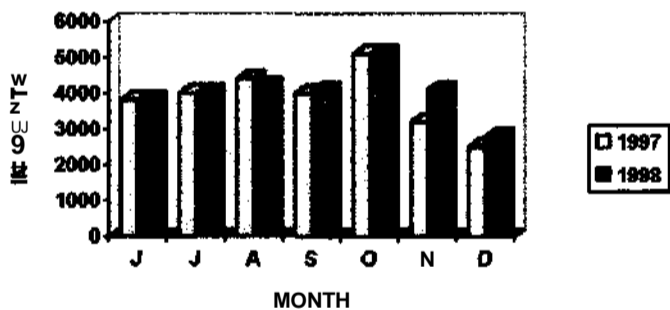


Figure 3.3: Juvenile disorder, June to December 1997 and 1998.

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It is interesting to note that with the exception of August, all months have shown an increase in such incidents in 1998 compared to the same period in 1997. This is despite the fact that overall incidents of disorder are falling during the same period. As such juvenile disorder now comprises a larger proportion of overall disorder offences than it did, twelve months ago (34% in March 1999 compared to 30% in March 1998).

One possible reason for this shift might be that the development of a PS approach has encouraged people to report such offences. If the public feel that their problem might be solved, they will be more likely to report the problem to the police. In the short term, this may lead to an increase in the reporting of such offences. The solutions to the problems may take a number of months to be developed and implemented, such that reductions in the reporting of such offences may not take place until perhaps a few months after the surge in reporting.

It is interesting that the increase in such offences in 1998 was more pronounced towards the end of the year, the period when most areas had gone live with PS. The second stage evaluation will look particularly at this data to identify whether there has been a reduction in such offences during the year, compared to the previous year. This might support the idea put forward above, of an initial surge in reporting followed a few months later by a reduction, brought about by the implemented solutions taking effect.

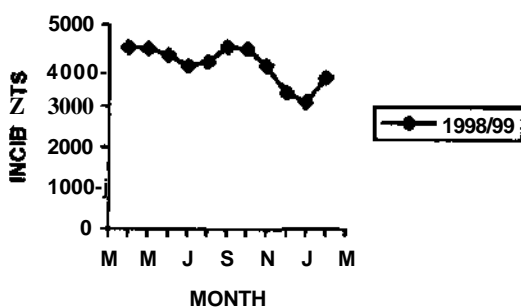


Figure 3.4: Incidents of juvenile disorder, three-month moving average March 1998 to March 1999.

Despite the fact that the figures for the last seven months of 1998 are higher than for the same period in 1997, Figure 3.4 shows that the general trend for the twelve months to March 1999, is gently downwards. Again the trend is more pronounced towards the end of the year though the data in figure 3.3 would suggest that the reductions are not as pronounced as those during the same period in 1997.

In summary, there would appear to have been a reduction in overall offences of disorder since the implementation of PS, though instances of juvenile disorder have risen compared to the second half of 1997. The impact of PS on this data is, however, difficult to assess at this stage.

3.2 Crime

As noted in Section 2.1 of this report, changes to territorial areas and Home Office counting rules have prevented the realistic comparison of some crime data pre and post April 1998. This analysis of most of the crime data is, therefore restricted to looking at trends for total crime and specific crime types from April 1998 to February 1999.

It is felt that this is acceptable as PS did not "go live" in the first areas (C2/C3) until June 1998 and hence, some indication of the pre and post PS position can be ascertained. Three-month moving averages have been used in attempt to smooth out fluctuations and identify underlying trends.

It is not possible at this stage, however, to compare month on month crime data (i.e. April 1999 with April 1998) as such data is not yet available.

Certain crime types have been largely unaffected by the change in counting rules, primarily burglary and vehicle related thefts. The analyses in relation to these types of crime are, therefore, month on month comparisons, though the change in territorial areas prevents the disaggregation of this analysis to an area level.

3.2.1 Total recorded crime

From an analysis of total crime data for the period April 1998 to February 1999 it would appear that, with the exception of the period around October, crime has been falling gently throughout the period.

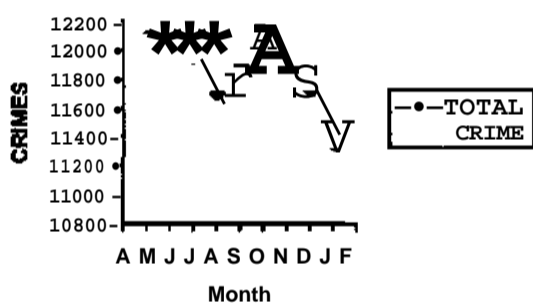


Figure 3.5: Total recorded crime in Merseyside, April 1998 to February 1999 inclusive (Three-month moving average).

It is noted that the fall had commenced prior to PS being implemented, but it is also noted that the fall appears more significant *since* the adoption of PS. Clearly, the impact of PS on this data is impossible to assess, as there is considerable documentary evidence to show that any number of diverse factors can affect recorded crime.

It is also impossible to know what the recorded crime position would have been without PS being in place. The data reveals, however, a 6% reduction in average total crime during the period reviewed which in itself is extremely encouraging.

The second phase of the evaluation, to be completed at the end of this year, will explore whether or not such reductions have been maintained.

When this data is disaggregated across areas, the picture is more varied, though again most areas overall crime follows a similar pattern to that outlined in Figure 3.5. Indeed, only three areas show average increases in crime during the period and these are relatively minor.

There does not appear to be any significant change in the overall crime trend after the time that PS "went live" in particular areas. This leads one to believe that the impact of PS alone on recorded crime at this stage, has been minimal and that the reduction in crime experienced across the Force is due to combination of factors (one of which may be PS). This is reinforced by the fact that in the last area to "go live" with PS, total recorded crime has almost exactly followed the Force trend.

3.2.2 Detected crime

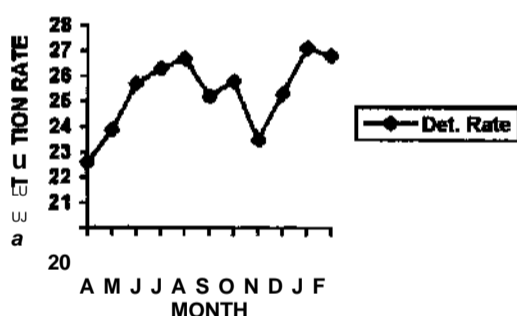


Figure 3.6: Primary detection rate for Merseyside Police, April 1998 to February 1999.

Figure 3.6 above shows that the overall trend in the primary detection rate for Merseyside Police has risen during the period April 1998 to February 1999. It is most interesting to note that the rate fell during the period August to November 1998, the period when most of the IMUs went live in the Force.

One of the concerns raised by the initial feasibility study into the adoption of PS was that the implementation process *might* have an adverse effect on the detection rate in the short term. The data in Figure 3.6 would suggest that this might have happened. Once again, however, any number of factors can affect the detection rate and it is impossible to tease out the specific impact of PS on this data. Whatever the reason for the dip, it is clear that the rate returned to previous levels (if not higher) once the IMUs had been established. The second phase evaluation at the end of the year will review the primary detection rate to assess whether or not the improvement has been sustained.

When detection data is disaggregated to area level, it is again found that most areas follow the Force wide pattern, which would again suggest that PS alone is having a minimal effect. It is probably one of a number of reasons why detection performance has improved during the year.

It is most interesting to note that 6 of the 11 areas posted their lowest monthly detection rate for the whole period under review, either during the month in which their IMU was established or in the following month. This reinforces the point made earlier about the possible disruption caused to the detection of crime, by the adoption of PS and suggests that, such disruption did occur to some extent.

Due to the fact that secondary detections are no longer used as a measure of police performance, this data has not been reviewed as part of this evaluation.

It was felt that there might be value in looking at broad crime types to identify if PS might have had an effect on particular types of offence.

3.2.3 Violent crime



Figure 3.7: Recorded crimes of violence April 1998 to February 1999 (Three-month moving average)

Figure 3.7 above shows that the overall trend for this type of offence has broadly fallen throughout the period under review. It is interesting to note, however, that the trend has been continually downwards from the period when the implementation of PS began. Previous work has shown that a PS approach has a particular impact on crimes of violence and disorder. The data illustrated above suggests that this might have been demonstrated in Merseyside. Disaggregated data in relation to individual areas, however, is inconclusive.

Once again, the second evaluation will seek to confirm or refute this assertion and identify the possible role of PS in achieving such reductions.

With respect to the detection of such offences, figure 3.8 shows that the trend has been relatively static throughout the review period, with fluctuations around a mean of approximately 67%.

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Figure 3.8: Detection rate for violent offences, April 1998 to February 1999 (Three-month moving average).

This again, suggests that PS has had limited impact on the detection of such offences, though again, the dip (albeit small) during the latter part of 1998 is again noted. Again, area data is inconclusive.

3.2.4 Burglary

Changes in the counting rules have not affected the recording of burglary and so the analysis considers the month on month position over a period prior to and post the implementation of PS.

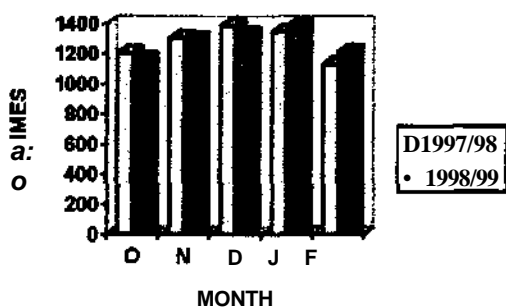


Figure 3.9: Burglary - Dwelling October to February 1997/98 and 1998/99

Firstly, with respect to burglary in a dwelling, figure 3.9 shows that the trends for a five-month period prior to the introduction of PS and the same period after implementation follow similar patterns. The figures for the last two months suggest that the situation is worsening in 1999 compared to the same period in 1998.

As for burglary in other building, figure 3.10 shows that this pattern is borne out.

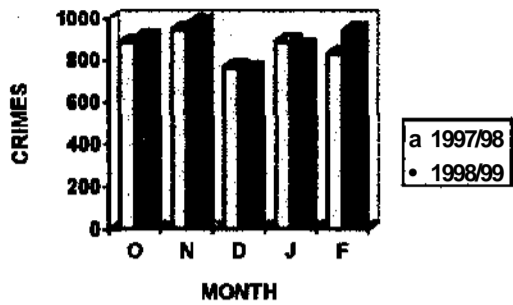


Figure 3.10: Burglary in other buildings, October to February 1997/98 and 1998/99.

Both schedules again, follow similar patterns with figures for 1998/99 being slightly worse than in the same period for 1997/98. This might suggest that, as yet, PS appears to have had minimal tangible effect on the levels of burglary either in dwellings or other buildings.

3.2.5 Vehicle related crime

Once again month on month comparisons can be made in relation to vehicle related crime as such offences are unaffected by counting rule changes.

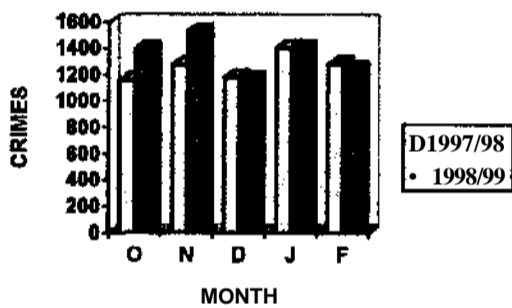


Figure 3.11: Thefts of vehicles. October to February 1997/98 and 1998/99.

Figure 3.11 would seem to suggest that since the turn of the year, there has been a reduction in such offences, compared to the previous year. This is particularly impressive, since it is clear that the position in late 1998 was clearly worse than in late 1997.

Merseyside Police: Initial evaluation of Problem Solving approach.

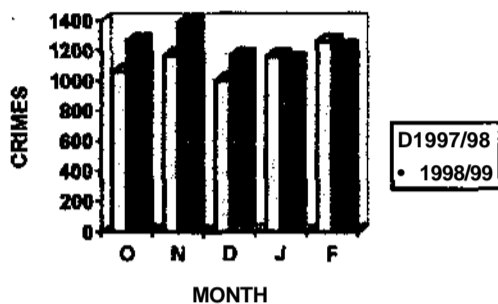


Figure 3.12: Thefts from vehicles, October to February 1997/98 and 1998/99.

With respect to thefts from vehicles, it is interesting to note that recorded offences follow a broadly similar pattern with a significant improvement in the position being noted during early 1999 compared to early 1998.

The precise impact of PS on the improvements in relation to both thefts of and from vehicles is impossible to assess. It may be significant, however, that PS was fully operational in all areas by the turn of the year. It is again recognised, however, that numerous factors can affect the occurrence and recording of crime and that PS may only be one of a number of factors affecting vehicle related crime. The second phase evaluation will seek to identify whether or not the improvements identified, have been maintained.

3.2.6 Criminal Damage

Significant changes to the counting rules for such offences means that a comparison of pre and post April 1998 data is meaningless. The changes do, however, facilitate a more detailed analysis of such offences by requiring the type of property damaged, also to be recorded.

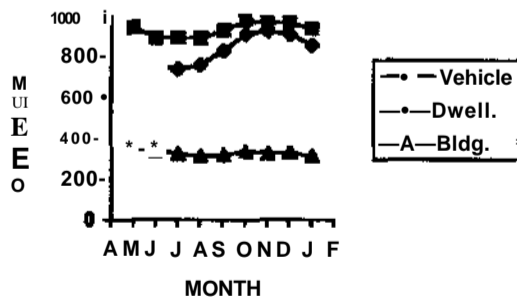


Figure 3.13: Criminal Damage, April 1998 to March 1999 (Three month moving average).

As one might expect, offences of criminal damage are likely to increase during the winter when there are fewer daylight hours. This indeed, appears to be borne out by the schedules for vehicle damage and, to a lesser extent damage to dwellings. The schedule for damage to other buildings is, however, interesting in that the impact of fewer daylight hours appears minimal. The schedule follows a gently sloping path, indicating a steady reduction in such offences during the period under review.

Again, the reasons for this are likely to be varied but it may be significant that damage to other buildings is an offence associated with the problem of youths causing annoyance (YCA). The evidence already outlined in section 3.1 suggests an increase of the recording of such offences. An increase in YCA and a reduction in damage to non-dwellings might indicate that PS is having an effect on YCA by reducing the severity of such offences to general disorder and rowdy behaviour. It may be then, that a spin-off from the impact of PS on YCA problems is a reduction in damage to non-dwelling premises.

The second stage evaluation will again seek to ratify these findings.

To summarise, then, it is perhaps too soon to say that PS has had a demonstrable effect on the levels of crime in Merseyside since its' implementation. It would appear, however, that early signs of some impact might be emerging in relation specifically to crimes of violence, vehicle related crime and damage to non-dwelling buildings. In addition, the overall crime trend appears to be downwards.

There is also strong evidence to suggest that the implementation of PS, particularly the establishment of IMU's has had a negative effect on detection rates, though they appear to have recovered as PS has become established.

The point made several times throughout this section and reiterated here, is that the second stage evaluation at the end of this year will seek to identify whether or not the emerging trends have been maintained or whether they merely represent a "blip" in the overall picture.

3.3 Perceptions

The data reviewed to date might indicate that PS has had some impact already (albeit limited) on crime and incident levels in Merseyside. The next question to be addressed, therefore is whether or not the public of Merseyside feel that the approach is having an impact and whether they feel that they are getting a better service as a result.

In addition, do officers and other members of the Force feel that the approach is working?

3.3.1 Public

It is recognised that the impact of PS on public perceptions is difficult to establish at this early stage. It would appear, however, that as PS has become established, so the public of Merseyside has begun to accept it as a more effective method of policing.

There is considerable evidence that, in the early days of PS the police, in particular IMU call handlers, faced considerable hostility from the public. The reasons for this ranged from frustration at not being able to get through to the IMU to an unwillingness to accept that they might not have a police officer deployed to deal with their problem.

It has already been recognised that an error was made in not marketing PS prior to its' implementation. Though the original report suggested that such marketing should take place, it was decided that the new approach should be explained to the public as and when they called Merseyside Police.

In reality, this put IMU call handlers in a stressful position, having to explain a new policing approach to people who were not always prepared to listen. This problem was identified relatively early in the implementation process and steps taken to market the approach more proactively. However, it is felt that much damage was done at an early stage to the public support for Merseyside Police and the approach as a whole.

It is noted, however, that generally comments from the public appear to be increasingly positive about PS. Once the approach is explained to them they seem to accept it. Indeed, comments from call handlers suggest that the public are beginning to feel that the police *are* now interested in their problems and in trying to solve them. The following comment from one IMU call handler reinforces this point.

"The public are turning to it... once the principle has been explained to them "

To reinforce this, by the end of March 1999, no formal complaints had been received regarding the operation of PS and the IMU's. By the same date, only four informal complaints had been received, primarily about delays in receiving a phone response, and there had been 18 letters of thanks and appreciation for the service provided. It is often easier to complain than give thanks and in that context, these figures are most encouraging.

Though the Force carries out an annual public perception survey at the end of every year, it was felt that to review the findings for 1998 compared to 1997 would give an inaccurate picture of public perception. By the end of the year most areas had only been live with PS for three or four months and one area did not go live until early 1999. Indeed, even where PS had been implemented first it had only been in operation for six months.

For this reason it was felt that it would be unfair and unrepresentative to compare public perceptions of the service they received in 1998 with those in 1997. It is proposed that the second stage evaluation in December 1999, will consider the perception survey at the end of this year, when PS has been operating for a full year. This data will be compared to the positions in both 1998 and 1997 to identify any shift in public perception regarding the service that they receive from Merseyside Police.

3.3.2 Officers and staff

It is clear that after initial cynicism, PS is being increasingly well received by operational officers. There is much evidence that the approach is helping to manage demand for operational officers and that it has had a significant impact on their deployment, particularly to minor incidents. Indeed, there are examples of officers complaining now when the IMU is not open as this is increasing their workload. In addition, there are examples of officers questioning whether or not the radios are working properly, due to the fact that they have been deployed to so few incidents.

One of the anticipated benefits of PS was that the adoption of IMUs would generate time for operational officers to spend more time problem solving and on proactive patrol. There is a clear perception amongst operational officers that the IMU has reduced the number of incidents, which they are deployed to. Reinforcing this view, 60% of those who responded to the perception survey felt that this was the case.

Less clear, however, is whether officers feel that they are problem solving and spending more time on general patrol. Section 3.4 below, will consider the data in relation to workloads and whether perception matches reality.

Two issues emerge from these perceptions. Firstly, there is a widely held view by officers that the logic of PS is irrefutable and that it is a preferable way of working. There is also a general level of understanding about PS, which suggests that the training has at least helped to raise awareness. Some 82% of survey respondents felt that they understood the concept of PS.

The extent to which PS is embedded into officers' routine ways of working is, however, unclear. It would appear that PS has been successfully "lifted off" onto a platform of understanding, but it has not yet become a routine way of working for most officers. While many operational officers understand what PS is, they struggle to relate it to their own particular work environment and way of working.

The original PS report recommended the inclusion of a 16-hour work based training package for all officers to enable them to apply the PS principles in practice. It is felt that this package would help to address the problem of embedding the approach into routine ways of working. It is recognised that, for a variety of reasons, work has not progressed on the preparation of this work based training package. It is now felt to be critical to the future success of PS in an operational context that this package is developed as soon as practicable.

Recommendation 1: **Work should proceed as soon as possible on the production of the 16-hour work based training package. This package should be "rolled-out" across the Force as soon as is practicable, once developed.**

The logistics of managing and co-ordinating the operation of this package will be discussed in Section 4.3 below, which deals with training.

There is evidence to suggest that PS and the advent of IMUs has helped to develop a sense of professionalism and pride in some officers, particularly those working in the IMUs. The approach promotes a greater ownership of and commitment to local problems.

IMU staff are perceived to have an improved level of knowledge of problems in their area and as such are able to provide a far better level of service both to the public and officers in their area. As such, they are increasingly being seen as a focus of knowledge about the area.

It is also clear that IMU staff themselves take pride in being able to provide a higher quality service. Two comments from IMU staff illustrate this point.

"I am finding myself trying to help people far more than I did in the past"

"I am thinking all of the time now, 'how can I help resolve this persons problem?'"

Many officers accept that PS does enforce a structure on them and provides a framework for them to work within. The IMU is also perceived as helping to highlight specific issues, by looking at a variety of different data sources, which otherwise might have been missed.

There is also an emerging view that PS facilitates multi-agency working and that it has made a significant contribution to the ability of Merseyside Police to meet the requirements placed on it under the Crime & Disorder Act.

As evidence of this, a housing officer from one local authority now spends one day per week in one particular IMU. This promotes a sharing of information, a joint identification of problems and a joint implementation of solutions. This arrangement has already been particularly effective in dealing with problems of neighbourhood nuisance.

In another example, it was identified that public toilets were a focus for sexual offences. This was highlighted to the local authority who carried out a survey, which found that over a lengthy period of time, there were only two "genuine" users of the facilities. At the time of writing, the local authority are on the verge of closing and demolishing the toilet block, thus removing the source of the problem. Officers from the area have suggested that this would not have happened had a PS approach not been taken

Finally, there is a perception in some that PS works better on lower tier problems, particularly YCA, disorder and damage. One must not forget, however, that the approach in Merseyside emerged from Operation Pivot, which focused on organised crime problems across the Force area. There is increasing evidence that the approach is being applied to area wide problems in relation to both minor incidents and crime problems. Some examples of successes under the PS approach are outlined in section 3.5 below.

Despite this clear evidence of the impact, there is a perception among many that PS needs to quickly come up with a "big hit", to reinforce its' credibility. It could be argued that there are many examples of success and that if they were in some way disseminated across the Force, then the value of PS would be amply demonstrated, negating the need for a big hit.

The original report recommended that examples of good practice should be made freely available both to support effective working across the Force and to demonstrate the value of the PS approach. The recommendation in that report was that the Force network should be used as a vehicle for this. Delays in implementing the network have obviously prevented the widespread awareness of PS successes. In the absence of the network, it is therefore recommended that steps should be taken to explore means by which PS successes can be publicised both internally and externally.

Recommendation 2: **Steps should be taken as soon as possible to establish means by which PS successes can be publicised both within and outside the Force. This will support the marketing of the approach and increase its' level of acceptance as an effective method of working.**

3.4 Workloads

There appears to be an increasing amount of anecdotal evidence suggesting that PS is having a significant impact on the workload of operational officers. This perception now needs to be verified by looking at workload based data.

3.4.1 Deployed incidents

To assess the possible impact of PS on deployment of officers, two sample months were reviewed, one (April 1998) prior to the launch of PS and one (February 1999) after the fiill adoption of PS in an operational context. A random sample of over 16,000 incidents in each month were then compared.

Table 3.1 reveals that in the post PS sample there has been an overall 12% reduction in the number of deployed incidents.

INCIDENT TYPE	% Change in number of deployed incidents.
Property crime	-1.3%
Crime against the person	-15.0%
Road Accident	+5.9%
Disorder	-26.1%
Alarms	-19.5%
Hazards	-27.0%
General/Sus. Circs./Missing persons etc.	-7.1%
Miscellaneous	-8.7%
TOTAL	-12.0%

Table 3.1: Percentage change in deployed incidents, February 1999 compared to April 1998 (sample of 16,000 incidents per month).

The largest reduction in deployments is found in the disorder and hazard categories. While too much should not be read into the reductions in the hazard categories due to the small number of incidents involved, the reduction in disorder offences is extremely significant. This category makes up the single largest group of incidents and yet after PS over a quarter less incidents of this type are being deployed to. The focus of PS and the implementation of the IMUs suggests that PS may indeed be responsible for much of this reduction.

It may also be significant that there has been a 15% reduction in deployments to offences against the person, particularly the minor assaults.

Even more interesting is the data in Table 3.2 which shows how the distribution of deployment has changed, since the implementation of PS.

INCIDENT TYPE	Proportion of total deployments - April 1998	Proportion of total deployments - February 1999.
Property crime	19.7%	22.1%
Crime against the person	2.8%	2.7%
Road Accident	8.0%	9.7%
Disorder	29.2%	24.5%
Alarms	7.1%	6.5%
Hazard	1.4%	1.2%
General/Sus. Circs./Missing persons etc.	20.7%	21.8%
Miscellaneous	11.1%	11.5%

Table 3.2: Proportion of total deployments by category, April 1998 and February 1999.

This data clearly shows that as well as a reduction in deployed incidents there has been a shift in those incidents deployed to. This shift has been away from disorder incidents to more serious offences such as property crime (burglary, theft etc.) and road accidents.

In other words it would appear that time freed up through non-deployment to minor incidents is being used to deal with more serious incidents. Clearly, this makes better and more effective use of operational officers' time and as such provides better value for money.

Clearly a 12% reduction of deployments across the Force represents a significant resource saving. For the scale of reductions identified in this sample, in simplistic terms, this equates to approximately 20 officer's time freed up through not having to attend incidents, particularly those of a more minor nature. In effect, the Force has found another 20 officers by reducing deployments.

It is immediately recognised that a number of officers were brought in, specifically to staff the IMUs and it is calculated that 111 officers were allocated in this way. At first glance, it would appear that there is a considerable mismatch between resource saving and resource usage under PS. There are, however a number of caveats to this data:

- Though approximately 20 officers are saved by not now being deployed to incidents, the total number of crimes and incidents is also falling, placing even less demands on the Force. This will undoubtedly free up more resources.
- A number of IMUs have removed a significant burden of paperwork from operational officers, thus freeing up more time. The potential impact of this is clearly demonstrated in section 3.4.3 below.
- It is evident from the analysis in section 3.4.3, that, post PS, officers are spending up to an hour less, per shift, in the police station, thus increasing their effective patrol time. Simply, for an eight-hour shift, this equates to 12.5% increase in all available operational resources.
- Not all of the 111 officers brought into the IMUs were front line operational officers. The impact of this was therefore not wholly borne by operational resources.

It is still very early in PS to assess resource savings, as in many areas it is still bedding in. The second stage evaluation at the end of this year will revisit this analysis to identify if resource savings have been maintained or even improved. It will also seek to estimate the level of resource savings from other sources outlined above, such as increased "out of station" time, reduction in paperwork burden etc.

3.4.2 Call volumes and call handling

An underlying principle of the PS approach is that call handlers and other IMU staff will take time to deal with callers problems. In so doing, they will try to reduce the number of calls that officers need to be deployed to. This might imply that average call lengths may increase as a consequence. While this may be acceptable, it is important that such an approach does not have a negative effect on the time which it takes for calls to be answered.

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Table 3.3 below, reveals that there was a 29% reduction in calls received by the DCC in the first three months of 1999 compared to the same period in 1998.

	D.C.C	LM.U.
Jan-March 1998	147,501	-
Jan-March 1999	105,132	131,187

Table 3.3: Incoming calls received.

At first glance, this data might suggest that there has been a dramatic increase in the total number of calls received by Merseyside Police in the first three months of 1999 compared to the same period in 1998. This is a flawed assertion, however, as many of the calls now going to the IMU would previously have come into the Force via the switchboard or direct to extensions known to the callers.

The data for calls to the switchboard and direct extensions is not readily available so at present it is not possible to measure the extent to which the IMU has drawn calls from these two sources. It would appear however, that the IMUs have taken a significant amount of work off the DCCs and that they have become a focus for incoming calls at a local level. In that respect they are supporting the provision of a more local service.

With a reduction of almost one-third of its' incoming calls, one might expect that the DCC would provide a better level of service to its' customers, both internal and external. The March PI Report notes that over the last 12 months 89.7% of 999 calls were answered within 10 seconds, compared to a 87.2% for the previous 12 months. This, therefore represents a modest improvement in performance.

The officers taking part in the staff perception survey were asked if they felt that the level of service from the DCC had improved since the inception of IMUs. Almost 80% of those who responded felt that there had been no change, while only 5% felt that the level of service had improved.

Before too much is read into this data, it is restated that it is very early in the life of PS to measure such an impact. It is intended that the second stage evaluation at the end of the year will seek to confirm or refute this finding.

Looking now at ease of access to IMUs, Table 3.4 below looks at data for the first three months of 1999 and considers the number of calls actually being made to each IMU. It considers the percentage of those calls where the line was either engaged or the caller rang off after receiving no answer

In simple terms, it could be that a high proportion of engaged calls indicates that there are insufficient lines into the IMU. Alternatively, a high proportion of unanswered calls might indicate that while there are enough lines, there are not enough call handlers to be able to match demand.

Area	Percentage of total calls - engaged	Percentage of total calls - unanswered
A1	16%	4%
A2	1%	2%
B1	3%	6%
B2	0.3%	1%
C1	2%	1%
C2/C3	11%	37%
C4	-	0.1%
C5	3%	1%
D1	1%	2%
D2	-	1%

Table 3.4: Reasons for non-connection of callers with IMU, first three months of 1999.

The relatively low percentages of "ring-offs" by callers indicates that they are content to wait in the queue until they are answered, perhaps in the knowledge that they will receive a better quality service when they do get through. Similarly, the low proportion of engaged calls suggests that the technology is appropriate to match the demand for incoming calls.

There are however, two notable exceptions. The data for A1 reveals that 16% of all calls are met with an engaged tone. This might suggest that there are insufficient lines into the IMU, though there are particular issues with regard to the level of staffing, dealt with in section 4.1 below, which may contribute to this.

The figures for C2/C3 show that over one-third of all calls into the IMU were unanswered and a further 11% were met with an engaged tone. In other words, almost half of all incoming calls failed to get through to the IMU.

A major contributory factor to this was the fact that the IMU did not have a call sequencer and hence could not operate a call queuing system. It should be noted, however, that for the calls that did get through, 98.5% were answered within 30 seconds.

The problems at Lower Lane were recognised early in the year and a series of measures were put in place from mid-April to address them. Data for the period 15th April to 15th May suggests that the proportion of unanswered calls has fallen to 3.4%, while the proportion of engaged calls at 10.1% remains at previous levels.

Clearly, there has been a dramatic improvement in the number of calls being answered, for a similar volume of incoming calls, and IMU staff deserve credit for the improvements made. The fact that the proportion of incoming calls met with an engaged tone remains around 10%, may indicate that consideration could perhaps be given to the installation of an additional line or lines into the IMU, matched with the appropriate staffing levels.

Interestingly for the first three months of 1999, 9.4% of all calls into the DCCs were met with an engaged tone and 10% were unanswered. This suggests that a figure of around 10% is an average for engaged calls for the Force. It also suggests that IMUs are answering a higher proportion of their calls than the DCCs and as a result are providing a better service to the public. It is recognised, however, that this relates to non-urgent calls only and it is accepted that DCCs must prioritise the answering of emergency calls in preference to non-urgent calls.

It has been suggested that in frustration at their inability to get through to some IMUs, callers are using the 999 number to contact Merseyside Police. During the first three months of 1999, some 24,743 999 calls were received compared to 23,903 in the same period in 1998, an increase of 3.5%.

This does not appear to be a significant increase and suggests that a perceived shift to the 999 system through an inability to contact IMUs has not happened to any great extent. In addition, the average wait time for a 999 call for the period in 1999 was just 5.18 seconds, compared to 4.88 seconds in 1998; a marginal increase.

From this, it would appear that whatever the perceived problems in dealing with calls in the IMUs, they are having minimal impact on the Force's ability to deal with 999 calls. The data would suggest that problems of access to most IMUs are minimal in any case.

In relation to call management, there is a Performance Indicator (PI) in place that requires 85% of all incoming calls to be answered within 30 seconds. It was originally intended to review this data. However, when comparing data supplied to MIA for the calculation of the PI, with data supplied for this evaluation, and incoming call data (direct from the Radio & Telecommunications department), serious discrepancies emerged.

It quickly became apparent that different IMUs were using different bases for the data. In relation to total calls, some were considering all calls which enter the phone system, others were only considering those which had been released from the answering/stacking system and were available to be answered by Operators. In addition, it appeared that the data for some of the IMUs did not reflect the number of calls abandoned when the caller was in a queue.

These serious discrepancies have invalidated the use of this data in the evaluation. More seriously, it appears that the data supplied for the calculation of the Pis is inconsistent. As a result, the performance of some IMUs appears to be far worse than others when, in reality the differences in the Pis may be caused, in part, by differences in definitions of base data.

It is important that this issue is resolved quickly. At present a picture of force performance is being portrayed which may not reflect the real situation. In addition, there is a danger that decisions could be made on the basis of flawed data.

There needs to be an agreed definition for "incoming calls" such that all IMUs are providing consistent data. In that way, this PI will be comparing IMUs fairly. At present, this is not the case.

Recommendation 3: The implementation team and representatives of MIA should meet as soon as possible to agree the basis for collecting data in relation to the speed of response PL

The subject of Performance Indicators is revisited in section 4.6.1 below.

Finally, since April 1999, IMUs are required to assess the quality of service provided. The target set was that at least 70% of callers should be satisfied with the initial response to non-urgent calls. By dip sampling previous callers to the IMU data for the first months identifies an average satisfaction level of 95% across the Force. This far exceeds the Force target and reinforces the emerging view that the public is indeed receiving a better quality of service since the development of PS and the establishment of IMUs.

3.4.3 Activity sample

As noted above, it has been suggested that PS has significantly contributed to a reduction in deployments of officers to incidents. The data in section 3.4.1 would seem to support this view. The question is then asked if officers are spending less time deployed to incidents, how much time are they saving and what are they doing with it?

To consider this point a simple activity sample was carried out, the details of which are outlined in Section 2.2 of this report.

Looking first at PC's, Figure 3.14 shows how the distribution of work has changed since the inception of PS.

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It is interesting to note that there is an apparent reduction in the time that operational PCs spend deployed to incidents (32% of their time, down to 29% of their time) and the time that they spend in police stations, since the inception of PS. This time saving has been taken up by an increase in the amount of time taken on general patrol (27% of time to 29% of time) and in the time taken attending meetings.

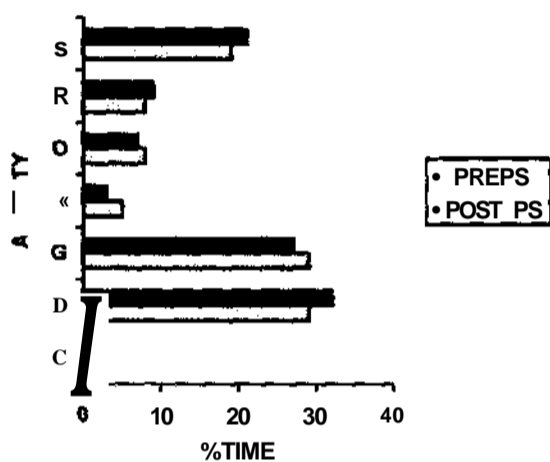


Figure 3.14: Comparison of PC activity pre and post PS.

Activity key

- S - In the police station
- R - Refreshments
- O-Other
- M - Attending meetings
- G - On general patrol
- D - Deployed to an incident
- C - At court

Though somewhat crude, this analysis might indicate that operational PCs have become more proactive since the inception of PS. The analysis is not detailed enough, to explore the nature of the meetings which officers are involved in. It may be however, that they are increasingly meeting with representatives of other agencies in an attempt to solve problems. This is pure conjecture however, and the second stage evaluation will repeat this exercise and probe reasons behind the increase in meetings time.

When general patrol and deployed time is profiled over a shift, the results are most interesting.

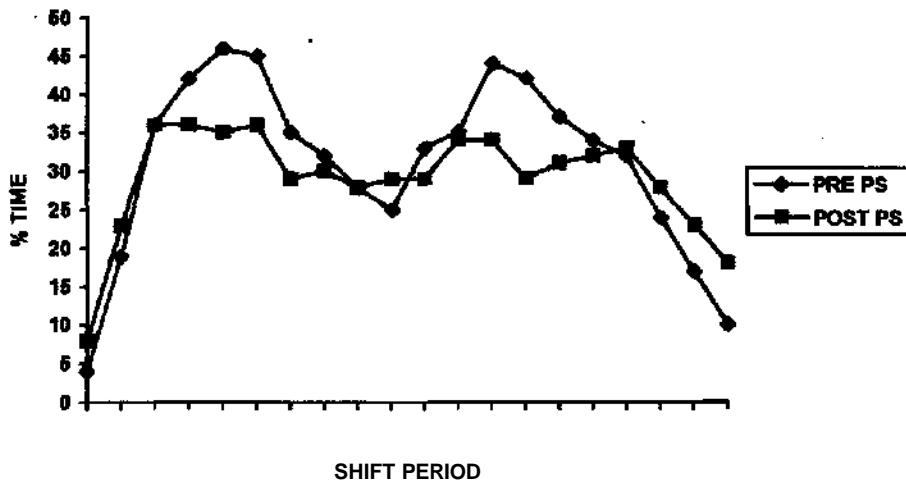


Figure 3.15: Comparison of time deployed to incidents, pre and post PS.

As the previous data suggests, prior to PS officers spent more time deployed to incidents. It is interesting to note, however, that officers are deployed more quickly to incidents sooner in the shift and appear deployed for longer at the end of a shift, post PS. In addition, the impact of the refreshment break is minimised post PS compared to the pre PS position. This indicates that PS has helped to maximise the time that officers are being effectively deployed.

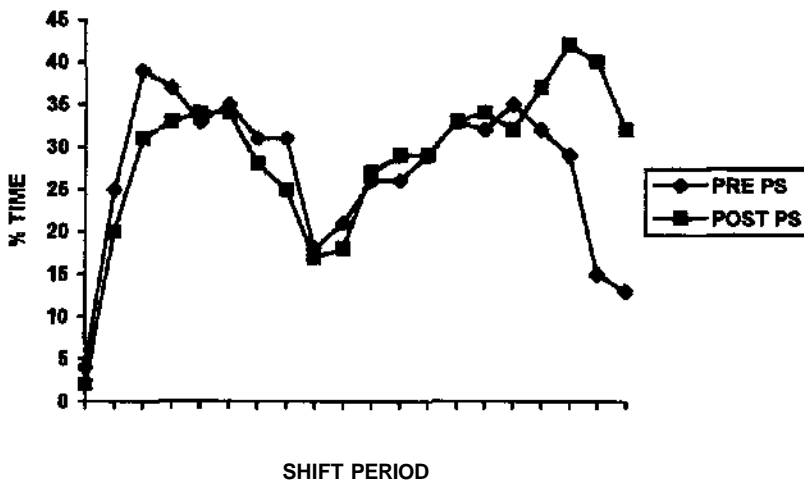


Figure 3.16: Comparison of time of general patrol, pre and post PS.

This is most interesting in that while the pre and post positions are broadly similar, post PS less time is spent on general patrol at the start of the shift, while significantly more is spent on such activity at the end of the shift.

When the profile for time spent at the station is reviewed, a possible explanation for this pattern emerges.

Merseyside Police: Initial evaluation of Problem Solving approach.

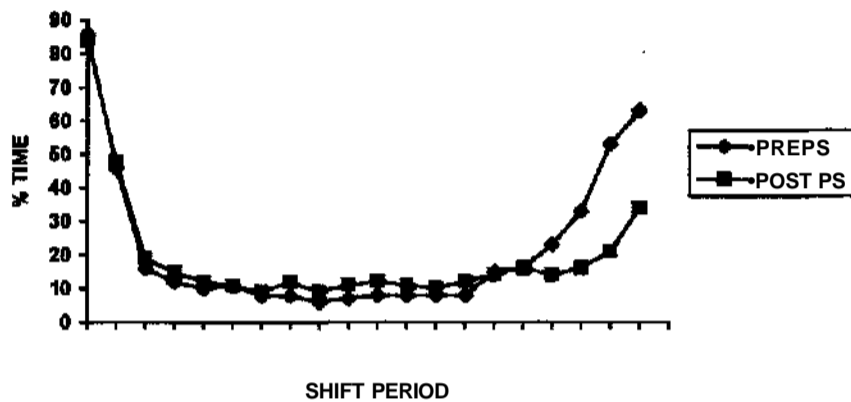


Figure 3.17: Comparison of time spent in police station, pre and post PS.

This clearly shows that while the profiles are broadly similar throughout most of the shift, officers are spending less time in the station towards the end of the shift compared to the position pre PS.

The exact reasons for this need to be explored. It is recognised however, that time towards the end of a shift is often used by officers to work on paperwork. If officers are being deployed to fewer incidents post PS than pre PS, there may be less paperwork to complete.

In addition, some IMUs have taken some paperwork burden off operational officers by taking of routine statements. These factors combined could explain why officers are spending more time on patrol or deployed at the end of a shift under PS, than they were prior to PS.

This issue will also be revisited in the second stage evaluation. It appears however, that PS may have increased the amount of "useful" time available to officers during their shift.

The analysis for Sergeants and Inspectors is less conclusive due to the small number of such officers taking part in the activity sample exercise. There does however, appear to be a slight shift in the time that sergeants are spending in meetings and on "other" duties post PS. As with PC's this may be through meeting with groups to resolve underlying problems and the second stage evaluation will explore this matter.

3.4.4 Perceptions regarding workload

Supporting the data already outlined, there is a strong perception that there has been a reduction in deployment of operational officers, particularly to minor incidents. From initial suspicion of IMUs, officers now see them as having a major impact on their workload. Indeed, as noted above complaints now come from some officers when the IMU is not open.

There are concerns however that some officers are already beginning to take advantage of this situation by offloading tasks, which they do not wish to carry out, onto IMU staff. It is stressed that this practice is not, as yet, widespread but IMU supervisors must ensure that their staff only carry out work that is appropriate for the IMU.

Some IMUs have taken the task of taking statements off operational officers. It has been estimated that this alone can save up to two hours per officer shift and this may again be a cause of the changing activity profiles since the launch of PS. To make use of this freed up time, one area now invites victims of vehicle related theft to attend the police station, where their vehicle can be checked for fingerprints. This service was not provided prior to PS and the IMU as there was insufficient time available. This is another illustration of how PS is enabling a better quality of service to be provided.

3.5 Case Studies

Already described in section 3.3.2, is an example where adopting a PS approach has helped to solve a problem of sexual offences. Described below are three other examples where PS has solved specific and sometimes long running problems. It is stressed that without a PS approach and without having sufficient time to take the PS approach (made available through the adoption of IMUs) it is unlikely that these problems would have been solved. They would probably have been met with a series of visits to the same problem, without getting to the root cause of that problem.

3.5.1 Case 1

A break in to an aviary was reported and a number of valuable birds were stolen. There were no witnesses, no clues and no suspects. The property stolen was, to all intents and purposes, unidentifiable, namely a number of Canaries. The call handler, who dealt with the call, took time to gather data from the victim and identified that the birds were of a particular rare species.

Armed with this data, she then contacted a number of local pet shops to find that one had been offered a number of these birds a short while earlier. The individual offering the birds for sale, a local bird breeder and customer of the shop was traced and found to be a handler for the stolen birds. From there, the burglar was traced and his home found to contain a large number of stolen birds and other property. This burglar had until that point, never come to the notice of the Police before.

The call handler argued that in the past, this crime would have been screened out as a matter of routine. Now, under PS, she had the facilities to scan a range of data to gain a wider understanding of the problem, and the time to make the follow up enquiries. As a result, a number of burglaries were detected, a burglar and handler were arrested and charged, property was returned to the victim and a better quality of service was provided.

3.5.2 Case 2

Analysis of crime and incident data revealed a problem with dwelling burglaries in the North of the Force area, which seemed to be in the vicinity of a railway station. The "freeing up" of time, brought about by the IMU enabled patrols to be directed to observation duties in and around the station. A known burglar was seen leaving a train and soon after arrested for "going equipped". He admitted to carrying out the breaks in and around the station and a number of other offences.

Once again, by generating the time to deploy resources in a focused way and looking at the source of the problem, a series of offences were detected. Pressure on resources prior to PS might have meant that it would not have been possible to carry out observations and hence, it may have taken longer to solve the problem (if it would have been solved at all),

3.5.3 Case 3

A MANWEB sub-station with a flat roof was sited on the edge of a piece of wasteland near to some allotments, containing greenhouses. A number of juveniles regularly climbed onto the roof and threw stones from the surrounding piles of debris, breaking windows in the greenhouses.

In liaison with MANWEB the source of the problem was identified. MANWEB then arranged for a sloped roof to be put onto the sub-station and for the drainpipes to be boxed in so that the juveniles could not climb onto the roof. They also cleared the site of debris. The problem was thus removed by dealing with the causes. In the past, this problem had been dealt with by deploying an officer on numerous occasions to move the juveniles on.

Many other examples of the PS approach helping to solve real problems are available, but the three outlined above show how the approach has had an impact on a variety of problems (not just YCA and disorder as is commonly perceived).

In summary, it appears that PS is starting to have some limited impact on crime, the level of incidents, incidents deployed to and the workloads and working patterns of operational officers. Section 4 of this report now moves on to consider how PS has operated within Merseyside Police and whether improvements can be made to existing ways of working.

4. THE OPERATION OF PS

4.1 Structures

4.1.1 Staffing of the IMUs

It is recognised immediately that the great majority of IMU staff are firmly committed to the principles of PS and the concept of the IMU. Their professionalism has ensured that a difficult transition period has been negotiated with as little disruption as possible to the level of service provided to the public of Merseyside. This is particularly true of the IMU supervisors, who almost without exception have taken the concept on and made it work.

Table 4.1 below shows that the level of staffing has increased since the initial review into IMU operation was carried out in December 1998.

Area	EMU staff-Dec. 1998	IMU staff-Mar. 1999
A1	9	9
A2	16	18
B1	15	15
B2	10	16
C1	16	19
C2/C3	22	26
C4	15	16
C5	-	7
D1	20	20
D2	15	21

Table 4.1: IMU staffing levels

Some IMU staff have been designated as purely call handlers, while others are required to be multi-functional, combining call handling duties with intelligence tasks.

At face value, it would appear that most IMUs have increased their level of staffing since the early review. Discussions with staff suggest however, that these figures mask a more worrying picture.

Several of the IMU supervisors have reported that they are running understaffed for long periods, either because posts are not being filled or because IMU staff on long-term sick leave are not being replaced. In addition, there is some evidence of abstractions, which are causing operational problems for the IMUs. Indeed, one IMU supervisor is constantly being pulled away from the IMU when a major incident occurs because of his HOLMES skills. It is also recognised that some of the smaller IMUs are particularly vulnerable to understaffing due to lack of resilience.

Despite the strong recommendation in the initial report that IMUs should be staffed at the appropriate level, there are real concerns that *actual* staffing levels in some IMUs are falling below a critical level. In certain situations, this has meant that some IMUs have had to close at certain times of the day (even in the middle of the day in one case).

Some IMU supervisors are coming under strong pressure from senior area managers to release officers from the IMU back to operational duties. Indeed, since this report was commenced it has been reported that one IMU has lost 4 call handlers back to operational duties.

Clearly, if IMUs are not staffed to an appropriate level, then they will not be able to continue to provide the level of service to the public, which it would appear they are starting to do. By drawing staff out of the IMU, the impact of the IMU will become limited and may result in officers being sent again, to a higher proportion of minor incidents.

Some areas have considered innovative ways of dealing with the staffing shortfalls in IMUs, including considering drafting in Specials at certain times of the day. The clear evidence that is emerging from this report is that the IMU *must* be staffed by experienced operational police officers. They have the necessary experience and skills to be able to make appropriate decisions regarding calls and the ability to look across a range of data to identify problems. It is somewhat unfortunate that this is precisely the type of officer that can be of great value in an operational context. The use of Specials in an IMU is strongly cautioned against.

While this report stops short of prescribing the number of officers that each IMU should contain a strong recommendation about the level of staffing is made.

Recommendation 4: **Staffing of IMUs must be maintained at a level, which allows them to provide their complete range of services to the required quality. Vacant IMU posts should be filled as far as possible. In addition, every effort should be made to fill EMU posts with suitably qualified and experienced officers.**

4.1.2 Integration of functions in the IMU

While there are many examples of close working between the three main components of the IMU, there are a number of areas where integration of functions is limited. Not surprisingly, where the three constituent units are all in one room or very close to each other, it appears that integration is better.

There is a concern in a number of areas however, that the intelligence unit in particular is not fully integrated into the IMU. This perception comes from officers within the intelligence unit who either cannot relate their work to the rest of the IMU or will not acknowledge that they are part of an IMU. It also comes from other IMU staff who view their intelligence unit staff as insular and preferring to retain traditional functional boundaries.

It is stressed that this is not the case in all IMUs. In some, the functions are fully and successfully integrated. A quote from one intelligence unit officer however encapsulates the problem.

"They (call handlers) live in their little world and we live in ours"

In one IMU the functions have been limited to specific areas. Call handlers only deal with incidents, crime desk (CMU) staff only deal with crime matters, and intelligence unit staff only work on crime problems. This demarcation is causing tensions within the IMU between the various elements. The crime desk will not deal with incidents if they are busy and the call handlers will not deal with crimes if they are busy. The intelligence unit feels a sense of resentment as they see that the call handlers have taken non-crime scanning and analysis capabilities from them. The piecemeal approach to functions is having a detrimental effect on Scanning as no single part of the IMU can create a total picture of what is happening in the area. It is clear that the three units are not working well together. They are even working different hours.

It is recognised that this is an extreme case and only occurs in one IMU. It does however illustrate the need to **fully** and completely integrate the functions of the IMU and that all component parts feel that they are part of the corporate whole.

Recommendation 5: **Chief officers should explore the integration of functions within the IMU during area visits to ensure that it is taking place. Force co-ordinators should also consider this issue during their reviews.**

The local variation between multi-tasking and mono tasking staff in the IMUs is recognised. This report stops short of making a specific recommendation regarding the preferred approach. The matter is one for local discretion. It is noted however that the more effective IMU's appear to use multi-tasking staff, who fulfil all of the roles within the IMU.

It has been suggested that a day's seminar for all intelligence officers might help to address some of the issues identified and facilitate their better integration into the IMU. There is felt to be much merit in this, as it will encourage a sharing of issues and a shared identification of how the issues can be addressed.

Recommendation 6: **All Intelligence officers should attend a day's seminar to explore issues surrounding their integration into the IMU structure and how those issues can be addressed.**

4.1.3 Geographical responsibility

There is strong evidence to suggest that where areas have adopted a sector policing approach and aligned Inspectors and blocks to geographical areas, PS seems to have been adopted more successfully. At the time of writing, most areas have moved over to such a style of policing. It is unclear whether PS was the stimulus for this or whether it would have happened anyway.

Merseyside Police: Initial evaluation of Problem Solving approach.

Whatever the reason, it is clear that PS has the best chance of success under geographically based policing. The emergence of such groups as Community Action Teams (CATs) and Area Action Teams (AATs) and their immediate successes, since the implementation of PS, provide evidence of this.

Failure to adopt such a model may cause a gap to emerge under PS between a problem being identified and an appropriate solution being put in place (caused in part by a lack of ownership of, interest in and commitment to a specific geographic area).

The original PS report suggested that PS would work better under a geographical policing model and recommended that areas should consider such an approach. This report reinforces that recommendation but recognises that the area policing style is a matter for the command team to decide.

As an example of best practice, the approach adopted by Belle Vale is commended. Moving to geographical responsibility, each sector has:

- Inspector
- Detective Sergeant
- CBOs
- Call handlers) in the IMU with specific responsibility for research in relation to problems in that area
- Crime desk staff
- Intelligence unit staff in the IMU with specific responsibility for research in relation to problems in that area

In effect a mini area has been developed for each sector, which gives a huge boost to local ownership and responsibility. It is also firmly in line with the Chief Constable's commitment to providing a local service where members of the community know the officers responsible for policing their local area.

4.1.4 Tasking & Co-ordinating

There is almost a universal view that PS has brought the Tasking and Co-ordinating group (TCG) to life again by giving it a focus. Many areas suggested that the TCG was going through the motions somewhat prior to PS but that it has now found a role under PS.

It is clear that the TCG is a crucial component of the PS process in areas. It provides the link between the identification of problems, the prioritisation of those problems and the implementation of appropriate solutions. It also manages accountability by requiring those officers allocated problems to report on progress. As such it should drive the PS process in areas.

There appears to be considerable variation between areas with respect to the operation of TCGs. Some meet on a weekly basis, some fortnightly, others monthly. Some are led by a Chief Inspector, others by an Inspector, others still by a Sergeant.

Those TCGs that meet on a regular basis and are led by the Chief Inspector (Ops) appear to be most successful. A regular meeting ensures that the momentum for progress is maintained and leadership by the Chief Inspector ensures that the group has sufficient credibility and drive.

Recommendation 7: The Tasking & Co-ordinating group should be led by the Chief Inspector (Operations) and meet on an agreed regular basis (at least monthly).

Even in some of those TCGs chaired by Chief Inspector's there is evidence that they are not being driven sufficiently tightly. Where problems have been allocated to particular officers by the TCG, sometimes the matter is allowed to drift. Officers who have been allocated the problem are sometimes allowed to get away with a "no progress to report" report back to the TCG.

To drive the process and ensure that progress is made towards the solution of problems the TCG must be seen to be strict in managing the progress of problems. This is another reason for strong leadership of the group by an officer of a senior rank.

Recommendation 8: The TCG must ensure that rigorous processes are in place to manage the progress of problems and refuse to accept "no progress" reports unless there is a valid reason.

In a few areas the TCGs have incorporated a form of bidding process. Officers come to the TCG and bid for resources to carry out a particular activity, but they must prepare their case using a PS approach, utilising the SARA concept.

Interestingly, some areas are now considering inviting representatives of the local authority to selected TCG meetings to deal with specific problems requiring a multi-agency approach. This approach should be encouraged.

Finally, there is worrying evidence that the process is not being driven at supervisory level. This is considered in more detail in section 4.2 below but it is felt that a strong and active TCG will go some way to dealing with these issues.

4.1.5 Rote of the Analyst

There is evidence in some IMUs that analysts are so busy entering data or trawling data for other officers that they are not able to devote sufficient time to analysing. This is, in turn preventing the early identification of problems. It is easy to recommend that more time should be provided for analysts to analyse but quite another matter to ensure that this can happen. However, it is possible for IMU supervisors to try to manage their resources more effectively and the following recommendation is made, accordingly.

Recommendation 9: IMU supervisors should take all possible steps to manage analysts workload and attempt to create enough time for them to carry out analysis work. As a rule of thumb, it is suggested that analysts should spend at least half of their time analysing data.

Some of the work overload may stem from the fact that the role definition of analysts seems to be blurred and varies between IMU. If the role and responsibilities of analysts were clearly stated, this might clarify confusion over what they should and should not be doing and allow them to concentrate on their core tasks.

Recommendation 10: The role and responsibilities of analysts should be clearly defined, agreed and communicated to all areas. These should reflect the central role of analysis.

Finally, there is also some evidence that the skills of analysts vary greatly between areas. This is due in some part to the lack of detailed training regarding their role and the crime data analysis process as a whole. It is recognised that the PS implementation team has carried out some limited training, but a more comprehensive programme needs to be put into place.

Recommendation 11: A training needs analysis should be carried out to identify current skills levels of analysts, the skills which they should have in order to carry out their job successfully and an outline of training that needs to be provided to fill any skills gaps. Steps should then be taken to provide necessary training as soon as practicable.

4.1.6 Joint IMUs

It is recognised that, at present there is only one joint IMU in the Force; Lower Lane covering C2 and C3 areas. This IMU has been the subject of considerable scrutiny since the early review of IMU operation, which suggested that *consideration* should be given to the splitting of the IMU. A number of modifications were put into place in April to address some of the emerging issues. While it is very early to review the impact of these modifications data in section 3.4.2 suggests a dramatic improvement in call handling performance.

Some area command teams have indicated that they would consider the establishment of a joint IMU with a neighbouring area. While the economies of scale and resilience arguments are appealing, it is suggested that the merits of a joint IMU compared to a single area IMU are still to be proven. In economic terms, though recognising the benefits of potential economies of scale, the Force should be wary of the principle of diminishing returns. There may be an optimal size for an IMU in relation to the workload in an area. Beyond that size, any additional resources put into the IMU are less and less productive, per unit of resource.

To enable the changes made in Lower Lane IMU to have a chance to "bite", and clarify the position in relation joint and single area IMUs, it is suggested that any decision about its future should be deferred for up to three months. However, it is also suggested that no other IMUs should be allowed to merge until the position at Lower Lane has been clarified after a review of its performance, possibly in July.

Recommendation 12: **No decision about the future of Lower Lane IMU should be taken until the recent changes have been given an appropriate opportunity to have an impact. A further review of the performance of the IMU should be carried out in July, and decisions about its' future taken based on that review.**

Recommendation 13: **No other IMUs should be allowed to merge until the review of Lower Lane IMU in July, has been completed.**

4.2 Systems and Processes

4.2.1 Role of the Supervisor

As already noted above, the role of supervisory officers is crucial to the success of the PS approach. There is clear evidence however that some officers of the rank of Sergeant and Inspector are not driving and supporting the PS process. As supervisors it is their responsibility to ensure that their officers are working in a PS way and are making progress with any problems allocated to them. This plainly is not happening in a significant number of cases. It is interesting to note that this issue has also emerged in other Forces trying to adopt a PS/Problem Oriented Policing approach.

To some extent, a strong TCG can go some way to dealing with this problem. However, many supervisory officers appear unclear about their role under PS and/or unwilling to commit fully to the approach.

It is recognised that there is a wider issue about the role of Inspectors in general in the Force, which is currently the subject of a review. It is crucial, however, that their role is identified and disseminated and that it supports their responsibilities under PS. Failure to gain and maintain the commitment of supervisory officers to the PS approach will ultimately lead to its withering.

4.2.2 SARA & PAT models

It is widely recognised throughout the Force that the SARA and PAT models are simple and logical and that they provide a clear structure for PS to work within. There has been early confusion with some officers equating SARA in particular with a particular form to be filled in. This does appear to be receding somewhat now, but it is reiterated that SARA is merely a model or framework to support the adoption of PS.

Having said that, most areas use the SARA format to compile data in relation to a problem. The original report did not set down a rigid definition of what constituted a problem and hence what should trigger the SARA process. The reason for this was that all problems should be taken on their merits and even one occurrence of a particular problem could be severe enough to trigger the PS process.

The danger of this approach is that different standards will be applied across areas to decide which problems should be actively pursued. This has emerged in practice where the number of SARA packages produced varies greatly between areas. While one area has only prepared seven SARA packages since the implementation of PS, other areas have developed over one hundred.

There is a concern that in some areas, SARA packages appear to be produced for almost every incident and that this devalues the approach. PS should focus on specific, serious and/or recurring problems, not necessarily every individual incident.

While this matter does seem to be righting itself as PS beds in and IMUs become used to a way of working, it is down to strong IMU supervisors and TCGs to ensure that SARA packages are produced for legitimate problems. Some areas have dealt with this problem by introducing a pre-SARA form. This contains broad details of the problem to be addressed and enables an early decision to be taken by IMU supervisors as to whether this problem is worthy of further investigation. This approach has emerged from a number of areas and is commended as good practice.

Scanning

With regard to the scanning of information, some areas have given individual call handlers responsibility for scanning particular geographical areas. Other areas have tasked their call handlers with scanning for particular crime or problem types. Again, this is a matter for local discretion, though clearly geographical scanning will work well in an area which has adopted geographical based policing.

As noted earlier in this report, there is also evidence that scanning is not taking place as widely as it should, often due to pressure on analysts to input data rather than analyse it.

There is a concern voiced by a number of senior officers that there appears to be little scanning at a Force level. The original report recommended that the Force Intelligence Bureau should take an active role in scanning Force problems and that recommendation is reiterated here. It is accepted, however that FIB have only recently received PS training and may therefore have had limited opportunities to apply PS to Force wide issues. The second stage evaluation will consider whether such a task has been fulfilled during the year.

Analysis

As for the SARA process itself, there is evidence that some areas are not analysing the problem thoroughly. In certain situations, they are scanning a particular problem then jumping straight to what they think is the best response, without necessarily analysing the problem properly.

There is also a concern in some IMUs that uniform officers are reluctant to come into the IMU to research problems for themselves. Some expect to be fed the appropriate information in relation to particular problems, rather than come into the IMU and seek it out. The long-term implication of possible over-reliance on the IMU is that this might promote lazy working practices and an erosion of investigative skills.

Once again, the work-based training package should encourage officers to research problems for themselves. In addition, supervisors must also ensure that their officers are researching problems properly.

Some areas, again those with an active TCG, have developed an approach where overtime and/or additional resources will not be provided until it is shown that the problem to be addressed has been thoroughly researched and the SARA process adopted. As noted above, methods of working are left to local discretion, but this is put forward as an effective means of encouraging the use of the PS approach.

Response

Inevitably failing to analyse a problem properly leads to a predominantly police based response, which may or may not be the appropriate response. It does, however, mitigate against the development of a multi-agency or other agency response, which is often a more effective solution to a particular problem. This may stem from an inability to see how the PS concepts apply in the workplace and the work based training package outlined in recommendation 1 may go some way to dealing with this problem.

Assessment

It also appears that Assessment is "patchy" though again it seems to be more rigorously carried out where the TCG is active and the problem owners are pressured to progress the resolution of problems. One of the issues surrounding assessment is that it is difficult to agree a point when a problem can be considered solved.

One approach is to re-visit a closed SARA file some months after its' apparent resolution. It may be appropriate to contact the original complainant to see if the problem has resurfaced. It is immediately recognised, however, that this is a resource intensive activity with limited value. The problem of developing an appropriate methodology for assessment is one that needs to be addressed urgently. Without a means of assessment there is a danger that problems may be presumed to have been solved when in reality they have not.

Recommendation 14: The implementation team and IMU supervisors should work together to develop an agreed and acceptable methodology to enable effective assessment of problems to take place.

It appears in some areas that intelligence packages are not being prepared in a SARA format. This leads to confusion between what a SARA is, what an intelligence package is and what they should be used for. In reality, they should be one and the same and the following recommendation is therefore made.

Recommendation 15: **All IMUs should work towards the preparation of SARA and intelligence packages using the SARA format. This will help to reduce confusion and increase standardisation of approach.**

The progress of SARAs is often not fed back to the call handlers, many of whom will have carried out the initial scanning. This is not good practice from two perspectives. Firstly, the original complainant(s) may contact the IMU to find out whether progress is being made in solving the problem. If the call handler does not know, it is both unprofessional and embarrassing. Secondly, from a morale perspective it is important that call handlers see how work, which they have been involved in (usually at an early stage), is progressing.

Recommendation 16: **Processes should be established to ensure that all IMU staff are kept up to date regarding the progress of SARAs in the area.**

A few areas keep an up to date register of SARA's in briefing rooms, together with minutes of TCGs and information about performance against area targets. This provides every member of the area with the opportunity to keep up to date with problems in the area and how they are being dealt with. This model is put forward as one possible means of adopting recommendation 16,

4.2.3 Intelligence issues

It is clear that there is, in some areas, a significant backlog in entering intelligence logs (FI4s) on the Force Intelligence System (ORACLE). While this is not specifically a PS problem, it is beginning to have an impact on the scanning process. The danger of backlogs in entering intelligence is that a downward spiral is created. Sometimes, the data entered is of limited value by the time it is entered onto the system. Officers are aware of this and then are reluctant to put forward FI4s in the first place. This has potentially serious implications and will certainly limit the effectiveness of scanning if allowed to go unchecked.

It is accepted that specific skills are needed to enter intelligence data. It is not possible to deal with backlogs just by asking a typist to enter the data. Specific skills are needed to identify relevant information and create the links with other data, required by the ORACLE system. It would appear that there is a shortage of such staff in the Force, which is a major contributor to the backlogs. There appear to be two issues.

Firstly more staff need to be trained to become intelligence inputters/officers. More fundamental than that however, is that more people need to be encouraged to put themselves forward as intelligence inputters/officers. Many feel that the role is not valued or a "good" career move and that progress will only be made when the role of intelligence inputter is valued above that of copy typist.

Recommendation 17: The role of intelligence inputter and intelligence officer should be reviewed with a view to encouraging more high quality officers to carry out the role.

Some have suggested that the role of inputter/officer should be seen as a career development role and the possibility of secondments or attachments should be investigated to see if they could apply to such a role. Without up to date information, the value of the scanning process on which PS is based, becomes limited. As such, intelligence inputters and intelligence officers have a crucial role to play in the success of PS. That central role needs to be recognised.

It has also become clear that a considerable amount of valuable intelligence can come into the IMU through the call handlers. It would appear that much of this is not collected, however, because the call handlers do not know how to process it, in what format to gather and record it and they are not sure exactly what information is valuable and what is not. It is important that this important conduit for intelligence is supported.

Recommendation 18: Intelligence staff and call handlers should spend a period of time with each other (perhaps a day), so that each can understand the others requirements. They should develop mutually agreed means by which intelligence can be gathered by call handlers and fed to intelligence officers.

4.2.4 Relationship between IMU and switchboard/DCC

There is evidence, particularly in the early days, of the Force switchboard putting non-urgent calls through to the DCC rather than the appropriate IMU. Further to this, there is also evidence of resources being deployed without IMU knowledge or request.

As PS has become established, so this problem appears to have diminished and in many areas there is now a positive working relationship between the DCC and IMUs. This is due in no small part to joint training and DCC staff spending time in an IMU and vice-versa, organised by members of the implementation team.

4.2.5 PS and the planning process

There is limited evidence of PS being used in the planning process to date, despite the fact that it has now been incorporated into the planning handbook. It is recognised that due to the timing of the implementation, the 1998/99 planning cycle may have taken place before the full adoption of PS. The second stage evaluation at the end of the year will explore the extent to which PS has been used in the planning process for 1999/2000.

At a more tactical level however, there are an increasing number of examples of a PS approach being used in threat assessment exercises and in the preparation of operational orders for major events.

4.2.6 Local *authority* liaison officers

The siting of a Chief Inspector in each Local Authority office has been universally accepted as a major success. Much credit should go to the five officers involved for taking on a potentially difficult task and making such an impact. It is also significant that they also been warmly welcomed and accepted by the local authorities themselves.

They are seen as providing an effective conduit into the local authority helping to "smooth the path" through to appropriate departments, where specific solutions are required, which are beyond the remit of the Police. They have also helped to develop strategic frameworks for joint working and they have been particularly effective in helping the Force meet many of its' responsibilities under the Crime & Disorder Act.

This allocation of senior officers is seen as a tangible measure of the commitment of Merseyside Police to a multi-agency approach and to solving problems in the community in an integrated way. Through this allocation of officers, Merseyside Police has achieved considerable credibility in the local authority as being serious about dealing with community problems.

There are many examples of how the officers fulfilling this role have facilitated strong working relationships between the Force and the local authority. While it is perhaps unfair to pick out any one example, the work of the Liverpool Anti-Social Behaviour Unit (LASBU) and the role of Chief Inspector Simon Byrne in its' development is commended. This unit, though still in its' infancy has already received much high profile attention and the LASBU team have already been involved in discussions with the Home Secretary and Home Office Minister.

To temper this slightly, a number of officers have stated that, in the early days there were problems of visibility and access to the Chief Inspectors. It is noted that this situation is now improving as the officers "grow into" their role and it is anticipated that this issue will disappear in the coming months.

4.2,7IMU Performance

It is noted that in some areas, there is no feedback and/or review of management information in relation to the performance of the IMU. Such data considers calls handled, speed of response and demand/resource profiling. The information is available but it would appear that it is not reviewed in all areas.

Recommendation 19: **Area management teams should consider IMU performance on a monthly basis to ensure that the EMU is operating as effectively as possible.**

4.3 Training

Following the decision to implement PS throughout Merseyside Police, Management Development and Training (MDT) was tasked with delivering training in PS to every member of the organisation. In addition to additional specialist training for specific groups (such as area command teams), every member of the Force (police officers and civilian support) was to receive a two-day course in the principles and operation of PS.

To deliver the basic training, a team of eight trainers was drawn together and given a target throughput of 128 students per week. The training commenced in April 1998 and it was at that time anticipated that the basic training would be complete by June 1999.

Operational officers were first to receive the basic training, phased in relation to the date that their area was due to "go live" with PS. It was a strong recommendation of the original PS report that PS should not go live in an area, until as many officers as possible in that area had been trained.

MDT administrators liaised with areas to agree a list of nominees for each individual course. Due to pressure on rooms a variety of training locations were used around the Merseyside area. For example, facilities at Acre Lane were used for the training of Wirral officers.

By March 1999 the MDT team had trained over 3,000 members of the Force at a variety of venues. A review of the feedback sheets reveals that the training has been perceived by the students to be of a consistently high quality. Average student satisfaction ratings across the whole of the basic training are 85-90% and examples of the views expressed by some students are listed below.

"Good, relaxed, easy to listen to and informative "

Trainers had a good knowledge of the subject"

"Enjoyable and very professional"

"Clear and concise delivery "

Merseyside Police: Initial evaluation of Problem Solving approach.

There is also evidence that the training, on many occasions "made converts out of cynics." The MDT team is to be congratulated for their thorough approach and the professional delivery of PS training, particularly given the very tight timescales.

In addition, PS has been included as an element of other core training including CID foundation, probationer and traffic warden training.

Since the adoption of PS, Merseyside Police has played host to representatives from a large number of Forces, looking at the approach taken. Almost without exception they have all spent time with the trainers and have been extremely impressed by the considerable commitment made by the Force to PS training.

Despite the obvious success of the training programme however, a number of issues have emerged during the year in relation to the delivery. Some of these are relatively serious and threaten to undermine the excellent results achieved already unless they are addressed.

4.3.1 Staffing of the training team

In September 1998, the PS training team was reduced from eight dedicated trainers to four. Consequently there was an increasing reliance on the use of external trainers to assist in the delivery of the programme and ensure that timescales for delivery did not slip. Though this enabled the operational officer and support officer (Traffic/OSD) training to take place, by April 1999 only two trainers were left and they were coming under increasing pressure to return to their areas. There are also other pressures now on MDT to meet other training priorities, such as diversity training.

As a result, though the material has been prepared for the civilian support training to be delivered, at the time of writing this training has not yet commenced and some 1,500 to 2,000 members of the Force are still to receive their basic training. It was due to begin in mid-March and this delay means that it is unlikely that the original deadline of completing all of the training by June 1999, will be met.

It is important that this issue is resolved promptly. Failure to facilitate the civilian support training might promote a degree of resentment in these staff. They may feel that though operational officers received two days training, they have as yet received none and there appears no immediate prospect that they will do so.

To try to resolve this issue the acting Chief Inspector in MDT has produced a paper outlining the problem and putting forward a number of options as to how the training can be delivered given the resource restrictions. They centre around the compression of the basic training for civilian support staff into a three-hour programme. There is much logic to this approach and consultations with the equal opportunities unit, staff and employee relations and some departmental managers suggest that this would be acceptable. A number of options have then been put forward in terms of the delivery of this package.

Recommendation 20: **Decisions must be made promptly regarding the adoption of a three hour training package for civilian support staff and the most effective means of delivery.**

Prompt decisions will minimise the slippage in the training schedule and should ensure that all members of the force have received training in the basic PS principles by the end of the summer.

4.3.2 Supervisory officers training

Phase 2 of the training programme was intended to reinforce the basic training received by Sergeants and Inspectors. It was designed to stress the importance of managing the PS process, consider how supervisory officers could ensure that their officers were problem solving effectively and explore how PS could be incorporated into the performance review model.

Though this phase of the training commenced, it quickly became clear that there were serious reservations about the value and focus of the training from those attending. It appeared that many of those attending expected to be *told* what their role was under PS and what they should do. The course was never intended to deliver this. Rather, it was designed to encourage officers to *think* carefully about their role and how they should incorporate PS into their work.

This was particularly worrying and is felt to stem from the uncertainty about the role of supervisory officers as a whole, referred to in section 4.2.1 above. Such were the concerns raised that the decision was taken to suspend the training. At the time of writing, this training has not re-commenced and this may in turn have some bearing on the fact that that supervisory officers as a whole do not seem to be driving PS as effectively as they should (also referred to in section 4.2.1).

It is strongly advised that the supervisory officer training be re-activated as soon as is practicable. Not only will this ensure that the recommended training programme is followed but it may deal with the issue of supervisor commitment to the PS process. The resource restrictions referred to in section 4.3.1 are noted and this may have an impact on the method of training delivery.

The reasons for the initial failure of this training also need to be taken into account and the programme re-designed somewhat. This should incorporate some form of pre-read to reinforce the PS principles. In addition, attendees must be made clear about what the training will and will not deliver, prior to their attendance. The objectives of the course must be clearly communicated and attendees must be encouraged to think about the issues that will be addressed, prior to attending the training. In this way, misunderstanding about the focus of the training should be minimised and those attending will do so in the knowledge that they will have to consider PS in their own context rather than being told what to do.

Recommendation 21: **Steps should be taken to re-package and re-commence the supervisory officers training as soon as practicable. The package must make clear what is and what is not included and what is expected of those attending.**

4.3.3 Nominations

Despite the logistical difficulties, the nomination process ran relatively smoothly. While there is a general problem of nominees not attending courses (not just problem solving training), most operational officer PS courses were well attended.

There were, however, difficulties in raising nominations for departmental officers (non-territorial operational officers) due to such factors as operational difficulties and the pressure of abstractions from departments. By the end of the first month of their training, the actual number of such officers trained was 38% down on the target figure. A number of steps were put in place to resolve this situation but by the end of this phase of training, only 56% of the target group had been trained.

At the time of writing it is intended to train those officers who have not yet received their basic training, at the end of the programme. However, there are particular resource constraints, which may have an effect on the ability of MDT to carry this training out.

Over and above non-territorial operational officers, it is clear that there are a number of officers and staff who have "slipped the net" and also not yet received their basic training. There is some merit, therefore in considering some form of mop-up training to catch those who were missed in the first run. One could argue that as time passes, and PS becomes more established, so the need for basic training diminishes. While this may be true, it is felt that there are still sufficient officers not trained and PS is not yet sufficiently embedded in the organisation to negate the need for such training. As a result, the following recommendation is made.

Recommendation 22: **The number of operational officers, territorial and non-territorial, still to receive their basic PS training programme should be identified as soon as possible. Dependent upon the numbers identified, steps should be put in place to provide this training as soon as practicable.**

Consideration should be given to "blitzing" this training over a short period of time either by use of a re-formed specialist training team or external training team.

4.3.4 Future training requirements

While the original training is still being delivered, it is important that some thought is given to how PS can be incorporated into future training. There would appear to be three areas worthy of consideration.

16 hour package & role of ATO

Already referred to in recommendation 1, the pressing need for this package is re-stated. Leaving aside the development of the package itself, there are a number of issues surrounding the logistics of delivery of this package. It is intended that Area Training Officers (ATOs) take responsibility for managing this package in their area. This raises two concerns, however:

- How will the ATOs be trained in how to manage this package and informed of what is expected of them?
- ATOs already have a significant workload. Do they have sufficient time to enable them to take on the management and co-ordination of this training package?

It is recommended that these issues receive speedy attention. Failure to address them will delay the adoption of the work based training package, which is seen as crucial to the embedding of PS into routine ways of working.

Recommendation 23: **The implementation team should liaise with MDT as soon as practicable to explore not only the development of the 16 hour work based training package (recommendation 1), but also the means of managing and co-ordinating it's adoption effectively.**

New staff

Clearly individuals join Merseyside Police on a regular basis, through a number of routes. It is important that these individuals, irrespective of whether they are police officers or civilian support staff, need to be trained in the principles of PS and the Merseyside Police approach. As noted above, an element of PS training has already been included in core training, including probationers training. While this will help ensure that new police officers are trained in PS, civilian support staff should also be given the opportunity to learn about PS.

Recommendation 24: **Consideration should be given to the incorporation of some PS input into the induction package, for civilian support staff joining Merseyside Police.**

Joint training with other agencies

A number of areas are already beginning to explore the possibilities of carrying out joint PS training with representatives of other agencies. While this report stops short of making a specific recommendation to this effect, the principle of joint PS training is one which is commended and worthy of full consideration.

Premises

One of the major problems facing training administrators was to find suitable premises in which to deliver the training. Whilst premises were always found, it would appear that there were issues around:

- The availability of suitable premises
- Ensuring that the location was convenient for those attending
- The payment of expenses to attendees.

To ensure that these problems are not repeated in the delivery of civilian support staff training and any "mop-up" basic training it suggested that innovative means are explored in relation to locations for training delivery. One suggestion is that future training should be area based, utilising area training/meeting rooms, with the trainer going to the attendees rather than vice-versa. There may be merit in exploring this idea as it may encourage attendance, minimise disruption caused by attendance and remove the issue around payment of expenses to attend the training.

Recommendation 25: **Consideration should be given to the feasibility of delivering future training using local area facilities.**

4.3.5 Management of the training programme

Initially a lead deliverer was allocated to the PS training programme with a responsibility to, not only deliver training, but also manage and co-ordinate the programme. It was clear that this placed a huge burden on the individual and some months into the programme it was decided to allocate an Inspector to take over the management and co-ordination duties.

It was felt that this was a very positive step. The Inspector was not required to deliver on the programme. This prevented the individual from focusing too much on delivery issues and hence enabled him to manage the programme more strategically by maintaining a broad overview of all aspects of the programme.

An external consultant was used to support the training team by exploring the material and how they would deliver it. This was also perceived to be very valuable and generated a more professional approach in the delivery team.

External trainers were used at times to supplement the team. While some were satisfactory, others were less so, a number having problems in grasping the concepts, the police culture and the translation of concepts into meaningful training.

Recommendation 26: **External trainers used to support PS training in future should be carefully selected, well briefed and tightly managed to ensure that they deliver the material to a satisfactory standard.**

4.4 Information technology

Much progress has been made in the provision of better IT support to the Force since the inception of PS, such as the provision of MapInfo. Despite this, IT is still perceived as piecemeal and non user-friendly by the majority of the Force.

The need for a system, which can integrate and interrogate information from a number of source systems, is still strong. It is encouraging to note that during the year progress has been made in the development of a broad operational requirement for such a system and that certain elements of this are now under test.

It is recognised that the development of any Force wide IT system is a lengthy and complex process. This report merely restates that the provision of a system supporting single data entry and access is fundamental to the scanning and analysis process. As a result, the Force is supported in its' continuing efforts to bring such a system to fruition.

The provision of a Force-wide network or Intranet, was also seen as central to the sharing of information and best practice about PS. Again, it is disappointing that the network is not yet fully in place, but again the Force is encouraged to press ahead with this development.

4.5 Human Resource Issues

Such a fundamental change in the operation of the Force was bound to have an impact on members of the organisation. It is clear that some have been affected more than others and a number of HR issues have emerged during the implementation of PS.

4.5.1 Performance Review

It was originally intended that PS would be incorporated into the performance review process through the development of a PS competency and its incorporation into the performance and development review (PDR) model. While this is still the intention, the PDR model to be adopted and its' implementation are still to be decided and this has prevented the formal inclusion of PS in the performance review process.

It is argued that, without this there is no formal mechanism for sanction and reward in relation to poor and good PS work, respectively. It could be further argued that lack of such a mechanism has contributed to the fact that PS is not yet properly embedded into routine ways of working. From a PS perspective, the Force is therefore encouraged to press ahead speedily with the adoption and implementation of a PDR model, incorporating processes for reviewing and assessing PS performance.

From a purely logistical perspective, a number of IMU supervisors have reported that they are having problems in carrying out performance appraisals under the current arrangements, because of the large number of staff that they now have to supervise. They argue that there is no one that they can delegate this to and that, if done properly, this can be a lengthy process.

To some extent, it could be argued that this issue is about being organised and managing new responsibilities differently. It is anticipated that this matter will solve itself during the year as staff adapt to their new roles, but the second stage evaluation will revisit this issue at the end of the year.

4.5.2 Career development and IMUs

It is clear from this report that the IMU is increasingly central to the operation of PS and the effectiveness of the Force as a whole. Some have argued that the Force must recognise the value and worth of IMU staff and that a posting of, say, six months or more in an IMU should be seen as a valuable career development activity.

It has also been suggested that all newly qualified Sergeants should spend some time in the IMU to learn about its' central role and how they can help to encourage officers to make use of the facilities.

It is as not known, at this stage, whether or not these suggestions are viable but there does seem to be value in exploring means by which PS and the IMU in particular can be used to support career development.

Recommendation 27: **The implementation team and representatives of the HR department should explore means by which the IMU can be used to create and support career development opportunities.**

4.5.3 Succession planning

A number of roles have emerged as central to the effective operation of PS, the two most important of which, it is suggested, are the IMU supervisor and the local authority liaison officer.

It is clear that the IMU supervisor is fundamental to the effective operation of the IMU and as such the role needs to be managed carefully. There must be continuity and while post holders need to be given time to make an impact, they should not spend more than a specified period in the post, say three years.

Similarly, for the local authority co-ordinators, it is important that they are given time to build confidences, establish relationships and make tangible progress. It is important, however, that they do not spend too long in the post.

One such officer has already commented that he feels that there is a danger that the post holder can quickly become divorced from Merseyside Police and more closely aligned with the local authority, simply because of where his office is sited. This officer is also concerned that regular Force circulations such as training nominations do not find their way to him and that, unless he is careful, he could find himself marginalised in the Force. This might in turn harm his future career prospects. It is recognised that these posts are of a three-year tenure and it is felt that this is appropriate for this role.

For both roles, therefore, it is important that they are both carefully succession planned. This might require the successor to "shadow" the existing post holder for a number of weeks prior to taking over, to ensure that he/she is aware of working practices and personalities on taking over the role. This is felt to be particularly important in relation to the local authority co-ordinators.

Recommendation 28: **The HR department should develop processes to ensure effective and seamless succession planning for I MI] supervisors and local authority liaison officers (Chief Inspector posts).**

4.6 Other Issues

4.6.1 Performance Indicators

It is important that Performance Indicators (Pis) reflect that, which the organisation wishes to be achieved and the parameters within which such achievement takes place. There is a simple maxim that *"what gets measured, gets done"*. In other words, people will seek to focus on those tasks or activities, which are reflected in the means by which they are measured.

If the Pis are inappropriate, for whatever reason, there is a temptation to "fiddle the figures" in order that the Pi's appear acceptable (this is a common practice and not exclusive to the police service). In other words, efforts are focused on manufacturing satisfactory Pis rather than on trying to carry out the tasks that should be done. A perfect example was illustrated in section 3.4.2 of this report. The IMUs have a PI to respond to 85% of non-urgent calls within thirty seconds. The logic behind this PI is that by giving a prompt response, the public is getting a better quality service.

A similar PI in another Force however, has led to an interesting approach in that a member of staff is specifically tasked with taking the initial call from the public. If a "help desk" operator is free, the caller is put through immediately, if not the caller is "stacked" until one becomes available. One could argue that the Force is meeting its PI in that over 90% of calls are answered within 30 seconds under this system. However, following the initial response, it could be that the caller is stacked in a queue awaiting a free line for a number of minutes. Though the PI is being met, one could argue that the public might not be receiving a better quality of service.

An over pre-occupation with meeting the PI is having a similar impact in the IMLJs, it is argued. There is confusion over "when the clock starts" in relation to the incoming call. There is much discussion surrounding whether the call should be answered within 30 seconds of the call entering the stacking system or within 30 seconds of the call leaving the stacking system and being released to an IMU operator. This raises issues about how calls abandoned while in a queue or stack, are measured. Much effort is being expended to manufacture a position so that the "best" PI results can be produced, when much of this effort should be given to providing a better service.

The need therefore to establish the appropriate Pis is crucial. While the need to respond promptly with calls is without question, there is also a need to ensure that the quality of service provided to the public is measured. It could be argued that PS requires members of the Force to spend longer on the phone, listening to callers and taking useful information. By doing this, the call handlers might be on the phone for longer, thus keeping lines engaged, thus causing delays in calls being answered. In other words the PI to respond quickly to calls would appear to be in direct conflict with the view that PS should support callers receiving a better service.

One should not look at any one PI in isolation from all of the others. Pis come as a package and they should be looked at as such, taken together giving an overall impression of the "health" of the organisation. There is a real danger that an over emphasis on quantitative measures such as speed of response to phone calls will lead to a neglect of qualitative measures such as quality of service to the public.

It is important that the Pi's must reflect "good PS work". It could be argued that much of PS is about providing a better quality of service to the public and it is crucial that this is measured appropriately.

A number of issues were raised in the initial review of IMUs regarding the relevance of the first two Pis and the fact that clarification was required to establish exactly what was being measured. It is suggested that these issues have not yet been resolved and it is recommended that the implementation team meet with representatives of MIA to consider again the question of Pis and PS.

It is important that a set of Pis are in place, tightly defined and agreed, which measure what the Force wishes to achieve out of the adoption of the PS approach. As noted back in section 2 of this report, it could be argued that, as PS is an underlying philosophy, it should underpin the achievement of all Force objectives. As such, its success can be measured by considering the current Pis and targets in the Force. They may need to be amended and supplemented, however, to ensure that they encourage "good PS work" and reflect when this has taken place.

Recommendation 29: **The implementation team should meet with representatives of MIA to revisit the issue of Pis to ensure that they reflect PS and encourage members of the Force to work in an effective PS way.**

4.6.2 Implementation and residual structures

The general consensus is that the implementation process ran relatively smoothly, particularly considering the fundamental changes brought about to the organisation through the adoption of PS. The project implementation team deserves great credit for this, carrying out a complex series of tasks in extremely short time scales, such that almost all deadlines were met.

During the implementation process, the project manager had considerable problems in pulling together and keeping a team. At times, the team consisted of only two people and this placed great pressures on the team already grappling with a project of such complexity and importance, particularly in the early stages. Notwithstanding the pressures on resources, it is important that projects are resourced appropriately.

To some extent, the Force has been a victim of its own success in that many Forces became aware during the year of the "ground-breaking" approach to PS adopted by Merseyside Police. This led to visits from 18 Forces during the year and a visit by a party of officers from Charlotte in the USA. Many of these visits were of two or three days and placed further pressures on the implementation team, who were required to organise and host such visits.

With the completion of the implementation process in the coming months, it is anticipated that the implementation team, in its current form, will be disbanded. There is a strong case, however, for retaining some form of central co-ordinating or internal consultancy unit to ensure that PS does not wither. Evidence from other Forces suggests that without some central co-ordination point, PS will lose momentum and fail, particularly in the first two years of operation.

A clear message from this report is that great strides have been made in selling the PS message across the Force, but there is still much work to do. Issues will continue to arise through the operation of PS, as it beds in further during the year. In addition, this report has raised a large number of recommendations, which may need to be actioned and progressed. Some individual or team needs to take responsibility for ensuring that PS continues to develop within the Force.

A number of Forces have established an internal consultancy unit to manage and co-ordinate the operation of PS in the Force, notably, Thames Valley. This unit is recognised as making a significant contribution to the effective operation of PS in that Force and is seen as a potent means of ensuring the continued development of PS. It is suggested that such a structure would enable PS to continue to develop in Merseyside Police.

Recommendation 30: **Active consideration should be given to the establishment of an internal PS consultancy unit to co-ordinate and manage the continued development of PS in the Force, following the completion of the implementation process.**

4.6.3 Senior Officer commitment

A clear message throughout the original report was that the drive for the adoption of PS must come from the top of the organisation. This operates at three levels. Chief officers, area command teams and first line managers and supervisors must be seen to be committed to the approach. In Police culture parlance, if managers are not seen to "walk the talk", they cannot expect officers for whom they are responsible to do the same.

At the Chief Officer level, there is clear and irrefutable evidence that the executive officers of the Force are using PS in their daily work. It is most encouraging to note that all of the executive officers attended a number of training days where they worked through a management style problem using a PS approach. This promoted a PS approach to tasks, which appears to have been embedded into routine ways of working. A problem is, however, that many officers in the Force are not aware of this. Chief officers must do all they can not only to use PS in their daily work, *but also to be seen to do so.*

In addition, many area command teams made the point that although chief officers professed to be committed to a PS way of working, there was:

- no evidence of that approach being used to support Force Strategy Group meetings
- no reflection of PS in the preparation of policy documents
- little (if any) mention of PS by chief officers during visits to areas.

As noted above, there is little doubt that the chief officers are committed to a PS way of working and actively use the approach. They need to be far more visible, however, in their commitment.

Recommendation 31: **Efforts should be made to heighten the visibility of chief officers commitment to PS. To facilitate this it is suggested that consideration should be given to how a PS approach can be incorporated into the operation of Force Strategy Group meetings. In addition, policy documents should incorporate a SARA format as far as is possible and chief officer visits must probe the extent to which PS is being adopted in the area/department visited.**

In this way, area command teams in particular will note chief officers commitment to PS and ensure that they too are committed to the approach. It appears that, for whatever reason, while all area command teams accept the principle of PS and the corporate need to adopt the approach, some are more committed to the PS approach than others. This in turn affects the extent to which PS is actively pursued in their areas.

Clearly, pressure from above will require area command teams to demonstrate their commitment. There may, however, be value in repeating the area command team workshops, which took place as part of the training programme. These will seek to explore some of the problems experienced by command teams in operating PS in their areas and seek to find solutions such that PS can operate as effectively as possible.

Recommendation 32: **Consideration should be given to repeating area command team workshops to ensure that local problems in the operation of PS (if any) can be identified and solutions explored.**

5. SUMMARY

In summary then, it would appear that since the inception of PS there has been a reduction in the number of incidents and crimes, particularly of a minor nature, such as disorder. The contribution of PS to these reductions is impossible to identify, however, as is the extent to which these reductions would have occurred anyway, without PS. There are, however, an increasing number of examples of how adopting a PS approach has helped to solve problems and specific crimes, which would otherwise have remained unsolved (at least in the short to medium term).

It also very clear that there has been a significant reduction in the deployment of officers, particularly to minor incidents. This, matched with an apparent increase in the time that officers spend out of the station, would suggest that PS is certainly bringing about a more effective use of resources.

As with any fundamental change in methods of working, the approach is taking some time to bed down. There are, therefore, a number of organisational issues that need to be addressed if problem solving is to continue to develop in the Force.

Overall, however, the Force should be greatly encouraged by the early findings of this evaluation. PS does seem to be starting to have an effect across the Force and a platform of understanding has been provided, from which the organisation needs to move on. The second stage evaluation at the end of this year will explore the extent to which the impact has been sustained and whether or not the organisational issues, some of which are pressing, have been addressed.