POLICE PAPERS

REVIEWING THE ORGANISATION OF PROVINCIAL POLICE FORCES

SUMMARY

Police forces need to review their organisation from time to time to reassess the value of management overheads, clarify the functions of subunits and ensure that resources are being directed in line with priorities. Thorough reviews can be an antidote to the tendency in all large organisations to drift into over-management. Forces which have conducted them in recent years have streamlined their organisation to produce more self-contained and accountable subunits to police local communities, with shorter lines of command and more emphasis on performance monitoring as opposed to direct 'hands on' control.

Forces which have not undertaken such reviews for some time may be missing opportunities for considerable improvements, for example by reducing management on-costs (the pay costs of higher ranks as a percentage of constables' pay), the proportion of police manpower tied up in administrative functions, and the numbers of police officers controlled directly from divisional or force headquarters. Management on-costs vary amongst provincial forces from 36 per cent to 48 per cent and each percentage point in their average of 42 per cent adds about £20 million to the national bill for police services.

Lines of command inside forces are often longer than necessary. Forces should have territorial subunits which are fully accountable for the quality of day to day policing in their local area, in which case the value of retaining 'divisions' as an intermediate tier of command is open to question, at least in the 25 provincial forces with police establishments under 2,000.

Reviews of structure identify opportunities for reform which need to be weighed against the costs of change. Frequent restructuring may be counter-productive, but forces should usually undertake a review every five years. Ultimately, handling its recommendations is a matter for the professional judgement of the chief constable, but it can provide opportunities to agree service standards with the police authority and to discuss their resource implications. There is no blueprint to which all forces should conform, but this paper gives guidance on how reviews should be conducted.
Structural reviews need to be integrated with annual exercises to ensure that allocations of resources remain in line with operational priorities. In some forces the distribution of resources is mainly historical. Approaches to resource allocation range from sophisticated computer models to 'decibel planning' bidding systems ('those who shout loudest ...'). There is scope to reduce reliance on bidding systems and subjective judgements and to make more use of formulae to represent workload, with explicit statements of policies on service standards open to public scrutiny.

The outcome of reviews of structure and resource allocation can be trimmer forces, with basic command units held accountable for policing their local communities, given an adequate share of resources to meet their objectives, and working to quantified service aims used as a basis for performance monitoring (as described in Police Paper No 8).

But although many improvements can be made by forces themselves, there are constraints hindering beneficial changes which can only be addressed at national level. A national review of rank structure and associated pay scales should be conducted to allow more flexible approaches to management structures; and regulations on shift-working need to be reviewed in the light of new patterns of deployment which some forces are adopting.

**INTRODUCTION**

1 Increasingly, the police service is setting priorities; clarifying responsibilities of individuals and subunits for delivering them; and monitoring service quality*. But improved objective setting needs to be matched by organisational improvements.

2 Police management should allow rapid and flexible responses by local subunits to changing needs in their areas. It should impose minimal overheads — command 'pyramids' should be as flat as possible; and lines of command should be short and clear. Forces should resist the tendency to elevate problems and solutions to higher levels which are remote from the general public, unless doing so can be shown to bring compensating benefits.

3 Whilst force command structures and their allocation of resources should not be in constant flux they should be kept under review. This paper discusses the factors affecting those reviews.

4 The last decade has seen a wave of reforms to internal management, and particularly territorial command structures in police forces. Many have undertaken fundamental reviews of their organisation, and others are now contemplating radical reforms, influenced by new thinking which questions traditional assumptions about spans of command and allocation of responsibilities. There is also growing interest in mathematical models to assist the allocation of resources amongst territorial subunits.

5 But some forces have not had a fundamental review of organisation for a decade or longer, and the distribution of their resources is largely historical. In these cases there is no assurance that the force is as effective and efficient as it could be at translating public money into police services.

**THE CURRENT POSITION**

6 Many features of organisation are held in common throughout the police service. Similarities arise because:

— the final outputs required from police services are broadly consistent over time and geographically;
— the separate forces have a strong sense of identity as parts of a quasi-national service;
— forces share experiences through a network of committees and working groups in the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO);
— the most important terms and conditions of service for officers are negotiated nationally;
— officers move between forces for career development reasons; and not least
— the Home Office and HM Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC) have great influence over the ways in which local police resources are organised.

7 Nevertheless there are also differences between forces in ap-

* Police Paper No 8 Effective Policing — Performance Review in Police Forces discussed progress in these areas and recommended further actions.
Every force has a chief constable and a deputy. Overall supervision of operations is usually delegated to an Assistant Chief Constable (ACC). Most forces have more than one ACC (Greater Manchester Police has six), the others being responsible for staffing or specialist matters. Some police officers are organised in force-wide operational units or support departments, but most are in territorial subunits responsible for a range of policing services in a particular part of the force’s territory (Exhibit 4, page 5).

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Exhibit 3

TRADITIONAL FORCE COMMAND STRUCTURE

The traditional structure is characterised by long lines of command . . .

contain two or three 'sub-divisions' commanded by a superintendent. In addition to operational control of sub-divisions, divisional commanders usually manage a range of administrative and support services to them. Divisional headquarters tend to be relatively small in relation to the sub-divisions below.

11 In the history of the police service, sub-divisions are a relatively recent innovation. Superintendents used to command divisions, and the rank of chief superintendent was created to head large divisions which then needed a sub-divisional structure to make them manageable. But the names are of little importance: the important concept is that within forces there are territorial sub-units responsible for policing defined parts of the force's area. In most forces the sub-division is the lowest level in the command structure which can provide a 24 hour policing service able to respond to all incidents and deal fully with most of them without frequent external support. That is, it is usually the 'basic command unit' of territorial policing within a force.

12 But sub-divisions vary widely in size (Exhibit 5) from under 50 officers to over 250. In some rural areas they are low in manpower, headed by a chief inspector and dependent on support from neighbouring sub-divisions for purposes such as review of custody arrangements under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE). It is questionable whether these satellite sub-divisions can always be regarded as basic command units in their own right.

13 At the other extreme, some sub-divisions are so large in size that they are commanded by two superintendents splitting responsibilities between them. In the Metropolitan Police in London there is not normally a sub-divisional structure and the basic command units are the divisions, of which there are over 70 organised into eight 'areas', each equivalent to a medium-sized provincial force. Functionally, there is a similarity between a sub-division of 250 officers in a provincial force policing a compact urban area under a superintendent, and a division of 450 officers commanded by a chief superintendent in the Metropolitan Police, in the sense that each is the level from which the majority of policing services is delivered. In the larger provincial forces such as Greater Manchester Police and West Midlands Police it is a moot point as to whether the basic command units are their divisions or their sub-divisions.

14 Usually, officers within sub-divisions are organised into 'sections' which are manned by rotating shifts or 'reliefs' each typically led by an inspector. Traditionally all the officers in a relief come on duty together for an eight hour shift, beginning with a briefing parade. Four reliefs will provide 24 hour
cover between them one ('early turn') coming on in the morning; another ('late turn') coming on in the afternoon; officers on 'night turn' coming on in the late evening; and one relief on 'rest'. (Different arrangements may operate for 'rural beat' officers and 'neighbourhood' beats in urban areas).

15 Not all police stations are open for 24 hours a day, although a sub-division usually has at least one continuously manned station. Even where stations are always open, the responsibility for police services operating from them is usually split between the relief commanders alternating around the clock. It is thus sub-divisional command which is usually the lowest level in the territorial structure at which an officer takes responsibility for a range of 24 hour local policing services.

16 Surrey Police have implemented a different approach called 'total geographic policing' which abandons the traditional relief system to allow individual officers to come on and off duty at different times from their team-mates and supervisors. In this way, relatively small groups of officers can provide round the clock cover for a smaller geographical area. There can be up to six inspector-led teams of about 25 officers within each sub-division, each dedicated to a particular territory. For many purposes these teams are the basic command units in that force.

17 Although the police service has tried to remain anchored in the concept of local units serving local communities, there has been a trend towards fewer and larger provincial
forces which has increased the height and complexity of command structures; and made the officer with ultimate responsibility for operations — the chief constable — increasingly remote from the communities his officers serve. Up to the Second World War, most cities and towns had their own constabularies under their own chief constables, in addition to the county forces covering the more rural areas. Despite amalgamations, there were still over 100 forces in England and Wales in 1960. The size of the police service overall has grown — from about 72,000 officers in England and Wales (including the Met) in 1960 to about 125,000 in 1990 — and the number of forces has reduced: there are now only 41 English and Welsh forces outside London. Inevitably these forces have more complex command structures than their predecessors. But they may be more complicated — and expensive — than is necessary in some cases.

18 Most forces entered the last decade with a legacy of hands-on control from their centre, exercised down a cascade of command tiers with narrow spans of control at each level reflecting the need for close oversight of subordinates in the absence of useful performance measures (see Police Paper No 8). Many senior officers are uncomfortable with spans of command in middle management wider than ‘threes’ — so that for instance having six subdivisions in a force implies the need for two divisional commands to oversee them.

19 But many forces have restructured — attempting to shift to shorter lines of command supported by more internal inspection of performance. Sub-divisions have tended to become more self-contained with reduced operational roles for divisions. In the Metropolitan Police an entire layer of territorial management (‘districts’ between areas and divisions) was abolished in 1985. But some forces still retain a centralist style of management imposing high on-costs; fragmenting responsibilities for quality of service; and overriding links between local commanders and their communities.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

20 In many forces, the process of reviewing allocations is geared to bidding to the Home Office for additional resources. Home Office circular 106/88 advised that ‘the precise duties and locations envisaged for any additional manpower must be specified and [the Home Secretary] commends the practice, in many forces, of supporting their applications with a thorough review of the way in which existing resources are being directed.’ Whilst giving welcome encouragement to the practice of local annual resource allocation reviews, the approach to national resource allocation implied is of highly detailed central scrutiny of ad hoc local bids.

21 Use of formulae to assess workload has always played some part in forces’ internal allocations — for instance using incidence of serious crime to distribute CID resources. But approaches which systematically rejustify existing manpower allocations from a zero base using indicators of policing need are still not common. Ad hoc subjective judgements made from the centre are often the dominant influence. This may be consistent with ad hoc central management of operations but it poses serious problems for attempts to increase effectiveness and reduce management overheads through decentralisation.

THE POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT

22 Regular reviews of resource allocation, and less frequent but still regular reviews of overall force structures are the best antidote to the tendency in any large organisation for bureaucracy to proliferate and for accountabilities to become blurred over time. They offer opportunities to:

— reduce management overheads and clarify command responsibilities;

— match resources better to demands; and

— increase the accountability of local subunit commanders for the quality of their services.

These interlinked issues are discussed in turn in the following paragraphs.

MANAGEMENT OVERHEADS AND COMMAND RESPONSIBILITIES

23 Police services are for the most part produced and delivered by constables acting alone or in pairs. Personal initiative and responsibility are at a premium in their work; and they are selected, developed and paid accordingly. Command structures above them should be relatively ‘flat’. But organising and supervising
these officers, and supporting them with a range of administrative services and specialist resources have led to management structures of increasing complexity. Much of this will be essential; and by far the greater part, whilst perhaps not indispensable, will add value to police services.

24 Without performance measures related to outputs, it is difficult to know which elements of the management structure actually add value. Developing those measures and indicators must be a priority for the police service (as discussed in Paper No. 8). Meanwhile, progress can be made by taking a more critical view of the implicit assumption in many areas of the police service that things get done better by officers with higher rank and by specialist units controlled at higher levels in the organisation.

25 There is wide variation in the proportion of officers outside the territorial structure. There is usually greater need for smaller organisations to centralise in order to benefit from economies of scale in specialist functions. But the variations are not explained either by force size or population density (Exhibit 6). Some forces simply have different management cultures from others.

26 There is a tendency in any large organisation to meet new challenges with new specialist squads drawing resources out of local command units in a piecemeal way. Police forces are not unusual in this respect. One force review commented:

'A cursory examination of the force identified ... an apparent inability to respond to specific demands without resort to the temporary establishment of ad hoc squads.'

Temporary allocations can become permanent. Territorial units in another force are in aggregate consistently 100 officers below their agreed establishment because of 'temporary' postings to headquarters.

27 In one force, over 10 percent of uniformed operational manpower available to sub-divisions had been extracted to work in specialist squads commanded by divisions. These squads were not shown on establishments, the numbers of officers attached to them were not collated, and no process had been established to review their roles. Where there are a lot of ad hoc units with specific operational functions responsibility for the overall quality of local services is fragmented.

Exhibit 6
LOCATION OF FUNCTIONS
There is a wide variation in the percentage of officers based at headquarters . . .

Source: Audit Commission analysis of data from sample of forces.

28 There is a related tendency for the rank of officers commanding specialist units and headquarters departments to drift upwards. In the police service, rank is used not only for signalling the success and status of individuals but also for determining levels of pay, and for identifying their general command competence and the types of job they will do. Above the level of constable, the pay scale for each rank has only four points on it, which are reached according to length of service in the rank (Exhibit 7, overleaf). The only mechanism for increasing an officer's pay to reward merit is to promote the officer to a higher rank.

29 A good local beat officer with a liking for the job but an ambition to be successful (in the terms which society uses to judge success in a police career) thus looks towards promotion. But this means moving to another job, which may have unwelcome effects upon individual motivation. Also, higher ranking
Exhibit 7

PAY SCALES IN THE POLICE SERVICE

The only way to give a monetary reward for merit is promotion to the rank above . . .

32 These attitudes to rank are sustained by pressures from outside the police service. Some local authorities seem to regard it as a matter of civic prestige that a police commander of certain rank should be dedicated to their community. Other organisations as well may look to the rank of the police officer dealing with them as an indication of how seriously the force considers them. Imposing on middle-ranking operational commanders a heavy workload which could otherwise be delegated to other officers with the necessary local experience and judgement limits the attention which they are able to give to leading their officers. In turn it limits the sizes of operational units and leads to suboptimal command structures. Alternatively it causes confusion of accountabilities by creating specialist departments and units dedicated to particular concerns (each commanded at a senior rank and each therefore with its own management infrastructure).

33 Government controls on force establishments concentrate upon numbers of police officers rather than on what they cost (see Police Paper No 6). For a force to vary its establishment by replacing one chief superintendent with one PC is fairly easy. However, the basic pay of a

posts have to be maintained so that junior officers have promotion opportunities. Streamlining one part of police organisation usually means creating posts in another part, so as not to alter inter-rank ratios too dramatically. Those posts then have to be justified by roles and responsibilities judged appropriate to them. The consequence can be a burgeoning of management activity which does not add value to the organisation.

30 Flexible grading of posts is discouraged by a tendency to specify job descriptions in terms of rank, rather than in terms of the intrinsic requirements of the post. This can be reinforced by custom and practice, and in some cases by legislation, which expects particular duties to be performed by officers in particular ranks. Thus for instance the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 specifies the precise custody duties of sergeants, inspectors, superintendents and so on.

31 There is also a widespread view that it is invidious for posts of the same type to be occupied by different ranks, and that every rank should be represented in every line of command. The presence of a superintendent in a post will imply the need for all posts at similar levels in management lines to be occupied by superintendents, for a chief inspector to act as deputy and for there to be inspectors in the next tier down. Setting the rank of a post at a certain level can instigate a cascade of job creation below that level.

Source: Home Office.
chief superintendent is about twice that of a PC. If a post of that rank were abolished, the force should be able to afford to take on more than one PC within an unchanged manpower budget. As this would involve an increase in the total number of police officers in the force, it would be very difficult under Home Office controls. Once a structure of higher ranks in the middle of the pyramid becomes established, it is usually only growth at the bottom of the pyramid which will alter inter-rank ratios.

34 The consequence is a tendency for police forces to drift into top-heavyness. Pressures to increase value for money push in the other direction, but not all forces use regular reviews of structure to counteract the drift towards increasing complexity, and those that do may find their options limited by difficulties in shedding middle management and handling diminishing promotion opportunities. The upshot is a very mixed picture if the pay costs of ranks above PC are expressed as a proportion of the pay costs of PCs. This on-cost varies amongst forces from almost a half to as low as just over a third (Exhibit 8).

35 The average is about 42 per cent in provincial forces in England and Wales. Each percentage point of this on-cost equates to spending of over £20 million a year. So, for instance, a reduction to an average of 40 per cent would generate savings which would cover the costs of over 1,000 extra police constables. It is important, therefore, to understand how this on-cost is justified, and why it should vary so widely. As bigger forces should be able to exploit larger economies of scale in central management, one factor might be force size. But whilst forces A and B in Exhibit 8 have the same total establishment, the on-cost in A is about a third higher than in B. Neither are the variations explained by different degrees of civilianisation.

36 A correlation between the management on-cost and size of unit can be observed at the level of sub-divisions (Exhibit 9 overleaf). Very small sub-divisions in this sample have a low on-cost because they are commanded by chief inspectors and have fewer inspectors and a lower level of 24 hour staffing. They rely on neighbouring units for cover during the night. But the other sub-divisions, commanded by superintendents, tend to have very similar numbers of higher ranking officers (Exhibit 10 overleaf).

37 Hence, the bigger the sub-divisional establishment within this range, the lower the on-cost. For sub-divisions with 75 to 100 officers the average on-cost in study forces...
in recent years, and HMIC have found opportunities for other forces to follow suit.

39 The picture is of course complicated, and it must be recognised that extra management may add value. Surrey Constabulary, for instance, aims to make a large number of relatively small inspector-led teams the basis of highly localised territorial policing. The force does not have a particularly high management on-cost (it is below the national average), but it may have opportunities to reduce it by adopting a different policing style.

40 In due course it should be possible to make inter-force comparisons of the quality of outputs delivered by differing policing styles. Surrey is already working to develop a range of performance indicators (including public and customer satisfaction surveys) broadly on the lines advocated in Police Paper No 8. In the meantime, subjective judgements should at least be made explicitly, in the knowledge that alternative approaches exist, requiring different management structures with different cost implications.

41 The main issues of territorial command structure facing forces concern identifying the basic command units; deciding how big they can be before they become unmanageable or lose touch with communities; how small they can be before they become uneconomic or ineffective; and how they should be controlled from force headquarters. Exhibit 11 illustrates some of the different views which forces take. Most recent force reviews have iden-
Police have recently announced the dismantling of their existing divisional commands in a restructuring which is the culmination of a longer term programme to shift responsibility out of divisional headquarters.

Although increasing the size of subunits gives opportunities to spread management more economically within sub-divisions, it tends to be a zero-sum game for the force as a whole, at least in the short term. The service has no mechanism to shed unnecessary management except natural wastage. Managers displaced from the territorial command structure will be found headquarters jobs. However, forces can take the opportunities of retirements and growth in establishment to move towards a flatter structure. The extent to which those opportunities have arisen, and been exploited, is one factor explaining the variation in management on-costs.

MATCHING RESOURCES TO DEMAND

Police forces ensure that their own resource allocation systems conform to the requirements of the government’s auction of extra police resources, in which forces bid for resources by declaring special needs. Just as these auctions create problems at national level, they have serious drawbacks in local resource allocation:

- there is no incentive to reduce demands for resources. Bids are ratcheted-up;
- bids are thus received with suspicion and regarded as unreliable guides to relative needs;
- thorough appraisal of bids causes

Exhibit 11

THE PLACE OF BASIC COMMAND UNITS IN FORCE STRUCTURES

Different forces take different views on which level in their command structure represents the basic building blocks of local 24 hour policing . . .

Exhibit 12

THE OUTCOMES OF RECENT FORCE REVIEWS

Those forces which have reviewed their organisations have increased the size of territorial units . . .

42 Exhibit 12 summarises the outcomes of a sample of recent reviews. Ambitions to increase the sizes of sub-divisions seem to be growing. At least one force in this sample is now looking at its structure again and considering a further consolidation. A number of forces have taken divisional commanders away from routine command and given them internal inspection and quality control functions in ways described in Police Paper No 8. Some forces have attempted the complete elimination of the divisional command tier, although external observers sometimes question the extent to which they have succeeded. Thames Valley
delay which requirements for supporting information can add to. During these delays, managers are wary about invalidating their bid by shifting resources out of vital functions into others of higher priority in case headquarters infers that the unit has slack; gamesmanship is encouraged. Local commanders vie for special consideration. Winning extra resources may become an end in itself, with service priorities warped towards demonstrating the need for a bigger share of what is available; and the establishment of ad hoc special units and squads is favoured as a basis for resource bids. The case for them is more demonstrable than for 'more of the same all round' even though 'more of the same' may be better.

45 At national level, the Home Office is beginning to use a formula to assess bids, but for the time being the bidding system remains firmly in place and the extent to which the formula is relied upon is unclear to forces. Within forces, as at national level, the best way to respond flexibly to changing demands is an approach:
— which gives line managers more discretion to use their share of resources more flexibly;
— which uses more objective indicators to fix the share of resources in each sub-unit and department; and
— which periodically reviews the structure of subunits and departments.

46 Systems which rely more on objective indicators of need give best results. But reviewing resource allocation is not a 'one-off' exercise in good practice forces. One force, for example, reallocates all territorial patrol officers annually using a formula based on indicators such as recorded crime and incidents. Another runs monthly a computerised model of workload derived from the latest statistics to guide the personnel department on where to make deployments and redeployments as opportunities arise. Other forces have developed refined indicators of workload, for example by applying to recorded numbers of different incident types the estimated times required to deal with them. Most forces cater for exceptional circumstances with supplementary bidding, but some forces scarcely employ formulae at all. Exhibit 13 summarises the range of different approaches found across a sample of forces studied.

47 Forces conducting major reviews of resource allocation only infrequently can find that, according to their own criteria for good allocations, big imbalances have developed in the interim because of shifts in workload and demand:
— a force which conducted a review after five years found relative sub-divisional establishments as much as 15 per cent out of line;
— in another force, population movements led to one sub-division becoming understaffed by 10 per cent in less than ten years; and
— a third force reckoned relative overstaffing in one sub-division was 30 per cent of its establishment.

48 Local managers notice imbalances and adapt services as best they can. But this can be very inefficient. In one force, the resources of an inner city sub-division were regularly supplemented from neighbours to the extent that its establishment was effectively increased, and that of the donors decreased, by 33 officers. The extra officers were still rostered for duty in the other sub-divisions and extra travelling, subsistence and supervision costs added £100,000 to annual expenses.

49 Whatever resources a unit has, including management overheads, its

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Exhibit 13
RESOURCE ALLOCATION METHODS
There are two main approaches with many variations . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FORCE</th>
<th>METHOD</th>
<th>FREQUENCY</th>
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<td>H</td>
<td>Ad hoc bids</td>
<td>Irregular</td>
<td>Additional posts</td>
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Source: Audit Commission survey of study forces.
service standards should be linked to them. Allocations should reflect desired levels of service, and standards may be below their potential if they are set without regard to resource allocation. In one force, there were 30 per cent more officers in rural areas and 10 per cent fewer in urban areas than was indicated by numbers of incidents alone — the reason being the need to cover the risk of unusual incidents. But no standards had been set for use of the extra rural allocation, for instance in higher frequencies of patrol, higher intensity of community liaison, and so on.

50 Organising shift systems is another aspect of matching workload and service standards which has an influence on the optimal size of units. As well as seasonal variations there are sharp daily and weekly peaks and troughs in crimes, incidents and calls from the public which shift rostering should reflect. Failure to do so will mean either unacceptable variation in quality of service (in slack periods, a relatively minor incident may draw police officers at high speed from all around; in periods of peak demand more serious incidents may have to wait a long time for police attention) or reliance on duty outside of rostered hours. Activity during periods of low demand can be infilled with proactive work, but this has the drawback of making proactive initiatives a marginal activity, carried out by whoever is available whenever they have the time. This work should not be handled in that way; and it may be done best at the same time as other demands peak.

51 It is difficult to organise a small number of officers to match variations in demand under the traditional relief system. To maintain economies in supervision, reliefs cannot become too small. A small sub-division may only be able to mount four general patrol shifts and two shifts of neighbourhood beat officers. A large sub-division can mount more general patrol shifts allowing overlapping duty and flexible deployment shifts in addition, so that the profile of manpower rostered for duty is matched more closely to patterns in demand. But this increase in effectiveness requires more than the lumping-together of existing subunits: patterns of working throughout the new unit need to be integrated so that officers can be managed in larger groups.

52 Moving to more flexible shift systems, so that officers can be rostered to be on duty for more than eight hours at a time as part of normal working (e.g. the 'Ottawa' system of ten hour shifts) can be helpful, but longer continuous spells of duty mean longer continuous periods off-duty (one of the attractions of the Ottawa system to those working it). Matching shift patterns to variations in demand in this way can only be successful where the subunit is large enough to have resources in excess of those required for minimum cover during the slack periods. Where it does, Ottawa is one way of more effectively concentrating the availability of the 'excess' into periods of peak demand, by overlapping shifts on duty during that period. But if the minimum level of cover effectively accounts for all the resources available, moving from eight to ten hour shifts will not help if it would reduce manpower availability below that minimum during some periods.

53 An alternative is to allow officers to come on and off duty at different times from their supervisors and team-mates, as in Surrey Constabulary's 'total geographic policing'. Only once a month do all the officers in a 'geographical area' team parade together. At other times they brief themselves by talking to colleagues, reading specially produced daily sheets of notes of events and issues arising, and calling on a 24 hour information office inside stations. This emphasizes the need for officers to be more flexible about the precise times at which their duties will start and finish and places the onus on inspectors and sergeants to be very active in meeting their PCs outside the station. The flexibility of the system is designed to align manpower availability with demand, thus avoiding frequent calls for loans of manpower.

54 Both the Surrey system and experiments with Ottawa shifts which a number of forces are conducting depend on the individual officers involved waiving some of their entitlements under the national Police Regulations which cover terms and conditions of service for officers in the 'federated' ranks from chief inspector downwards.

55 Matching police resources to demand also means ensuring that expensive police manpower is not tied down in jobs which other personnel could do. Ratios of civilisation vary widely amongst forces...
(from under 30 civilians per 100 police officers to over 46) and some have potential to make much more use of it despite concerted efforts by the Home Office and the Inspectors of Constabulary to encourage them. This may be because civilianisation is seen narrowly as part of the process of coming to terms with disappointed bids for extra police officers, or because civilians are not fully integrated into the management systems which chief constables have for police officers (so they have less ownership of their civilian resource). It may also be because civilian posts are seen as more dispensable when economies have to be made; or perhaps because posts which could be civilianised are sometimes reserved for police officers unsuited to other duties.

ACCOUNTABILITY

56 The more self-contained basic territorial command units become in terms of resources, the more accountable their commanders can be for the quality of their service. For specialist and support services which need to be organised centrally to exploit economies of scale, client-contractor relationships with subdivisions can be established. Some forces are moving towards recharging costs of operational support to divisions or sub-divisions as part of their cost centre accounting system. But this approach is not widespread or well-developed.

57 As technology advances, the scope for exploiting scale economies without compromising the accountability of subunits may increase. An example is incident response. Modern command and control systems can identify the location and current activity of resources across a whole force, allowing the selection of the nearest available resource for despatch to attend incidents graded as high priority regardless of which subunit it belongs to. Resources can therefore be devolved to sub-divisions whilst still available to provide contingency cover. This is particularly important in rural areas.

58 Forces should be asking:
— why is such a proportion of our resources outside the structure of our basic territorial units, in headquarters or specialist squads?
— How can we get the management of more of our resources down to a lower level in the organisation without compromising efficiency and effectiveness?
— Why do we need so many officers above the grade of PC?

Reviews to test assumptions on answers to these questions are necessary to keep the service focused on its basic purposes. The remainder of this paper discusses the main issues which these reviews need to address, and how to deal with them.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION METHODOLOGY

60 Resource allocation methodologies can do two jobs. Combined with a definition of standards they indicate the absolute level of police resources required. But they can also share a given pool of police resources amongst different units in line with relative needs. Service standards are then a function of the resources available. Resource allocation is mainly about distribution within forces, because their total resources are effectively fixed by Home Office controls and grant mechanisms. But a structural approach to relative resource allocation can also be used

CONDUCTING REVIEWS

59 Reviews of force structure are time-consuming. Managing the process of change can also be difficult. Similarly, the investment of scarce skilled manpower in reviewing resource allocations is not easy for forces to find in a climate of rising demand and restricted volume growth. Both types of review require careful analysis, a clear appreciation of costs and benefits of options and an effective implementation programme. There are complex trade-offs to be made. Ultimately, these are for the professional judgement of chief constables, but they provide opportunities to discuss service standards and their resource implications with police authorities. There is no blueprint. But underlying principles apply to both types of review:
— they should be 'zero-based';
— they should use objective analysis;
— operational service standards and objectives should be made explicit and included in the review;
— where it is necessary to make assumptions or professional judgements, these should also be stated explicitly;
— reviews should be programmed at regular intervals; and
— where a review recommends a change, the benefits expected from that change should be made explicit.
to bid for extra resources against other public services at national or local level, by demonstrating the gain to service standards which extra resources could produce. A more output-related approach to questions about the need for police services would be welcome in many ways.

61 Within forces, reviews of relative allocations to command units should be annual and based on objective measures of policing need.

62 A formula does not have to be perfect. Models which give a good approximation to what would have emerged from ad hoc judgement may be good enough. The advantage they offer is that they are simpler to operate; their results are transparent; they operate predictably, objectively and even-handedly; and they are capable of improvement. The Metropolitan Police have a manpower allocation formula for uniform constables, which is used without adjustment to allocate manpower to their eight areas; and, with adjustment, to divisions within them (Box 2).

**FUNCTIONS OF UNITS**

63 The functions of each subunit need to be identified before assessing their resource requirements. They should be reviewed periodically, as part of force structure reviews. As many functions should be concentrated within basic territorial command units as considerations of efficiency and effectiveness allow.
Some considerations favour central departments or special squads controlled by headquarters. Notably:
— the risk that some functions may not get the attention which they deserve unless addressed by a dedicated squad administered centrally;
— problems requiring closely coordinated responses across the whole force area;
— economies of scale in central provision of specialised equipment and expertise.

64 The first objection should not be under-rated, but where there are problems they are better addressed by inspection of subunit performance (Paper No 8). Setting up central squads to remedy poor quality of service by territorial units risks reinforcing the tendency for local commanders to undervalue important parts of local police services. The more that ownership of local problems is removed from local commands, the less accountable they become for the quality of local services.

65 There are some issues requiring close coordination, such as motorway patrol (which in some areas might indeed benefit from greater coordination above the level of forces). There will also be problems such as detection of child abuse rings requiring specific force-wide and inter-force action from time to time.

66 The need to interwork with other agencies, such as social services departments, also pushes towards higher level ownership of problems. The most powerful force is, however, likely to be economy of scale in provision of specialised resources. A possible solution to both pressures is to maintain central squads where it is more effective and economical to do so, but to provide them as 'contracted' services to 'client' local commanders who may call on their support as need be, whilst retaining accountability for the quality of local services provided using that support.

67 This approach allows resource allocation of specialist squads to be driven by demand from their clients. To work, it requires a system of financial management in which the contractor services can be recharged to the delegated budgets of local commanders. There can still be a role for temporary specialist subunits, which can offer a brisk, well directed response to temporary problems. The approach should then be to 'get in, make an impact, and get out'. 'Temporary' squads should not be allowed to linger by default, and their resources should be recorded and monitored. Their purpose should be defined, and there should be a system to review their output. The definition of purpose should lead directly to the selection of performance measures. Where the purpose is unclear, the presumption should be against setting the unit up.

ESTABLISHING A FORMULA

68 The key steps in designing a system for allocating resources amongst subunits with defined functions are:
— identify 'demand drivers' for those functions and relate them to workload;
— devise a formula to indicate each unit's share of resources using 'proxy indicators' to reduce data collection requirements if possible; and
— fine-tune the allocations taking account of exceptional circumstances not represented by the indicators.

69 Appendix A briefly explains these steps. Most resource allocation systems concentrate on police officer manpower, but there is potential for them to be more useful. For instance, a formula for allocating police constables could be adapted to include a range of other resources, such as supervisory ranks, civilians, operational support and so on, allocated pro-rata.

70 The distinction which the government and hence forces still tend to make between police officers and other resources (such as civilians, items of equipment and so on) is increasingly unhelpful. All resources should be included on a common basis if the full benefits of local accountability are to be realised.

71 Resource allocation within forces would be simpler if it were possible just to distribute cash limits to budget holders within a system of devolved financial management. Those cash limits could be set on the basis of higher level (simpler) proxy indicators. Common-service units would have no budgets of their own, being recharged to their clients' budgets. Forces could move closer to this if the government adopted the recommendations in Police Paper No 6 and if police authorities (and, within forces, chief constables) exercised less control over the mix of
police inputs, shifting attention instead to the quality of police outputs.

FORCE STRUCTURE
72 Annual resource allocation systems are only as good as the organisational structure of departments and units constraining them. Every five years or so there should be a review with the aim of identifying a structure in which:
— territorial command units are fully accountable for the quality of day to day policing;
— working relationships are defined clearly and lines of command are simple and unambiguous; and
— the management hierarchy is as flat as possible.

73 Reviewing force structure is a process in which options have to be tested at each step (Exhibit 14). The key steps are:
— strategic review of the location of functions (e.g. territorial or headquarters);
— territorial partition of the force area;
— design of the appropriate management structure within and around the basic territorial command units.

74 Appendix B briefly examines the considerations which a structural review will raise under these headings. At each stage, policy assumptions or specifications of service standards may need to be made. It is necessary to iterate the process several times, systematically relaxing any constraints on structure introduced so that their implications can be understood. The review of structure needs to be related to a review of the resource allocation methodology, to ensure that the two remain suited to each other.

75 The experience of forces which have conducted reviews basing their territorial policing on sub-divisions commends initial assumptions (which may need to be revised as the review proceeds) set out in Box 3. One of the main questions is the need for intermediate layers between force headquarters and basic com-
mand units. Forces should not take for granted the retention of divisional management as an intermediary. The functions usually associated with divisional headquarters can often be managed as or more effectively either in force headquarters or sub-divisions (Box 4).

76 Changing management structures is not just a paper exercise. It redefines personal relationships and success will require careful investment in developing individuals to fill new roles. This is perhaps particularly important for basic command unit managers and their relationship with divisional commanders. There is always 'loneliness' in command but no reason to make individual commands lonelier than they need be. Divisional commanders can help as well as hinder subordinates seeking more responsibility, and if sub-divisional commanders are to account directly to ACPO ranks, they should be able to draw for guidance and support on experienced senior officers with thematic responsibilities in a quality control team. Broadening spans of command at each level will place a premium on this quality control system.

77 The review is certain to produce commands with substantially different sizes of geographical area. It may indicate commands with different establishments or workloads. It is not necessary to equalise subunits in these respects, nor to have uniformity in their management structures. There can be 'big ships' and 'little ships' in the fleet of subunits, and their commanders and management structures can involve different ranks. Having some 'small ships' may sometimes be a better way to meet the community needs. They can also be suitable commands for officers developing management skills.

78 How a chief constable organises his force is his responsibility. It is legitimate, indeed essential, to ask the public what it wants, but not always so useful to ask about exactly how to provide it. But the review should produce specified service standards and conclusions on how to achieve them which can be the subject of public consultation, and officers acting on behalf of the police authority can be closely involved in reviews, without dictating outcomes, from an early stage. The police authority may, indeed, initiate a review by calling for a report on the force structure, an assessment of its effectiveness, and evaluated options for change. In doing so, the authority should obviously be mindful of the resource implications of the work.

79 The police service relies on natural wastage to shed manpower resources, particularly in order to achieve a reduction in higher ranking officers. In the short term, it has to redeploy resources surplus in one area to another. Any creation of temporary posts for this purpose should be part of a plan for the future which will prevent those posts from becoming permanent. There may need to be a medium-term implementation plan for a restructuring which can be linked to a business plan for the force covering, say, the next five years, and a post-implementation review.

Box 3
INITIAL WORKING ASSUMPTIONS FOR SUB-DIVISIONAL ORGANISATION

- The number of officers in each sub-division should be at least 180 and is likely to be up to 250 or more.

- Headquarters should be chosen from existing designated (though not necessarily permanently operational) PACE stations. Operational advantages would have to be exceptional to justify major rebuilding at other sites with all the delays entailed in gaining Home Office approval.

- Areas with strong community affinity should not be divided unless unavoidable. This needs to be interpreted with an open mind and must not restrict options for evaluation unduly. It is an important factor if local accountability to the community is to be achieved but much easier to evaluate in rural areas with small self-contained settlements.

- Aligning territorial boundaries with those of magistrates' courts, the Crown Prosecution Service, social services departments and district councils is administratively convenient, but unfortunately these are themselves rarely coterminous. There will always be compromises, and the boundaries of other agencies cannot be allowed to bear heavily on the choice of police territories.
Some of the issues described above and in the appendices require attention at national level. Exhibit 15 (overleaf) is a graphic depiction by one force of its ambition to extract a layer from its command structure. The aim is worthwhile, but the image begs many questions about where the individuals involved are to go — and about career progression for those remaining in the base of the pyramid. Many senior officers — including some chief superintendents — question the continuing relevance of chief superintendent posts as presently constituted but most are wary of giving practical effect to that view without some compensating change to career patterns. ACPO is researching the subject of lateral career development. But pay policies might also have to be adjusted.

Less emphasis on rank in determining levels of pay and types of job, leading possibly to a truncation of the rank structure, would need to be matched by changes to pay scales. Longer and overlapping scales should be helpful, as should a system allowing merit-related as well as service-related movement up pay scales.

Flexible shift systems such as Ottawa, and that used in Surrey Constabulary, can be introduced only if there is unanimous local agreement amongst the officers involved. Changes to regulations on this point are being considered by the Home Office.

The Home Office could also encourage more innovative command structures by recognising that,

Box 4

RELOCATION OF DIVISIONAL COMMAND FUNCTIONS

The functions of divisional headquarters could in many cases be performed elsewhere with no loss of effectiveness. For instance ... 

Policy formulation: divisional commanders act as an intermediary between headquarters and sub-divisions in formulation of policy. Usually headquarters could deal directly with sub-divisions. 

Quality control (see Police Paper No 8): the sub-divisional commander can be accountable directly to an ACC (Ops). An internal quality inspectorate undertaking thematic studies can support the ACC and offer advice to local commanders.

Command of major events: local commanders can handle all but the biggest operations. Organisation of support from elsewhere within the force or external aid can be co-ordinated by headquarters on the basis of plans formulated by the local commander with advice from the quality inspectorate. Senior experienced officers, including quality inspectorate personnel or the ACC (Ops) can assume command of specific operations on an ad hoc basis if required, but this should be exceptional.

PACE/contingency cover: sub-divisions should as far as possible draw on their own resources. The organisation of a rota for senior officer support required from nearby subunits does not require divisional line management.

Divisional CID: primary responsibility for crime should rest at sub-divisional level as a critical factor in quality of policing services. As far as possible, divisional CID functions and resources should be devolved to sub-divisions; some expansion of HQ, as with non-CID operations, may be necessary but it is unlikely that an overall increase in staffing would be required.

Administration support units (see Police Paper No 1): economies of scale can be maintained by arranging ASUs as support services to sub-divisions on a client/contractor basis. Divisional command is not essential to this sort of organisation. Dedication of ASUs to particular groups of sub-divisions, as under divisional command, may sometimes be less effective than dedication to particular external agencies, e.g. to CPS areas.

Communications rooms (see Police Paper No 5): ASUs and communications rooms can come under a headquarters support department, with their services supplied to sub-divisions under 'contract' to their commanders, and their costs recharged to their budgets. The number and configuration of communications rooms could then be governed by economies of scale.

Community liaison: divisional commanders need not be figure-heads of local community accountability. The bulk of community liaison should be conducted 'closer to the ground'. Formal mechanisms of consultation could be reorganised on this basis with the cooperation of the other parties involved.

Financial management: sub-divisions can be centres of financial as well as service quality accountability, and more control over resource procurement and specification should be devolved to that level. With efficient financial information systems exploiting economies of scale in central data processing, the involvement of divisions in lines of financial reporting and control should not be necessary.
for example, one constable does not equate to one chief superintendent in cost terms, and thus allow forces discretion to vary establishments within a budget control total rather than within a control over the number of police officers. More helpfully still, it should implement the proposals in Police Paper No 6, which would give more local discretion over the mix of resources in police forces.

84 The more objective approaches to reviewing force organisation and the allocation of resources which this paper proposes cannot completely capture all the nuances of local circumstances and the professional judgements which must be involved. The key is to get the organisation and the allocation methodology broadly right, taking account of good practice elsewhere and local priorities; then to monitor performance and environmental changes regularly and systematically so that systems can be fine-tuned.

Exhibit 15

EXTRACTING A LAYER FROM THE COMMAND STRUCTURE

When a police force identifies surplus management resources, it faces a difficult decision about what to do with them . . .

85 Bigger is not always better, but in managing day-to-day police business local is usually better than central. How local the management should be will vary from place to place, and from time to time. In rural areas basic command units of policing may need to cover bigger areas and be smaller in manpower than in urban areas. But there are often opportunities even in rural areas to amalgamate basic command units to create bigger units without losing links between the commander and the community, and up to the limits of the commander's span, bigger units can be more effective, more self-contained and more accountable. The quality of performance review systems is a key factor in how wide spans of command can be at each level. Smaller units can, however, be made more economical and effective if traditional approaches to shift rostering, management structure and responsibilities of rank are modified.

86 The police service is constantly struggling to maintain responsive and accountable relations with local communities. There is no single solution. But a number of forces have found it possible to get back closer to the basics by reviewing their organisation. All forces should have these reviews. Critically, there needs to be a better understanding of the outputs from policing and how to measure them to allow a more rigorous analysis of the value-added by layers of management and specialist units. The terms of public debate need to move off the assumption that more police officers and more police expenditure leads to a commensurate increase in the quantity and quality of police outputs.

87 Until existing forces have found better ways to reconcile their size and territorial coverage with the need for service to local communities, there is a risk that the creation of regional forces or a national force as currently being discussed would lead simply to less local accountability and more, rather than better, management activity at the expense of basic policing services.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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### APPENDIX A

**Designing a resource allocation methodology**

1. Having identified the functions of each part of the organisation the next step is to identify the underlying determinants of demand (demand drivers) for each of the main policing functions. Exhibit A-1 is an illustration of some functions which need to be covered and some possible measures. Analysis of the activities which comprise the functions and explicit statements of any minimum standards of service are required. In some cases the relationship between demand and workload is directly dependent upon service standards, for instance in the cases of incident response and victim support.

2. Key functions to be considered are of two main types:
   - those requiring urgent action, including incident response, receipt of calls in the communications room, and receiving prisoners and visitors at stations. There is a complex trade-off between response times and resources;
   - those not directly demand-led, including routine proactive patrol, policy initiatives, and supervision. Traditionally these tasks are regarded as spare time activities for when officers are not reacting to immediate demands. Increasingly, it is recognised that these functions need to be properly programmed if they are to be fully effective.

3. The workload attributable to each demand driver should then be assessed using data on officers’ activities. In forces without adequate continuous activity monitoring, a sample survey will suffice. The objective is to determine the average amount of work generated by the demand driver, the variance about the average and the pattern over time. Some provincial forces such as Norfolk Constabulary have developed this approach.

4. The next step is to develop a formula. It should be as simple as possible, using the least number of proxy indicators which adequately represent variations in unit workloads. A start should be made with the most general indicators as these should be the most easily understood and robust. Selecting suitable proxies requires statistical techniques, such as regression analysis and ‘goodness-of-fit’ tests. More refined indicators should only be used if the improved fit justifies extra data collection.

5. The more that a variety of functions can be aggregated in territorial units, and the less the independent role of specialised squads, the less detailed the proxy indicators for territorial resource allocation need to be. Indicators as general as
— unique situations such as airports (and possibly city centres);
— longer-term needs which are difficult to quantify such as in areas of high tension; and
— new demands not reflected in historical data such as new roads and housing estates.

Cover for contingencies, such as unexpected outbreaks of public disorder or other major incidents, can be modelled objectively, both for basic manpower and availability of command expertise, but the results of the modelling may need to be overlaid with ad hoc judgement.

NON-TERRITORIAL UNITS

Central units could operate as 'contractors' on the basis of service level agreements with 'client' territorial commanders. Their costs could be recharged to the devolved budgets of their clients. Demand from territorial commanders would become a primary determinant of the resources allocated to such units. For functions which cannot be recharged to basic command units, for instance motorway policing, judgement of resource requirements needs to be informed by monitoring the activity and performance of the units, and comparative analysis against other forces.

Exhibit A-2

ILLUSTRATIVE PROXY INDICATORS

Forces should use the most general indicators which adequately represent the variations in workload between units...
**APPENDIX B**

**Reviewing force structure**

**LOCATION OF FUNCTIONS**

1. The force should start from a clear understanding of what its functions are (as discussed in Police Paper No 8). Assumptions on which operational functions should be organised territorially and which retained for central departments should be reviewed from first principles (Exhibit B-1) and the location of each function will vary according to the circumstances of the force (Exhibit B-2).

2. Management arrangements for non-territorially controlled functions can then be designed. They define for each function who should:
   - specify the service;
   - manage service delivery;
   - deliver the service.

In previous papers in this series, the Commission has shown how these distinctions are made:
- Paper No 3 showed why forces should establish a civilian transport management organisation to act as a self-standing contractor unit;
- Paper No 4 showed that force training schools should act as contractors to meet specified operational and career development demands;
- Paper No 5 showed how operational commanders should specify and monitor levels of service to be provided by communications rooms.

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**Exhibit B-1**

**ALLOCATING FUNCTIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

Forces should specify criteria for deciding where to locate functions . . .

![Exhibit B-1 Table]

**Exhibit B-2**

**ILLUSTRATIVE LOCATION OF FUNCTIONS**

Some functions may need to be almost wholly centralised and others wholly dispersed. An illustrative example of applying decision criteria to the main functions . . .

![Exhibit B-2 Table]
Forces should introduce ‘service level agreements’ in support services for which local specification and central management is desirable. Some forces already record information on the time spent by central squads in territorial units. Similar information is used increasingly by local authorities as the basis for service level agreements between operational departments and central support functions.

An agreement between operational commanders and their communications room, for example, would include target times to answer calls, call grading criteria and despatching times. This allows operational commanders to control, and be ultimately accountable for, the quality of service whilst benefiting from the specialist expertise and economies of scale of a more centralised unit. Operational commanders should be delegated their share of the budget for these resources. The same argument applies to administration support units (ASUs) (Paper No 1).

Custody facilities are another important example. They have become more specialised and expensive since PACE introduced standards for accommodation and staffing. In most forces each territorial subdivision has at least one 24 hour station maintained to PACE standards, but alternative arrangements can be beneficial:

— some forces get considerable scale economies from a central facility serving several sub-divisions in urban areas;
— in one force, three custody centres in the most rural areas, although designated as PACE stations, are not staffed 24 hours a day. When it is necessary to detain a prisoner overnight (perhaps four times a week) he or she is transferred temporarily to the nearest full-time PACE centre and collected the following morning. Officers involved find this arrangement works well; it releases three sergeants from each small custody centre.

Not all forces have capacity amongst existing PACE stations to centralise. If they do not, the capital cost and Home Office regime for approval of capital expenditure are likely to be prohibitive. But all forces should review the scope to use their custody facilities in a more flexible manner.

The lowest level in the organisation which has the capacity required in these respects is the sub-division in many forces. Whatever the basic command unit is called, the existence of an intermediary layer of line management between it and force headquarters should be questioned. Where the function of divisional management is purely to act as a filter between BCU commanders and the ACC (Ops), its rationale should be carefully reconsidered: it is unlikely to make a convincing case except in the very largest forces.

Box 3 of this paper illustrated some initial assumptions which can be applied to the distribution of officers laid out on a map. This will produce a set of possible partitions of the force into BCUs. The next step is to filter out options which are unacceptable. Service standard constraints such as police station opening hours and incident response times should be identified so that managers can evaluate the associated costs and benefits. They can also be discussed with the police authority.

Key resources constraining the size of sub-divisional BCUs are:
— commanders;
— duty officers;
— response resources.

An outline of a sub-divisional BCU is illustrated at Exhibit B-3.
Personnel management, operational duties and external liaison are all important aspects of the commander’s role. There is no consensus amongst police managers about the relative importance of these responsibilities. Most commanders emphasise the importance of personnel management; and in many forces it takes a major part of their time. But some forces are reducing the personnel commitment of the commander to one of direct responsibility for immediate subordinates and exceptional responsibilities for the remainder.

Traditionally, commanders conduct personal appraisals with every officer in their command. This typically involves an interview of about one hour plus preparation. A complement of 150 officers would generate around 30 days work a year simply to administer the system. Some forces have recognised that the majority of appraisals can be carried out more effectively by the officer’s direct supervisor. Career counselling is another time-consuming aspect of a commander’s traditional responsibilities. Some forces are appointing supervisors in territorial units to act as career development liaison officers. They provide an initial point of reference for officers requiring information, advice and counselling about their career opportunities within the force.

At sub-divisional level and above, commanders’ direct involvement in operational matters is limited. With proper performance review systems in place the bulk of operational activity can be monitored routinely. In the study forces, it was found that sub-divisions ranging from 79 officers to 274 could all be commanded by a single superintendent with only marginal increases in management support in some of the larger units. But demands on the commander’s time are not totally divorced from the underlying workload. Apart from the need to keep in touch by ‘walking about’, responsibility for particular major events can be time consuming — policing a football match, for instance, may involve the commander for a full day.

If commanders at superintendent level are spending a significant proportion of their time on direct tactical control, systems should be reviewed. Where exceptional events require tactical command at a senior level, there are usually more than enough officers of the necessary rank in a force to fill a call-out duty rota, and reducing the numbers of them should be possible without jeopardising contingency management plans.

Keeping close contact with community leaders can constrain the area a BCU commander can cover. Once this contact is eroded the unit’s effectiveness can be undermined. The practical effect depends on local circumstances, for example:

— a busy town with a population of 127,000, a police establishment of 274 and 11,500 crimes a year is commanded by a superintendent. This works because management systems are good and the compactness of the territory makes communications easier;
— a sparsely populated area (larger than entire police forces in other parts of the country) is also commanded by a single superintendent. The rate of criminal
activity is comparatively low (4,200 crimes a year, at half the national average rate per head of population) and meetings with external agencies and community groups are less frequent.

Many senior police officers believe that all parts of the force area should have an officer of inspector rank on duty at all times, to provide a focus for operational decision-making and supervision. Sub-divisions tend therefore to be resourced to provide 24 hour inspector cover. Inspectors are also required to discharge certain delegated duties under PACE although this is less time-critical and does not of itself necessitate 24 hour inspector cover. To maintain 24 hour cover requires five to six officers per post (allowing for average rate of absence due to sickness, leave, training, etc). None of the sub-divisions in the study forces had more than six regular uniformed inspectors — in addition they nearly all had a detective inspector and some also had specialists for roles such as community liaison.

Continuous inspector cover is not, however, a rule. The smallest sub-divisions have only one inspector and the duty officer is normally a sergeant. In emergencies and for 'PACE reviews', inspectors can be called in from outside the subunit and, in the view of forces using this approach, it does not compromise local management accountability. Some officers argue that restricting the number of PACE review officers in the force helps consistency.

Some forces also stress the importance of inspectors attending certain serious incidents (such as fatal road traffic accidents or suspicious deaths). This can have a critical impact on the maximum territorial area of a BCU. But others take the view that appropriate experience is the key requirement at such incidents — a traffic specialist at an accident, for example, or a scenes of crime officer or detective to preserve the scene of a serious crime.

Rapid response to urgent incidents is seen by both police and public as critical. The complaint 'there's always a policeman when you don't want one and never one when you do' is all too familiar. It is expensive (£300,000 a year) to keep a double-crewed saloon car on the road 24 hours a day. Making the best use of such resources is not simply a matter of minimising their numbers. Standards of response service should be set and resources matched to them. Response resources should cover as wide an area as possible without response times becoming unacceptably slow.

In urban areas several response cars may need to be on duty simultaneously to meet demand. In rural areas with fewer calls, response workload alone may not justify so many, but greater distances to cover may mean that response standards can only be met if proportionately more are deployed (Exhibit B-4). Setting response standards and using planning methodologies to examine trade-offs between resource requirements and response times are well established practices in the fire and ambulance services. Senior police officers sometimes argue that the nature of a police response is more complex than the relatively limited role of the other emergency services, but this does not invalidate the use of a planning methodology. One force which has used such techniques found it could achieve satisfactory response times with 10% fewer response resources. There are some benefits if the patches of rapid response resources coincide with territorial boundaries, but this is only one consideration which will need to be considered as options for territorial partition are eliminated. With sophisticated despatching systems, and client-contractor relations with the communications rooms open...
erating them it becomes less important for a unit to ‘own’ a response resource of its own.

LIMITING THE OPTIONS
22 Once workload constraints and assumptions about standards have been identified (Exhibit B-5), they should be applied to the list of feasible territorial partitions to limit options for final consideration. In considering workload constraints, options for implementing more flexible shift systems etc. should be to the fore. The first set of assumptions about standards may either be unachievable with the existing level of resources, or it may leave a large number of feasible partitions. In either case standards have to be revised in the light of operational priorities. The list of feasible territorial structures can then be revised. This step should be repeated until a short list of feasible partitions remains, providing the highest standards of service possible with the resources available.

23 With proper performance review and administration systems in place, a superintendent should be able to command units of over 200 officers effectively. Where reviews highlight significant operational advantages in having units with fewer than 100 officers or more than 250, then it may be appropriate to have a commander of lower or higher rank respectively. But it is not the rank of the commander which is important so much as the whole management infrastructure.

24 Adequate arrangements to set objectives and monitor performance should allow greater spans of command at all levels (see Police Paper No 8). It is not unreasonable for an ACC to be directly responsible for ten territorial subunits. Spans of this width are found in the police service. This should give a manageable structure with just one ACC (Ops) in most of the 25 provincial forces with police establishments under 2,000. In these the need for an intermediate level of management between the basic command units and the ACC, simply to reduce the span of command, must be open to question. The development of internal force inspectorates on thematic lines will assist in making wider spans of command workable, but quality inspectors should not drift back into routine operational command roles as is likely if they are organised on territorial lines.

25 In forces with many basic command units an intermediate layer between them and the ACC may be necessary to prevent overload. Even in the majority of these an alternative would be to have more than one ACC (Operations), each with responsibility for a territorial sector of the force with ten or so commanders reporting to each of them.

26 Forces should review the management and supervisory requirements below the BCU commander in the light of local circumstances. The number of inspectors will depend largely on whether the unit is providing 24 hour inspector cover; on the overall workload of the unit; and on whether there are management responsibilities which can be delegated below this level.

PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT
27 The aim is a structure of BCUs
which relates to community affinities and local policing demands. There is a tension between the pull towards small units with commanders close to local communities, and the pull towards bigger units which can economically be more self-contained, and therefore more accountable for the quality of local services. Ultimately it is a matter for the chief constable, but his opinions will need to be informed by a review team holding consultations (including local officers and the police authority), and as far as possible subjective judgements should be tested objectively.

**POST-IMPLEMENTATION REVIEW**

28 The review should identify the benefits which its recommendations would bring if adopted, the timescale over which they should accrue and the costs of achieving them. A post-implementation review should be programmed accordingly, specifying the measurable criteria by which successful implementation will be judged.