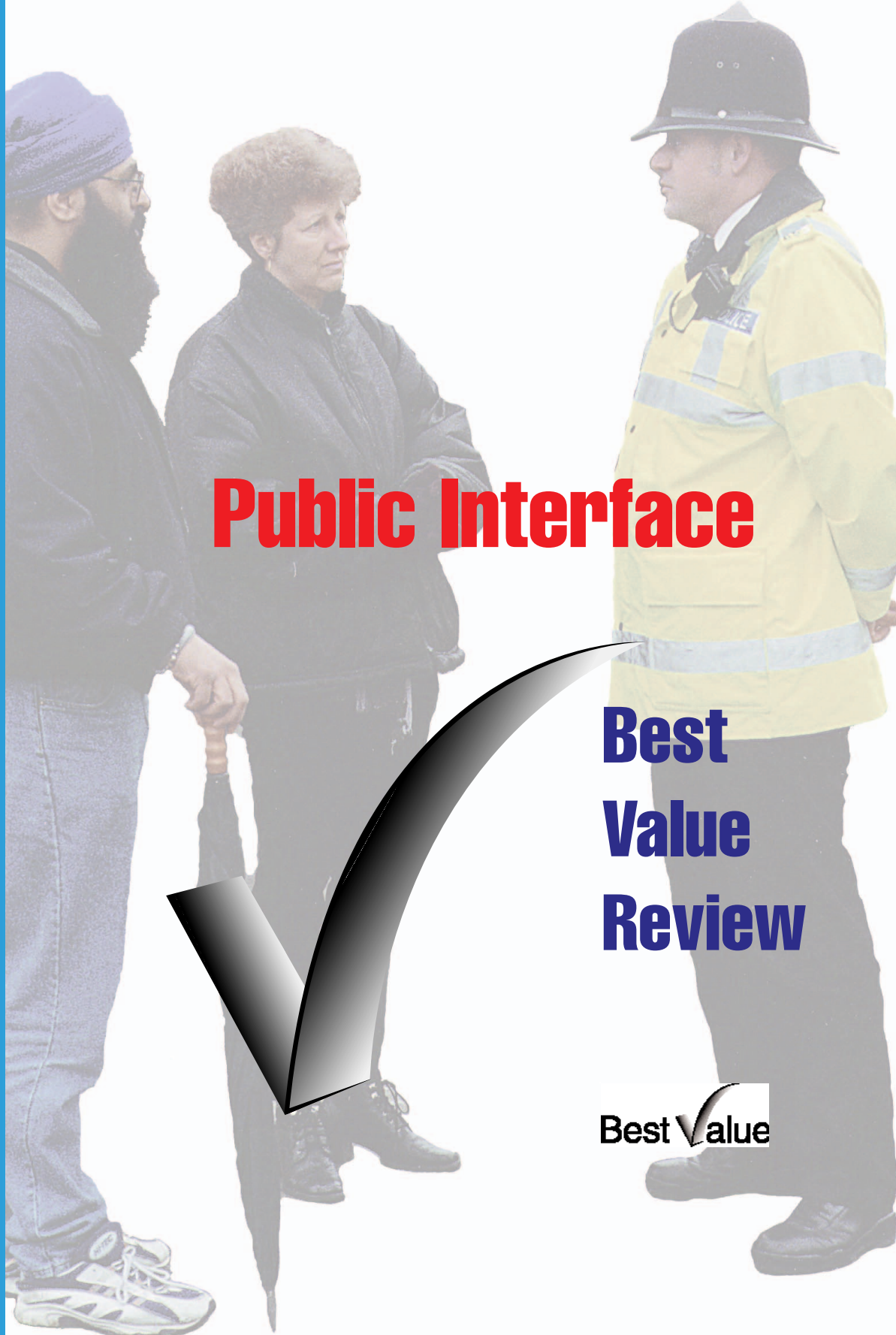


public interface



# Public Interface

**Best  
Value  
Review**

Best Value

# Executive Summary of Public Interface Best Value Review

## Police Authority Scrutiny Panel



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## Best Value Review Team Member



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## Introduction

The Public Interface Best Value Review considered a wide range of activities and business processes within the Police Service. The Police Authority selected the following areas for either Full or Light Touch Reviews:

- Call Handling – Full Review
- Enquiry Offices – Full Review
- PCAF – Full Review
- Mobile Police Stations – Light Touch Review
- Media Department – Light Touch Review

This Executive Summary should be read in conjunction with the 'Best Value Review of Public Interface – Scoping Study, 7 November 2001' which provides a comprehensive status report on the chosen review topics.

## Summary Conclusion

There are many examples of good working practice across the Service. The ability to offer a higher standard and level of service (overall) is frustrated by the mismatch of available resources to public demands and expectations of policing. The recommendations highlighted in this report are strategic and indicate a need for change. Findings of a more tactical nature are shown as Issues for local management action.

## CALL HANDLING CENTRE

### Key Findings

- Staff are strongly committed to delivering the best possible service but are prevented from doing so by some of the work management systems.
- Customers are dissatisfied with delays in answering calls – and being passed from one member of staff to another when calls are answered.
- Demarcation between Call Handling Operators and Agents causes inefficiency. It leads to friction, low staff morale and impacts the quality of customer service.
- Current shift pattern arrangements do not match resources to demand, particularly at times of peak demand.

**It is recommended that the majority of staff in the Call Handling Centre should be multi-skilled and offered systematic career development opportunities – with enhancements based on skills acquisition.**  
*(Section 2 Page 7 – Call Handling)*

**As Civilian members of staff become more experienced, it is recommended that consideration be given to the appropriate release/redeployment of police officers from the CHC to front line operational duties.**  
*(Section 2 Page 7 – Call Handling)*

**It is recommended that the comprehensive review of the 'resource to demand' profile is maintained to identify the opportunities for ensuring an optimum fit between (real time) demand and resource planning/allocation procedures.**  
*(Section 2 Page 10 – Call Handling)*

### Issues for Local Management Action

- The new Management Team has taken the opportunity to improve working relationships. It is encouraged to continue such initiatives, particularly in the improvement of communications – with regular, structured team meetings to identify and share the professional skills and experience of team members.  
*(Section 2 – Page 8)*
- The Management Team is encouraged to review the supervision and support structures for call handling staff to assist the operators' ability to quickly and accurately answer queries from the public.  
*(Section 2 – Page 8)*
- It should also consider reviewing the flow of information processes to enable team members to interact with each other, enhancing the flow of information.  
*(Section 2 – Page 8)*
- It is suggested that a working group be convened to revisit the concept of Information Kiosks previously examined in an 'Invest to Save bid'. In association with other public service authorities and agencies, this might examine the development of shared information terminals at suitable locations. A pilot Division should be identified for such a project.  
*(Section 2 – Page 9)*
- The Management Team is encouraged to consider further the benefits of annualised hours in comparison to the recently agreed variable shift agreement.  
*(Section 2 – Page 10)*

### Savings and Benefits

- These recommendations would produce net savings of up to £741k p.a. – including investment in an enhanced staff career structure.
- Based on private sector experience it is estimated that introducing 'annualised hours' would create additional savings of 12%-15% p.a. Non-cash benefits include a more stable, better qualified and highly motivated workforce offering improved customer service. There would also be an increase in visible policing arising from the redeployment of police

### ENQUIRY OFFICES

#### Key Findings

- The cost of maintaining 24-hours-a-day opening for some offices does not appear to be justified in relation to customer demand. However, there is a need to consider visibility and public accessibility issues.
- Layouts of some enquiry offices reflect staff perception of vulnerability albeit at the expense of customer accessibility.

**It is recommended that Enquiry Office opening hours are reviewed.**

*(Section 3 Page 12 – Enquiry Offices)*

**It is recommended that Enquiry Office layouts be reviewed, with the aim of making them more open and accessible to the public. This should include consideration to removing the barriers/ screens at Luton and Bedford.**

*(Section 3 Page 14 – Enquiry Offices)*

### Issues for Local Management Action

- Consideration should be given to examining the suitability of Community Information Centres – being piloted in Kent – to serve those smaller towns where activity analysis indicates fewer visitors.  
*(Section 3 – Page 14)*
- The 'triage' system currently employed by hospital trusts should be considered. Ensuring that every visitor is acknowledged on arrival and informed of any delay has been shown to lessen frustration and increase levels of public satisfaction.  
*(Section 3 – Page 14)*

### Savings and Benefits

- Layout changes to Enquiry Offices at Bedford and Luton would incur capital costs of c.£240k; the possible closure of suggested offices would produce annual revenue savings of c. £138k.
- Non cash benefits include an increase in visible policing from the redeployment of officers, and better accessibility resulting in higher public satisfaction in line with HMIC recommendations.

## MOBILE POLICE STATIONS

### Key Findings

- The full potential of Mobile Stations has not been realised.
- Some local communities are apparently unaware of their existence.
- Local organisations/community interest groups should be consulted on the most appropriate locations and timings for the deployment of the stations.

### Issues for Local Management Action

- The Divisions are encouraged to continue deploying the vehicles in line with the Rural Policing Strategy and urged to adopt a more focussed approach in targeting schools, youth clubs and shopping centres.  
*(Section 4 – Page 15)*
- The Community Teams are encouraged to conduct a consultation exercise with Town and Parish Councils in their areas to determine the best times and places to deploy the Mobile Stations.  
*(Section 4 – Page 15)*
- In North Bedfordshire the station has been used in partnership with the Police Authority for public consultation. This is considered good practice and should be expanded to include other Divisions (see also Section 6 PCAF).  
*(Section 4 – Page 15)*

## MEDIA DEPARTMENT

### Key Findings

- The Media Department works to a comprehensive strategy aligned with national standards.
- The Department is acknowledged to be a high-performing team, held in high regard by the local and regional media.

## POLICE AND COMMUNITY ACTION FORUM (PCAF)

### Key Findings

- The public appear to be disinterested in large PCAF meetings and consider them to be a 'tired' format for communication.
- Consultation should be focused and flexible, working to a 'hot spot' principle.
- Surgery style forum appear popular with the public, and the mobile police stations are considered an effective vehicle for these exercises.

**It is recommended that the Police Authority moves away from the traditional large meeting structure and considers more targeted forum in local high volume areas.**

*(Section 6 Page 18 – Police Community Action Forum)*

### Savings and Benefits

- Savings against current expenditure are c.£6,400 p.a. There are also the non-cash benefits of more focussed meetings resulting in clearer lines of communication, improved accessibility (particularly from hard-to-reach groups) and resultant increase in public satisfaction.

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## 1. Introduction

As part of the five year Best Value programme, a review of public interface was scheduled to take place during the year 2001/02. The public interface review encompasses a wide range of issues and processes drawn from across the organisation — Call Handling from receipt of call to point of transfer to the dispatch process, Enquiry Offices, Organisational Feedback, Mobile Police Stations, Media, and Police Community Action Forum (PCAF).

Following a scoping study the Police Authority selected the areas of Call Handling, Enquiry Offices, and PCAF for full reviews utilising the Four 'Cs'. It also agreed that Organisational Feedback, Mobile Police Stations and Media would be subject to light touch reviews with internal challenge and limited consultation and comparison owing to the limited probability of gains compared to the cost of review. The area of Organisational Feedback, having been examined during the scoping study, is considered to have limited potential for recommendations or benefits and would not therefore be reviewed further.

The current position in these areas is detailed in the document 'Best Value Review of Public Interface – Scoping Study, 7 November 2001' and this information is not reiterated here. This report should be read in conjunction with that study.

The definition of Public Interface, and consequently the scope of the review, was agreed as:

*'To ensure the process by which a member of the public interacts with the service meets the requirements of the customer and is appropriate in terms of both accessibility and customer care'*

The overall direct<sup>1</sup> cost to the organisation

of the Public Interface process, as defined by this Best Value Review and incorporating the Call Handling Centre, Enquiry Offices, Mobile Police Stations, Organisational Feedback, Media, and PCAF functions, is estimated as £3,840,000 (2001/02 Budget – Finance Department).

Because of the diverse nature of each area within the public interface process, they were examined as separate entities and as such are reported here in the same manner.

<sup>1</sup> This reflects only the direct cost of staffing and IT and does not include overheads or other business support costs

## 2. Call Handling Centre

It is acknowledged that the Call Handling Centre has been subjected to a series of reviews in the recent past and this Best Value Review has considered the research and findings of the following documents:

- Call Handling Centre Project Report – 1999/00
- Manchester Business School Review – 2000
- Review by Richard Read – 2001
- HMIC Thematic Inspection 'Open All Hours' – 2001

### 2.1 Work done under the Four 'C's

The Call Handling Centre was subjected to the four 'C's as part of the review.

#### Challenge

Personal interviews with selected members of staff were conducted as part of the scoping study to obtain baseline data. A questionnaire was subsequently distributed to all members of staff, followed by focus group meetings challenging the processes and work practices within the centre and ensuring that all elements of the process were examined and rigorously tested. A copy of the questionnaire is presented at **Appendix A**.

Internal challenge has also been provided by nominated members of the Police Authority through a series of meetings, the minutes of which are presented at **Appendix B**.

Meetings and visits to both the RAC and AA have been used to provide an external challenge. Comments and observations from these organisations have been included in the relevant parts of the report.

#### Compare

Numeric benchmarking has been carried out using data from 27 forces, including three from our family of forces. Qualitative systems data has been gathered from a visit to Northamptonshire Police, and visits to both the RAC and AA have produced comparison opportunities.

Bedfordshire Police was visited in 2000 by MBA students of Manchester Business School who carried out a benchmarking exercise. This visit resulted in an internal assessment and comparison with 32 other police forces.

#### Consult

Internal consultation has been extensively conducted during the previous reviews of the Call Handling Centre and, where possible, findings from these exercises have been included in this review.

As part of this review a questionnaire was distributed to 125 staff in the Call Handling Centre. Although there was a disappointing return of 23 completed documents it is clear from the follow up focus group meeting that some of these were consolidated replies from several members of the same work group.

In addition a survey was conducted by calling back a sample of callers. This survey proved somewhat problematic as callers could only be identified from incidents placed on OIS. A random sample of 50 was taken from a single day. These were then vetted to ensure that there were no ethical problems or potential danger to the caller by returning the call, i.e. domestic violence etc. As a result a total of 41 calls were made of which 37 agreed to answer the questions.

External consultation is also conducted regularly through user satisfaction questionnaires and the results of these have been used in this review.

Although 86% of callers were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received from the Call Handling Centre, the main area for improvement, identified both internally and from public surveys, has been the delays in answering calls. This has been reinforced by the consultation with staff carried out during this review. Second to this is the inability of the Call Handling Operators to quickly and accurately answer queries on law and force procedure, an issue that has also been identified by staff during the focus group meeting. This issue also adversely impacts on the former as operators become unavailable to answer calls whilst researching queries.

#### Compete

To enable Bedfordshire Police to consider outsourcing as an opportunity it would be necessary to be in a position to be able to define the scope of the business in terms of cost. The scoping study showed that cost information is in its infancy and based on human resource costs alone. Obtaining data on cost per call from other organisations is also currently problematic as different organisations use differing criteria. Work is however ongoing and an Activity Based Costing exercise was conducted in March 2002. This will enable us to identify the cost of specific processes and therefore use the same criteria when benchmarking cost per call, ensuring that there will be opportunities to examine this area in the future.

Currently call handling is considered an integral part of core policing and has a critical impact on public satisfaction. Outstanding recommendations from the previous reviews and management change, along with the fact that the central Call Handling Centre is still a relatively new function is likely to mean that any benefit gained as a result of externalisation is unlikely to outweigh organisational disruption and the resulting decline in staff morale and retention, and potentially customer satisfaction.

The overall direct cost of the Call Handling function to the organisation is £2,708,000 (*2001/02 Budget – Finance Department*).

**2.2 Findings and Recommendations**

The Call Handling Centre is the first point of contact for the vast majority of people requiring the services of Bedfordshire Police and, as such, is the part of the organisation having the most impact on the public perception and customer satisfaction levels. It is therefore critical that this first contact provides the required service in a timely, polite and professional way.

Whilst this report details the findings of the review, it is acknowledged that the Call Handling Centre Management Team has taken on board a number of issues and has initiated change since the review began.

**2.2.1 Work Practices**

The review team was impressed by the staff working in the centre who are generally committed to giving the best possible service to the public. Flexibility and a willingness to consider new processes was found which, if properly managed, bears well for the future operation of the room.

The current practice in the room is that the Agents who are generally those with the most experience and training, and are therefore more likely to be able to answer questions on law or procedure, do not answer calls from the public. Public calls are answered by Operators who, whilst skilled at call handling, do not have the experience or training to answer these questions.

Internally there is frustration within the centre, the blame for which, rightly or wrongly, is placed on the inadequacies of the Operators by the Agents and the attitude of the Agents by the Operators. There is a need to consolidate the different positions into one single team, working together to give the best service to the public.

**It is recommended that the majority of staff in the Call Handling Centre should be multi-skilled and offered systematic career**

**development opportunities with enhancements based on skills acquisition.**

A career structure is already in place for the Agents and this should be increased over a reasonable time period and where appropriate to include the Operators.

The majority of appointments would be made at the lower levels but there should be provision to recruit at a higher level if necessary. This may necessitate examining the recruitment process for CHC resources. There are also training implications to consider in that continuous development training, accompanied by mentored workplace training, will be needed to enhance the expertise in the room and thereby increase the service to the public. A more integrated room with career structures has been shown in other organisations, particularly in the private sector, to have a reducing effect on the attrition rate among Operators employed directly by the organisation with subsequent savings in recruitment and retraining.

**As Civilian members of staff become more experienced, it is recommended that consideration be given to the appropriate release/redeployment of police officers from the CHC to front-line operational duties.**

This would be in line with the need for a career structure identified in the staff focus group meetings as well as potential efficiency savings and redeployment of officers to operational posts. The Oscar 2 position was considered as it was thought within the room that a civilian supervisor in this position would be more effective. It should be noted however that the Oscar 2 position is currently not considered just a supervisory role but is used by management to give resilience to Oscar 1. The Inspector position (Oscar 1) is considered necessary due to the amount and type of authorisations that are required to be made by that grade, i.e. firearms callouts.

**TABLE 1: Current Agent Career Structure**

<b>Scale 2</b>	All new appointments through probationary period and training
<b>Scale 3</b>	Between 1 and 2 years service subject to the operator having completed PNC courses and all CHC training, and having achieved an acceptable standard of performance as assessed by Chief Inspector (CHC). Proficient in the operation of message switching systems and telex. Proficient in the operation of motorway console and computer. Basic knowledge of radio channels. IT assessment required.
<b>Scale 4</b>	As above, with a minimum of 3 years Information Room/Call Handling service and in addition proficiency in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Operating VA channels 1 and 2 (VHF and UHF)</li> <li>● Operation of all call handling centre positions, including switchboard</li> <li>● Show a high level of interpersonal skills</li> <li>● Able to work with a minimum of supervision</li> <li>● Able to exercise good judgement</li> </ul> The progression is by way of presentation, assessment, and interview
<b>Scale 4+1</b>	As above but able to train other operators in the use of equipment The number who may progress to this scale is currently limited to 12 The progression is by way of presentation, assessment, and interview.

Source: Call handling Report – Read

Based on current numbers the civilianisation process would give a saving of £319,473 per year. This figure is based on the difference between police and civilian standard costs. The issue of civilianisation should not be viewed as a short term solution however as there are valid issues of potential problems of ill health retirements from

some officers moved back to operational policing, and protection of police establishment numbers to be considered. The civilianisation process will need to be gradual over several years to allow for natural wastage as a solution to the identified problems and for the proper accumulation of expertise.

**Likely Impact of Revised Working Practices**

	<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>	<b>Cost</b>
<p><b>Status Quo</b></p> <p>The Call Handling Centre remains as three separate entities – Switchboard, Call Operators, Call Agents.</p>	<p>No increase in cost</p>	<p>Continuation of high attrition rate, particularly in Call Operators due to lack of team spirit.</p> <p>Continuation of poor performance in relation to answering non-emergency calls and the ability to answer questions from the public first time.</p>	<p>No change in costs</p>
<p><b>Full Implementation</b></p> <p>Full implementation of the recommendation over a five-year period.</p>	<p>Better trained and qualified staff able to give improved service to the public resulting in higher satisfaction rates.</p> <p>Less attrition rate resulting in cost savings from recruitment and training.</p> <p>Cost savings from redeployment of police officers.</p> <p>Increase in morale and staff satisfaction.</p>	<p>Cost implication of all staff being on structured grading.</p> <p>Potential difficulties with ill health retirements.</p> <p>Potential loss of police establishment numbers.</p>	<p>No additional cost for first three years.</p> <p>Then additional cost of approx £50K per year.</p> <p>Cost savings from redeployment of police officers – estimated at £319,473 per year.</p>

The additional cost shown for full implementation is that over and above the normal anticipated incremental drift arising due to staff currently being on linked grades, i.e. an operator being on scale 2/3. Using this scenario and based on the current staff mix the first three years would see no additional cost. After this the additional cost would be approximately £50,000 per annum.

**Issues Raised for Local Management Action**

*The new Management Team has taken the opportunity to improve working relationships. It is encouraged to continue such initiatives, particularly in the improvement of communications, with regular, structured team meetings to identify and share the professional skills and experience of team members.*

*The Management Team is encouraged to review the supervision and support structures for call handling staff to assist the Operators’ ability to quickly and accurately answer queries from the public.*

*It should also consider reviewing the flow of information processes to enable team members to interact with each other, enhancing the flow of information.*

### 2.2.2 Managing Demand

The organisation should look to ways of controlling and managing the number of calls coming into the Centre. Current research has shown that Bedfordshire is performing well in the area of answering 999 calls within target times compared to other forces and is consistently reaching its target.

Work is ongoing within Central Government and other agencies to educate the public about false and mistaken emergency calls, especially from mobile phone users, that should have an impact in this area. A national system introduced in October 2001, whereby all silent 999 calls are switched by British Telecom to a special centre for evaluation, should also ease the burden on police call centres.

Humberside Police is working with East Riding County Council to provide kiosks with video conferencing facilities at 150 public sites, such as supermarkets, to give access to services even when police and local authority offices are closed. Callers to this service will eventually be identified by means of a smart card. It is intended to eventually provide a scanner in the kiosk to aid document flow.

Both the Leicester and Humberside projects have yet to be evaluated although both were highlighted as good practice by HMIC (Open All Hours – 2001)

Kiosks are an interesting concept that was previously considered by Bedfordshire Police and Bedfordshire County Council in the context of an 'Invest to Save' bid.

TABLE 2: Calls Answered in Standard time

	Northants	Hampshire	Staffs	Bedfordshire	Private Sector
% 999 calls answered in standard time	92%	73%	90%	93%	N/A
% non 999 calls answered within standard time	67%	92%	85%	68%	99%

Source: Force information

We are not however comparing well in the area of non emergency calls compared with either other police forces or private sector centres and it is in this area that we should look to manage the demand.

Managing operational demand is being reviewed as part of the Best Value Review of Deployment 2002/2003 but an IT solution may be a means of reducing the number of calls entering the system and some examples found elsewhere are detailed below.

Research with Newham Local Authority has indicated that electronic interfaces using kiosks have led to a significant reduction in personal calls and visits to council offices. (See also Section 3 – Enquiry Offices). Newham strategy is to enable all their residents to be within 10 minutes of an electronic interface by the year 2004. Currently deployed in information centres, they will eventually be situated in public buildings across the borough. Simple interfaces give single click access to facilities including library services, social services, and advice on issues such as housing and crime.

Leicestershire Constabulary is collaborating with Consignia which is installing kiosks in 200 post offices in the county offering information services and short dial telephone services to the police and social services departments. Currently only downloaded information is available but future developments may allow real time access to the organisation.

#### Issue Raised for Local Management Action

***It is suggested that a working group be convened to revisit the concept of information kiosks previously examined in an 'Invest to Save' bid in association with other public service authorities and agencies. This might examine the development of shared information terminals at suitable locations. A pilot Division should be identified for such a project*** (Police Authority Scrutiny Panel challenge – 26 February 2002)

These kiosks should contain both telephone directories with direct dial information and facilities, and simple information and access forms to allow the public to identify appropriate departments for services and to complete templates for crime, lost property etc. Research from Newham Council has suggested that a reduction of 20% of incoming calls to the Call Centre can be expected from implementation of the kiosks, equating to a non cashable efficiency saving of £471,641. This figure is based on the number of non emergency calls received and the average call cost of £3.57 (see Scoping Study, Page 14). There would be associated building costs involved in introducing these facilities but any accurate figure is indeterminate until issues of sharing and partnership are resolved.

Further savings can be expected from the possible phasing out of the switchboard function if the expected reduction in calls is achieved.

Increased mobility of the population, coupled with increased availability of telephone communication and the use of the mobile police stations in North Bedfordshire and Central Divisions has meant that our customers are more inclined to use these means of contact rather than visiting a conventional police station.

Consultation during this review and the review of Crime Recording carried out in 2001 would tend to indicate that the public would rather contact the police by phone or have an officer visit them rather than visit a police station. Activity analysis has also shown that the majority of visits to police stations are for advice or directions, both of which could easily be dealt with by phone or electronic access. The organisation should consider the model employed in Newham Council in supplying electronic interfaces in the form of kiosks containing electronic directories of direct dial numbers and simple information and access forms (see also Section 2 – Call Handling Centre).

Current activity analysis indicates that the optimum opening hours at main police stations are 08:00 to 22:00 hours Monday to Saturday. Any decision about hours of operation needs to be a balance of the principle commitment to an accessible enquiry office service and financial or operational considerations.

### 3.2.1 Enquiry Office Opening

**It is recommended that Enquiry Office opening hours are reviewed.**

Whilst acknowledging the need for accessibility and visibility, if a purely visitor number view is taken then consideration should be given to the opening times shown below:

#### Benefits

- The potential savings from this recommendation equate to four Constables re-deployed (non-cashable) and two Civilian staff (cashable) amounting to approximately £138,000 per year (2001/2 budget)
- An increase in visible policing on the streets through redeployment of officers

#### Disadvantages

- Decrease in public access in these areas

The following table shows the numbers of visitors to the enquiry offices measured during two studies. Activity analysis conducted in 2001 and a study carried out as part of this review.

**TABLE 3: Visitors to Enquiry Offices**

Period	Activity Analysis 2001 10-day period	Best Value Study January 2002 7-day period
Bedford All Visitors	Unable to determine	577
Bedford 23:00 – 07:00	Nil	23
Luton All Visitors	Unable to determine	711
Luton 23:00 – 07:00	5	33
Dunstable All Visitors	N/A	161
Dunstable 23:00 – 07:00	N/A	Closed
Biggleswade All Visitors	80	54
Biggleswade 23:00 – 07:00	Closed	Closed
Amphill All Visitors	18	85
Amphill 23:00 – 07:00	Closed	Closed
Leighton Buzzard All Visitors	No data	112
Leighton Buzzard 23:00 – 07:00	Closed	Closed
Houghton Regis	No data	50

Source: Divisions

Station	Current Opening	Suggested Opening	Impact/Comments
Bedford	24hrs/365 days	Closed between 23:00 and 07:00 Access for prisoners only	Potential saving of 2 x Constable time
Luton	24hrs/365 days	Closed between 23:00 and 07:00 Access for prisoners only	Potential saving of 2 x Constable time
Dunstable	07:00 – 23:00	Opening times to remain	
Biggleswade	08:00 – 19:00	Opening times to remain	
Amphill	08:00 – 17:00 Weekdays	Closed to the public	Potential saving of 1 x Civilian
Leighton Buzzard	08:00 – 17:00 09:00 – 13.00 Sat/Sun	Opening times to remain	Leighton Buzzard, historically a policing satellite town to Dunstable, has grown in size and its population now exceeds that of Dunstable
Houghton Regis	08:00 – 17:00 Mon-Fri	Closed to the public	Potential saving of 1 x Civilian

**Bedford**

Bedford enquiry office is currently open 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.

Activity analysis carried out in 2001 showed no visitors to Bedford enquiry office between 23:00 and 07:00 during the 10-day trial.

A further study carried out in January 2002 as part of this review showed a total of 23 visitors between the hours of 23:00 and 07:00 during a seven-day period (average of 3.2 per night). Of these only three visited to report an incident, four visitors produced documents and the remainder were seeking advice (nine) or visiting prisoners or officers. The total number of visitors during this period was 577.

**Luton**

Luton enquiry office is currently open 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.

Activity analysis carried out in 2001 showed five visitors to Luton enquiry office between 23:00 and 07:00 during the 10-day trial. Out of a total of 160 hours (two officers) a total of 3hrs 59 minutes was spent dealing with the public.

A further study carried out in January 2002 as part of this review showed a total of 33 visitors between the hours of 23:00 and 07:00 during the seven-day period (average 4.7 per night). Of these eight visited to report an incident, eight visitors produced documents and the remainder were seeking advice (14) or visiting prisoners or officers. The total number of visitors during this period was 711.

**Dunstable**

Dunstable enquiry office opening hours have changed since a review conducted by the division in 2001. The station is now closed between 23:00 and 07:00 each night. Data from the original activity analysis carried out in 2001 is no longer valid due to the change. The total number of visitors during the study carried out in January 2002 was 161.

**Biggleswade**

Biggleswade enquiry office is open mainly between 08:00 and 19:00 each day. Sunday is covered by officers from Bedford.

Activity analysis carried out in 2001 showed 80 visitors to Biggleswade enquiry office during the 10-day trial, an average of eight per day. Of these 14 reported incidents, 17 produced documents, eight made enquiries relating to property, and four relating to dogs. There are two civilian members of staff employed as enquiry staff. There were 54 visitors during the study carried out in 2002.

**Amphill**

Amphill enquiry office is open between 08:00 and 17:00 each weekday.

Activity analysis carried out in 2001 showed 18 visitors to Amphill enquiry office during the 10-day trial, an average of 1.8 per day. Of these nine reported crimes, five reported traffic incidents, the remainder seeking advice or directions. There is one civilian member of staff. During a seven-day

survey conducted in 2002 there were 85 enquiry office visitors. Of these seven reported crimes/incidents, 24 produced documents, 31 sought advice or direction, five made enquiries relating to property, and nine were meeting police officers.

**Leighton Buzzard**

Leighton Buzzard enquiry office is generally open between 08:00 and 17:00 each weekday. The station was not included in the activity analysis study carried out in 2001.

A study carried out in 2002 as part of this review showed a total of 112 visitors during the seven-day period, an average of 11.2 per day. Of these 10 reported crimes, two reported traffic incidents, 19 produced documents, 47 were seeking advice or directions, and the remainder were visiting officers. There are 1.5 civilian staff.

**Houghton Regis**

Houghton Regis enquiry office is open between 08:00 and 17:00 Monday to Friday. The office was not included in the activity analysis study carried out in 2001. During a study over seven days conducted in 2002 there were 50 visitors to the enquiry office. Of these six reported crime/incidents, 25 attended a regular vehicle examination conducted by SOCO, 18 sought advice or directions, and seven were seeking advice for a school or community group. There is one member of staff.

Although the recommendation suggests no open public access during the night at Bedford and Luton there would still be emergency access as both stations have custody facilities where police officers are available. If a decision is made to close these stations at night then provision should be made for the public to have telephone access to the Call Handling Centre, or kiosk facilities if implemented.

On purely financial grounds the numbers of visitors at some of these stations do not merit their current opening hours but this factor is only one dimension and the symbolic importance of a police presence in a neighbourhood should not be underestimated. Uniquely identifiable police/public interface points offering ease of access, convenience of location and high quality personal interactions are integral to a policing style that is rooted in the community and geared to its needs (HMIC – Open All Hours).

Consultation with the Divisional Commanders has indicated acknowledgement of the economic and efficiency rationale in altering the opening times based on numbers of visitors, but a significant feeling that the overriding consideration should support the HMIC view on accessibility.

A report published in 1999 by the Audit Commission recommended the adoption of force-wide policies on the nature and location of public interface points. HMIC 'Open All Hours' suggests that forces should ensure that public interface points are located in a way that maximises their value to local communities. In considering the recommendation given above on possible opening hours the organisation is urged to consider the use of the Mobile Police Stations already owned, and to consider utilising any savings from closure to purchase additional vehicles to provide accessible, convenient, and quality interface points (see Section 4 – Mobile Police Stations).

### 3.2.2 Enquiry Office Layout

**It is recommended that Enquiry Office layouts be reviewed with the aim of making them more open and accessible to the public. This should include consideration to removing the barriers/screens at Luton and Bedford.**

#### Likely effects of revised layout of Enquiry Offices

	Benefits	Disadvantages	Cost
Full Implementation	Better accessibility for the public resulting in higher levels of satisfaction. Compliance with HMIC recommendations and Government advice on police accessibility Open All Hours – HMIC Action Stations – Audit Commission.	Feeling of insecurity of staff. Cost implications of building restructuring.	Cost of building alterations. (Bedford has budgeted for alterations during 2002/3 amounting to £90,000). A previous review of Luton suggested a cost of about £150,000.

The current layout of enquiry office counters, particularly at Bedford and Luton, reflects staff perception of vulnerability and demonstrates an excessive emphasis on security and separation of staff from the public. Facilities are generally laid out to be deliberately functional and devoid of comfort. They are designed to cope with the excesses of the criminal minority who attend police stations and are likely to increase perceptions of vulnerability for victims reporting crimes and marginalise other callers to the station. Whilst recommending that the barriers should be removed, it is important to acknowledge the health and safety issues and potential danger to staff from some members of the public, and to ensure that any diminution of existing protection should be matched by other, less intrusive safeguards, such as 'panic buttons' etc.

Consultation conducted during this review with

both the public visitors and the staff at Luton has reinforced the findings of the HMIC report 'Open All Hours' that advocates more open access. In particular consideration should be given to the recommendations outlined in that report in respect of privacy arrangements and accessibility for those with hearing or visual impairments.

In making this recommendation it is acknowledged that 'B' Division has already agreed to change the layout of Bedford and that finances have been agreed in the 2002/3 budget. The Divisional Commander has agreed to await the outcome of this report and he is urged to revisit the plan, in particular the closing of the internal doors to form an 'airlock' in which visitors will have to wait for access.

#### Issue Raised for Local Management Action

Kent Constabulary is currently running a pilot programme of 'Community Information Centres'.

These are integrated local authority and police enquiry facilities. The principle underpinning this pilot is that co-located services would benefit the public, for example an elderly person losing a benefit book could report the loss to the police and obtain a new benefit book from the council in a single visit.

Preliminary findings would appear to indicate that the service may not be suited to towns with a main police station **but the organisation should consider examining whether it would be beneficial in towns such as Ampthill, Biggleswade, and Leighton Buzzard where the activity analysis indicates smaller numbers of visitors.**

Consultation has also identified that the time taken to initially be seen is frustrating for visitors. Initial acknowledgement of their presence and an explanation of any possible delay is felt important and **the organisation should look to the system of 'triage' currently employed by hospital trusts. The simple act of ensuring that every visitor is acknowledged and informed of any delay on arrival at the station has been shown to lessen frustration and increase public perception and satisfaction.**

## 4. Mobile Police Stations

Bedfordshire Police currently runs two mobile police stations, one operated by North Bedfordshire Division and the other by Central Division. The Police Authority Scrutiny Panel decided on 14 November 2001 that this area would be the subject of a light touch review looking at the cost and usage of the vehicles.

### 4.1 Work done under the Four 'C's

#### Challenge

The vehicles were purchased and are run under the auspices of the rural policing fund and there is little scope for considering their disposal. The challenge aspect therefore concentrated on their usage and deployment and was tested by Community Action staff.

Internal challenge has also been provided by nominated members of the Police Authority through a series of meetings the minutes of which are presented at **Appendix B**.

A questionnaire circulated to Parish Councils as part of the consultation exercise was also used to provide an external challenge.

#### Compare

Comparison with the operating practices of Lincolnshire Police has been made.

Performance data in both organisations is still in its infancy and not robust enough for significant comparisons.

#### Consult

Internal consultation has been carried out with the Community Policing Teams of the divisions involved.

External consultation has been carried out by way of a questionnaire distributed to all Parish Council Clerks. A copy of the questionnaire is presented at **Appendix G**. 121 questionnaires were distributed with 53 returns (44%).

#### Compete

It was agreed by the Police Authority Scrutiny Panel meeting of 14 November 2001 that this area was not suitable for competition due to its necessary involvement in visible and core policing.

The cost of purchase was £68,000 per vehicle.

The operating cost of the mobile police stations, based on personnel costs and hours of opening, is £13,587.

### 4.2 Findings and Recommendations

The mobile police stations are an important part of the rural policing strategy and play a significant part in showing a visible police presence, particularly in those parts of Bedfordshire that otherwise would see very little police activity.

Comparison with Lincolnshire Police, which has been identified as leader in the field, shows that there is little difference in cost in its current two stations but that our performance in terms of visitors is about half that of Lincolnshire. Our two stations received approximately 3,000 visitors in 2001, compared to 6,000 for the two stations in Lincolnshire.

Lincolnshire has the experience of using the vehicles since 1994 and has a more focused approach. For example, in addition to ad hoc visitors, the mobile teams see approximately 8,000 infant and junior school children four times a year by visiting schools.

Consultation with Parish Councils has indicated that, where they are aware of the vehicles, i.e. where the vehicle has visited, there is a great deal of enthusiasm and satisfaction with its performance. There were however a significant minority of Parish Councils that were unaware of the vehicles or who had not been consulted in their deployment. The current practice of deploying to every parish on a regular basis is not considered to be getting best value from the vehicles, particularly in terms of accessibility for visitors. One observation from the Parish Councils was that the vehicle had visited their area but during a time when most of the population had commuted to work.

#### Issues Raised for Local Management Action

*The divisions are encouraged to continue deploying the vehicles in line with the rural policing strategy and urged to adopt a more focussed approach in targeting schools, youth clubs and shopping centres.*

*The community teams are encouraged to conduct a consultation exercise with Town and Parish Councils in their areas to determine the best times and places to deploy the Mobile Stations.*

*In North Bedfordshire the station has been used in partnership with the Police Authority for public consultation. This is considered good practice and should be expanded to include other divisions. (see also Section 6 PCAF).*

## 5. Media

At a meeting of the Police Authority Scrutiny Panel on 14 November 2001 it was decided that this area would be subject of a light touch review as there was little scope for efficiency savings compared to the cost of review.

### 5.1 Work done under the Four 'C's

The Media Department was subjected to the four Cs as part of the review.

#### Challenge

Internal challenge was conducted through research into current practice and strategies. Internal challenge was also provided by selected members of the Police Authority through a series of meetings, the minutes of which are presented at **Appendix B**.

#### Compare

Numeric benchmarking and process comparison has been undertaken with five other forces as part of a study conducted by Sussex Police. These forces are Sussex, Essex, Kent, Hampshire, and Lincolnshire.

#### Consult

External consultation was carried out by questionnaires sent to local and regional newspaper, radio, and television contacts. A copy of the questionnaire is presented at **Appendix H**. Nine Questionnaires were distributed with six returns.

An internal consultation exercise was conducted with Divisional Commanders and their comments are included in relevant parts of the report.

#### Compete

Although the Police Authority Scrutiny Panel had decided that this area should not be subject to a detailed competition study, a basic cost comparison was made against the police organisations taking part in the comparison study.

Direct cost to the organisation of the Media function is £150,500 (2001/02 budget – Finance Department).

### 5.2 Findings and Recommendations

The Media office is responsible for promoting all the activities of Bedfordshire Police to as wide an audience as possible. Media staff act as a bridge between the organisation and the local, regional, and national media, dealing with a multitude of enquiries to allow operational staff the freedom to get on with their work. For example Specialist Crime Services relationship with the media department is

such that as a case is notified to the department they take over the formulation of a media strategy, consult with the Senior Investigating Officer and other agency press officers, thereby taking a lot of stress from the SIO. This is considered a critical aspect of an enquiry by the division.

The office is also responsible for proactive use of the media to publicise the force and particular incidents that occur. They work to a comprehensive strategy aligned with nationally agreed standards. It should be noted however that they operate under the restriction of editorial discretion in that the media do not run some stories provided, either because they are not considered newsworthy or because editors are legally bound to follow some stories through over potentially a long period of time and will therefore not start the process. The organisation has however been the subject of congratulations and benchmarking exercises in relation to proactive publicity and recruiting campaigns and was the first provincial force to advertise on national media.

Bedfordshire Police Media Office is one of the smallest in the country. No budget information was available from the other organisations in the study but the department's staffing costs are significantly less than other comparable forces.

The table below shows comparative resource levels for the media departments of our family of forces.

Although no formal performance indicators exist, anecdotal evidence suggests the media department is a high performance team. Consultation with the local and regional media has shown that it has an excellent working relationship and is held in very high regard by the majority of contacts. Comments from local and regional contacts include:

*"A small friendly professional team always willing to help and full of ideas"*

*"Our relationship with the Beds Police Press Office is one of the most successful we have" (BBC Look East)"*

The Force Internet site is comparable with that of other similar organisations both in content, usage and cost. The dedicated 'Operation Scorpion' site is acknowledged as best practice and has been the subject of benchmarking by other organisations.

There are no issues or recommendations arising from this review of the Media function.

TABLE 4: Media Department Numbers Family of Forces

Source:- Forces

Force	Beds	Sussex	Essex	Kent	Hants	Lincs	Avon/Somerset	TVP	Leics	Warwicks
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>
Managers	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1
Press Officers	2	6	7	2	5	2	5	4	2	2
Admin Support	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
Divisional Press Officers	0	8	1	9	2	0	0	7	0	2
Other**	3	4	10	1	2	1	2	3	1	2

Other\*\* includes various positions that differ in each force but typically include Internet administrators and publicity/publication managers. Essex Police also include a television unit. Bedfordshire Police plan to recruit a further Media Officer and a Publicity Officer to cover publicity in the Road Traffic speed camera unit in the near future.

## 6. Police Community Action Forum (PCAF)

Since April 1995 the Police and Criminal Evidence Act and the Police Act have required every Police Authority, after consulting with the Chief Constable, to make arrangements to obtain the views of local people about matters concerning policing in the area and obtain their co-operation with the police in preventing crime through local consultative groups. The legislation does not specify the format of this consultation.

Bedfordshire Police Authority has historically complied with this directive predominantly through large structured meetings held at various locations and involving Authority Members, Divisional Commanders and local interest groups.

Police Community Action Forum have been subjected to the four C's during this review.

### 6.1 Work done under the Four 'C's

#### Challenge

Internal challenge has been supplied through Divisional Commanders and members of the Police Authority challenging the current format of the meetings and ensuring they were examined and rigorously tested.

#### Compare

Comparison including both quantitative and qualitative data has been conducted with other Authorities including Kent, Staffordshire, South Yorkshire, Hampshire, West Mercia, Essex, Suffolk, and South Wales.

The findings of the reports 'Consulting Communities – Association of Police Authorities 2001' and 'Police Authority Benchmarking – Association of Police Authorities 2001' were also used for comparison purposes.

#### Consult

Internal consultation has been conducted with Divisional Commanders and Police Authority Members.

External consultation has been conducted by 'Better Times' Consultants and, where appropriate, the results were used in this review.

#### Compete

There is a statutory requirement that the Police Authority consults with the public. Consultation is outsourced through the use of the Authority's PR consultants 'Better Times' who were appointed following a comprehensive tendering exercise that produced 21 requests, of which 10 submitted tenders. The cost of Police Community Action Forum to the Authority is £6,400 (2001/02 budget – Police Authority).

### 6.2 Findings and Recommendations

It is a legislative requirement that every Police Authority consults with local people about matters concerning policing in the area. The legislation does not specify the format of this consultation. Bedfordshire Police Authority has historically complied with this directive predominantly through large structured meetings held at various locations and involving Authority Members, Divisional Commanders and local interest groups.

The Police Authority has Communications and Marketing strategies covering all different aspects of consulting with the public. The contract to manage these strategies was awarded to 'Better Times' after a rigorous tendering exercise.

TABLE 5: Communication Tenders

Description	Range of Tenders	Better Times
Communication strategy	£15,000 - £48,000 (one exceptional tender of £110,000)	£18,000
Police Authority Annual Report	£1385 - £3,500	£1,980
Leaflet on Police Authority	£350 - £1920	£350
Policing Plan	£2,000 - £6,280	£3,000
Commissioned work – Hourly	£40 - £125	£50
Commissioned work – Daily	£250 - £800	£400

Source:- Bedfordshire Police Authority

'Better Times' also carries out public relations work and marketing services in respect of PCAF. This includes press releases, questionnaires, advertisements, posters and leaflets. The cost of PCAF in the year to date is £2,841.

The public opinion survey devised by the Force and the Police Authority was split into separate sections and will be printed and distributed by an external organisation at a cost of £10,000. The publicity for the survey will be undertaken by 'Better Times' as part of their contract and will cost around £2,000.

Comparison has shown that Bedfordshire Police Authority has below the national average number of consultation meetings, has below average spending incurred in carrying out consultation and has below average unit cost per consultation. (Source – Police Authority Benchmarking, Association of Police Authorities 2001) However direct comparisons are not possible based on the figures supplied due to the very different costing arrangements that apply to such meetings, for example not all Authorities are required to pay full costs for meeting rooms etc.

No comparative analysis has been undertaken to assess the effectiveness of each meeting as many Authorities were unable to supply any detailed information.

The comparison study carried out by Staffordshire Police Authority did show that most organisations have identified that the numbers of members of the public attending such meetings are generally very low. The exception being in the case of a particular local issue where the meeting had been specifically called to deal with that issue. This is also the case in Bedfordshire. Many Authorities are actively considering moving from large meetings to smaller, more focussed consultation methods.

Consultation carried out during this review, and by 'Better Times' Consultants indicates that the standard format of PCAF is considered 'tired' and that the public has become disinterested. The main findings of the consultation exercise were:

- Consultation should work to a 'hot spot' principle with focus and flexibility
- There needs to be a structured feedback mechanism to inform the public of decisions
- Surgery style forum are a popular method of consultation

The approach adopted by North Bedfordshire in focusing meetings to specific issues and holding meetings in high public volume venues, such as supermarkets and garden centres, is in line with a national move away from conventional meetings and has proved popular with local people. The mobile police stations are considered an effective vehicle for these exercises.

**It is recommended that the Police Authority moves away from the traditional large meeting structure and considers more targeted forum in local high volume areas.**

#### Likely impact of revised meeting structure

Benefits	Disadvantages	Cost
<p>More focussed meetings increasing potential for more valid consultation.</p> <p>Potential for more access to hard-to-reach groups.</p> <p>Potential for more public access to Members and police in high volume locations.</p> <p>Cost benefits of not using large venues.</p>	None	<p>Cost savings from this recommendation can only be estimated due to the lack of detailed cost information. The forum would however be incorporated with the high-visibility policing strategy of the Force and provide more effective consultation. Any savings would come from the generic cost of meetings, currently estimated at £380 per meeting.</p> <p>In 2001 there were 18 large meetings in Bedfordshire at a generic cost of £6,400.</p>

## Summary of Recommendations

**It is recommended that the majority of staff in the Call Handling Centre should be multi-skilled and offered systematic career development opportunities with enhancements based on skills acquisition.**

(Section 2 Page 7 – Call Handling)

**As Civilian members of staff become more experienced, it is recommended that consideration be given to the appropriate release/redeployment of police officers from the CHC to front-line operational duties.**

(Section 2 Page 7 – Call Handling)

**It is recommended that the comprehensive review of the ‘resource to demand’ profile is maintained to identify the opportunities for ensuring an optimum fit between (real time) demand and resource planning/allocation procedures.**

(Section 2 Page 10 – Call Handling)

**It is recommended that the Enquiry Office opening hours are reviewed.**

(Section 3 Page 12 – Enquiry Offices)

**It is recommended that Enquiry Office layouts be reviewed with the aim of making them more open and accessible to the public. This should include consideration to removing the barriers/screens at Luton and Bedford.**

(Section 3 Page 14 – Enquiry Offices)

**It is recommended that the Police Authority moves away from the traditional large meeting structure and considers more targeted forum in local high volume areas.**

(Section 6 Page 18 – Police Consultative Action Forum)

### Issues Raised for Local Management Action

Although not included as full recommendations, the following issues are raised for management consideration:

#### Call Handling

The new Management Team has taken the opportunity to improve working relationships. It is encouraged to continue such initiatives, particularly in the improvement of communications, with regular, structured team meetings to identify and share the professional skills and experience of team members.

(Section 2 Page 8)

The Management Team is encouraged to review the supervision and support structures for Call Handling staff to assist the Operators’ ability to quickly and accurately answer queries from the public.

(Section 2 Page 8)

It should also consider reviewing the flow of information processes to enable team members to interact with each other, enhancing the flow of information.

(Section 2 Page 8)

It is suggested that a working group be convened to revisit the concept of information kiosks previously examined in an ‘Invest to Save’ bid in association with other public service authorities and agencies. This might examine the development of shared information terminals at suitable locations. A pilot Division should be identified for such a project.

(Section 2 Page 9)

The Management Team is encouraged to consider further the benefits of annualised hours in comparison to the recently agreed variable shift

agreement. This consideration should be reported to the Police Authority in 12 months.

(Section 2 Page 10)

#### Enquiry Offices

The organisation should consider examining whether the system of Community Information Centres currently being piloted in Kent would be beneficial in the smaller towns where activity analysis indicates smaller numbers of visitors.

(Section 3 Page 14)

The organisation should look to the system of ‘triage’ currently employed by hospital trusts. The simple act of ensuring that every visitor is acknowledged and informed of any delay on arrival at the station has been shown to lessen frustration and increase public perception and satisfaction.

(Section 3 Page 14)

#### Mobile Police Stations

The Divisions are encouraged to continue deploying the vehicles in line with the rural policing strategy and urged to adopt a more focussed approach in targeting schools, youth clubs and shopping centres.

(Section 4 Page 15)

The Community Teams are encouraged to conduct a consultation exercise with Town and Parish Councils in their areas to determine the best times and places to deploy the Mobile Stations.

(Section 4 Page 15)

In North Bedfordshire the station has been used in partnership with the Police Authority for public consultation. This is considered good practice and should be expanded to include other divisions (see also Section 6 PCAF).

(Section 4 Page 15)



## Appendix A

### Best Value Review – Customer Interface Call Handling Centre Questionnaire

As part of the ongoing series of Best Value Reviews the Call Handling Centre will be examined as an important part of Customer Interface.

The purpose of the review is *'To ensure that the process by which a member of the public interacts with the service meets the requirements of the customer, and is appropriate in terms of both accessibility and customer care'*

The questionnaire is designed to get as wide and accurate view as possible with every member of staff being asked to answer the questions as fully and openly as possible. **You are the people who know how the job is done and how it should be done to give the best possible service to the public.**

The questionnaire will be followed up by interviews and focus groups with staff, using the questions as a guide. Please take some time to answer the questions as fully as you can and return the questionnaire to Mick Bell, Best Value Team by Friday 6 December 2001.

Thank you for your support

*Mick Bell*

#### Leadership

1. Who is responsible for performance and standards in the Call Handling Centre?

2. What are your performance indicators/standards?

3. What support do you expect from your supervisor?

4. What involvement does the Head of the Call Handling Centre have in supporting staff?

### Policy and Strategy

- 1. How do you ensure that your staff are aware of strategies and policies relating to the Call Handling Centre? (Supervisors)

- 2. How do you use management information to ensure the best service to the public? (Supervisors)

- 3. How are you consulted about policy and strategy? How do you want to be consulted?

- 4. How would you plan to handle future demand?

### People

- 1. Have you received appropriate training to carry out your role? What training do you feel you should have?

- 2. What should the organisation do to retain staff in the Call Handling Centre?

- 3. How are sickness levels monitored? How can we reduce sickness levels?

4. Are you confident that your work station complies with Health & Safety regulations?

5. How would you change the layout of the CHC to improve the working environment?

6. What Information Technology is provided to help you do your job? Is it adequate and 'fit for purpose'?

7. How can we improve the interaction between the Operators and Agents? i.e. message switching etc.

8. Should the CHC staff be multi-skilled? i.e. Operators using radios/Agents answering public calls. Please explain your answer.

### Partnerships and Resources

1. Are the shift patterns in the CHC appropriate?

2. Are our resources adequate?

Position	Adequate Yes/No	Minimum Staff Required
Supervisors	Yes/No	
Switchboard Operators	Yes/No	
Call Operators	Yes/No	
Call Agents 999	Yes/No	
Call Agents Dispatcher	Yes/No	
Call Agents Radio Support	Yes/No	

Comments:

3. How are the available staff matched to the demand? For example, can we switch people to call answering at times of greater demand?

## Processes

1. How do you ensure that callers are dealt with by the correct person first time?

2. How does the interface between Switchboard, Call Operator and Agent work?  
How can we improve the communication?

3. What facilities are in place to take calls in foreign languages or from callers whose first language is not English, or those with impaired hearing?

4. Is there any function you are required to do that you feel is not part of your job?  
Please explain your answer.

## General Comments

Please feel free to add any further comments you feel may be useful to the review.

Name  (Optional)

Position: Supervisor/Switchboard Operator/Call Handling Operator/Agent

Time Employed with Bedfordshire Police  Years  Months

I would/would not like to take part in a focus group meeting to discuss these issues

## Appendix B1



### BEST VALUE REVIEW TEAM MEETING PUBLIC INTERFACE (Year 2)

14 November 2001  
10.00 am at Bridgebury House (½ day)

#### MINUTES

##### Attendees:

Nick Hills (Chair) (NH), Gill Owen (GO), Sue Alexander (SA), Peter Conniff (PC), Phil Mosley (PM), Iain Metcalfe (IM), Brian Minihane (BM), Mick Bell (MB), Paul Wainwright (PW)

#### 1. Minutes of Meeting on 25 September 2001

Agreed.

#### 2. Scoping Document

MB took the group through the process of deciding which areas of public interface to investigate in greater detail under the 4Cs. It was decided by the group that clarification was required over what was meant by 'limited review' – certain areas where a review would not be covered in great depth after identifying information to show that such detail was not required.

MB highlighted the conclusions (on p.59 of the Scoping Document) that:

- **Call Handling Centre** be subject of a full review
- **Enquiry Offices** be subject to a full review
- **Organisational Feedback** be subject to a reduced review incorporating internal challenge and comparison only. This is due to the probability of gains compared to the cost of review.
- **Beat Management** be subject of a 'light-touch' review with particular emphasis on the cost and use of the mobile police stations. The review will incorporate challenge and comparison of costs and visits and consultation with users and local leaders.
- **Media** be subject to a 'light-touch' review in relation to proactive use.
- **PCAFs** be subject to a full review.

Each of these was discussed.

#### Call Handling Centre

It was agreed that this would be subject to a full review. Although there were over 100 recommendations in the recent call-handling report, none of them were under a best-value regime.

The following issues were raised within the meeting:

- **Deployment and Public Interface** – we should continually consider the split between the two reviews. As part of this, NH will also be involved within the Deployment Review.
- **Scoping Report** – it was asked whether the report could include basic details of each post within the CHC. MB stated that the job descriptions could be produced and that the process map outlined the individual roles.
- **Retention Issues** – PC asked that the retention of CHC staff be addressed. MB stated that Call Handling Agents had a career structure, but that Call Handling Officers did not. It was stated that there was also an issue over the high concentration of private call-handling centres in the Bedford area. PC stated that it must be understood there may be little opportunity for savings here and that the cost of continually losing staff meant we should be looking at consideration of loyalty packages, for example.
- **Working Environment** – PC brought up the issue within the CHC, including the 'them and us' attitude and the different uniforms.
- **Publicity** – GO stated that we should look at publicising direct-dial numbers, making them more accessible to people.
- **Costs** – the ABC model will be used to compare nationally and it was seen as important that costs are 'adjusted' before being compared. The use of ABC data will occur when available. It was also clarified that the civilian pay costs on p.14 of the Scoping Document included call handling agents and switchboard operators. The figure for compensatory grant concerned tax rebates due to relocation of existing officers.

The 4Cs contained within the Scoping Document (p. 15-17) were agreed subject to the following:

- **Compare** – PM stated that Thames Valley and Hampshire had undertaken reviews of call handling. NH asked if there was anything internationally which could be of use. MB stated that he would look on the internet for anything suitable.
- **Consult** – (EFQM Excellence Model) GO questioned the use of the Model (p.16 of the Scoping Document). MB stated that this year it would be more focused on specific questions to selected staff via a consultative exercise. MB would be undertaking this face-to-face. PM stated that staff are now generally supportive of the process.

When asked for initial thoughts, MB stated a 'swap round' of radio and call operators due to issues of experience may be possible.

#### ACTIONS:

- (1) MB to produce a few lines explaining the role of each CHC staff member.
- (2) PM to obtain information on BVRs of Call Handling within Thames Valley and Hampshire.

#### Enquiry Offices

It was agreed that this would be subject to a full review.

The following issues were raised:

- **Police Stations and Public Access** – PC raised the issue over Riseley Police Station that is not open to the public. PW asked whether the review would be looking at the issues surrounding the location of the police enquiry offices. MB stated that they would look at town centre office issues and the related communication (IT) issues. NH asked for clarification over which stations had enquiry offices and which had a telephone out of hours. MB highlighted that the Crime Recording Review recommended 24-hour crime desks and that we must take account of this when looking at the front-counter hours of work, for example. NH asked about the possibility of kiosks and use of the internet. He also highlighted that access points for the public may be the way forward (videophone, etc) in volume areas where there is no physical presence. NH stated that we needed to look at what enquiries come through the public counters.
- **Civilian Staff** – PC asked about the civilian support staff involvement at enquiry counters. At Dunstable they are all civilian, whilst the others are mainly civilian.
- **Public Perception** – there were also issues raised in respect of the Luton front-counter and the public's perception that there was little visible activity.
- **Education** – NH stated that we possibly needed to look at public education to deal with enquiries in other ways. SA gave an example of people reporting malicious calls (falsely) so that they can change their numbers free-of-charge. SA also stated that the largest volume of callers was on a Monday morning when they also had overseas

student registration.

- **Costs** – ABC will not be available until January 2002 and may well be too late to be of benefit to the review. It may therefore be the case that a smaller exercise needs to be undertaken. MB stated that the cost issues were the same as for call handling. The challenge/compare elements would look at other local authorities, the CAB and possibly the Benefits Agency, for example.

The 4Cs contained within the document (p.23-25) were agreed subject to:

- **Compare** – GO stated that we needed to look at the issue of 'opening up' offices such as the Benefits Agency had done.

Finally, MB stated that one consideration could be a triage system as in the hospitals.

#### ACTION:

MB to check outside phone access at all enquiry offices for out-of-hours contact.

#### Organisational Feedback

It was agreed that this would be subject to a reduced review with internal challenge and comparisons between Divisions via a data exercise.

The following issue was raised:

- **Letter Opening** – SA asked whether the data protection issue could be resolved. MB clarified that it was a matter of interpretation regarding "received" at a business address. It was stated that one of the outcomes might be a policy to clarify the situation.

The 4Cs contained within the document (p.30-31) were agreed.

#### Beat Management

It was agreed that this would be subject to a reduced review with emphasis on mobile police units. The cost/usage of mobile police stations would be compared to other areas including Staffordshire. The review will look at whether the units are being used to target the right areas and also consider reassurance issues. One of the units was displayed to members.

The Four 'C's contained within the document (p. 37-39) were agreed subject to:

- **Consult** - NH stated that the 'customers' to Beat Managers surgeries is usually low and that a survey of local residents in the areas should be undertaken. Members also raised the issue that work should possibly be undertaken to collect data on the awareness of the mobile police units when they visit areas (a random sample in the local area asking whether they know it exists? have they been there? would they go there? etc). PC mentioned the issue of Parish Councils and the role they could play in public interface.

## Media

It was agreed that Media would be subject to a 'light-touch' review. MB stated that this was not relevant for a full review, but would look at pro-active use of the media via an internal challenge, basic comparison and consultation with the local media.

The following issues were raised:

- **Publication in the Press** – BM raised the point that the media do not run certain stories as they have to legally follow the case through (continuity issues) and that this should be borne in mind.
- **Call Handling Centre** – GO mentioned the Call Handling Centre and their initial handling of media enquiries (eg Arlesley Lake). GO asked if there were problems with handing out inconsistent stories and whether the media should have access to the media department's mobile phone numbers instead. BM reassured members that such cases were infrequent and that the media department in the early stages of an enquiry needed to be contactable by police officers.

The 4Cs contained within the document (p.51-52) were agreed subject to:

- **Consult** – GO stated that we could look at a specific internet-site feedback questionnaire. NH stated that there is scope for publicising the internet as a site for feedback. PW stated that some forces had a children's section on the internet.

## PCAFs

These will be subject to a full review looking at the scope for change. MB stated that we needed to look at what we have done and new ideas that might work in Bedfordshire. Part of the review will be looking at what others currently do (such as Police Authorities and Local Authorities).

The following issues were raised:

- **Communications & Consultation Group** – NH stated that there was a link here with the recently formed Group within the Police Authority. NH is Chair of this group and would feed between the two groups as necessary.

- **Consultation Methods** – PW stated that the APA had recently produced a booklet on consultation methods within police authorities. A copy of this was handed to MB for information.

- **Legislation** – GO stated that the review needed to cover whether we meet the legislative requirements and suggestions about what we could replace PCAFs with.

- **Costs** – it was agreed that more detailed cost information was required.

The 4Cs contained within the document (p.58-59) were agreed subject to:

- **Consult** – NH raised the issue over lack of use of the Community Safety Panels and that the Police Authority were not consulting widely enough. We needed to broaden the definition of consultation with the public and look at a range of measures to see whether we are meeting the needs of local people and legislative requirements.

## 3. Update from Chair

Points discussed in (2).

## 4. Future Meeting Dates

Agreed that ad-hoc informal meetings would be arranged as necessary.

Next meetings on:

- **22 January 2002** (2pm at Bridgebury House) – short progress report on each area
- **26 February 2002** (2pm at Bridgebury House) – first draft of report
- **19 March 2002** (2pm at Bridgebury House) – discussion any revisions following 26 February meeting

## 5. Any Other Issues

MB to be invited to next Police Authority Communications & Consultation Group.

### ACTION:

PW to ensure other reviews follow similar process and look at possibility of a special Police Authority Meeting in March/April 2002.

Meeting Closed at 1.30pm.

## Appendix B2



### BEST VALUE REVIEW SCRUTINY PANEL PUBLIC INTERFACE (Year 2)

22 January 2002  
2.00 pm at Bridgebury House

#### MINUTES

Attendees: Phil Mosley (PM), Iain Metcalfe (IM), Mick Bell (MB), Paul Wainwright (PW), Martin Darlow (MD), Martin Stuart (MS), Paul Howes (PH), Nick Hills (NH) [Chair], Sue Alexander (SA), Gill Owen (GO), Peter Hollick (PH)

**Apologies:** Peter Conniff (PC)

C/Insp. Martin Darlow was introduced to the Panel by MS.

#### 1. Minutes of Meeting on 14 November 2001

Agreed.

#### 2. Update on Progress (Mick Bell)

MB updated the Panel and stated that the review was progressing well. However, obtaining return data was a problem, particularly from external organisations.

MB went through each of the areas subjected to the best value process via the Four 'C's.

#### Call Handling Centre

##### ● Challenge

MB stated that there had been a poor response to the staff questionnaire, mainly due to lack of time. The highest response had been from the CHC operators. It was felt that a number of the responses were a consolidated effort. Focus groups were being held with people who responded. The survey/focus groups highlighted a management issue (now resolved) and a resourcing issue (in progress). There was little in the results that was not already known.

NH raised a concern from the Police Authority Strategy Committee that calls via the CHC were not being answered and that we needed to ask how other external organisations tracked unanswered calls. MS stated that the issue is whether an IT solution is available. MB replied that the RAC do undertake this as they don't like to lose customers, although it is a costly IT solution. MD raised the ethical issues over the police pursuing unanswered calls. MB also mentioned that Kent Police have a callback facility, although it is slightly different in that people leave a message to callback.

##### ACTIONS:

(1) MB to pursue issues over call-logging (missed, unconnected, etc.) and report on costs, technicalities and reasons for pursuing or otherwise.

(2) MB to provide Members with sight of questionnaire used to consult with CHC staff.

##### ● Consult

MB was going to undertake a call-back survey, but would only be able to identify a male/female split, as the only information we initially obtain for every caller is the name and telephone number. He stated that the survey would not look at the 999 system.

MS mentioned that there is a risk issue if calling back, e.g. domestic violence situations, etc. SA stated that we therefore needed to ask a person, when they initially called, if they would mind being called back to participate in a survey.

MB noted the comments would also check the incident logs when calling back to see whether further information was available which could pose a risk.

IM clarified the point that 999 monitoring is constant, but that this monitoring is not about the call, purely the pick-up/response time.

##### ● Compare

MB had received information from Northamptonshire and Hampshire (along with data from ten other forces following the review in Hampshire). He would be returning to Northamptonshire to discuss their system in greater detail. The RAC had also made some useful information available to him, which would now be used within the review. A comparison visit was planned for 8 February 2002 to the AA.

NH stated that it was important that we consider the financial implications and good practice from the private-sector.

##### ● Compete

MB stated this section had been problematic. Different criteria was being used by different forces for cost data (per call), some including all overheads, others only including specific ones or none at all.

MB stated that the RAC include full overhead data, but that we should not put the actual data into a public report. There is also a national report on costs due soon from the Home Office. In addition, the ABC review is due at the end of January 2002.

MS stated that the review would look at the 'family' of forces in the first instance.

##### ACTIONS:

(1) MB to indicate the range of costs and criteria (removing names of other organisations if necessary) so that we can identify how close we are to the 'norm'.

(2) MB to determine whom within our 'family' has a centralised Call Handling Centre.

## Enquiry Offices

### ● Challenge

MB stated that questionnaires had been sent to the three main stations, but that the response had been disappointing (no reply from Bedford Greyfriars). Focus groups were now going to be arranged at the three police stations. He had also contacted Bedford Hospital Trust and was awaiting a reply.

MB will also take into account the reviews already undertaken at Bedford (enquiry office activities) and Dunstable (opening times).

### ● Consult

MB will be undertaking visitor surveys at the police stations. These will be spread across various times of the day. Data for the deployment of the Mobile Police Unit and the satisfaction levels are also being obtained.

SA stated that we needed to look at possible Public Relation issues if we are considering changing opening times, especially if we consider the problems at Dunstable when this previously occurred.

### ACTIONS:

(1) MB to look at possibility of advertisement if changing times were to be altered in future.

(2) Survey with visitors to enquiry offices to include question on 'other methods of contact preferred'.

### ● Compare

MB stated that Kent and South Wales had been identified by HMIC as 'best practice' and that we will therefore compare against them. We need to also compare with best practice elsewhere.

External comparison is being considered at present. The Accident & Emergency section at Bedford Hospital has been contacted in this respect.

### ● Compete

The ABC data will be available soon.

## Organisational Feedback

MB stated that the current data is not sufficient and that each Division collects different information. The challenge is to look at what happens after it has been to a Division.

## Beat Management

MB stated that this section of the review is restricted to Mobile Police Stations and surgeries. He had sent letters and questionnaires to the Parish Councils. Only Parish Councils were receiving questionnaires as one of the current aims of the Mobile Police Station is to visit rural areas. He was also looking at benchmarking with Lincolnshire Police, who also use Mobile Police Stations.

MB mentioned that the cost information available is basic (mainly consisting of the resourcing/running cost of vehicles, number of visitors, etc...).

SA stated that, following the demonstration of the Mobile Police Station to Members, they noted that complaints included the 'noisy' generator on the van and the problems locating the van in certain areas due to height restrictions, etc.

## Media

MB stated that a questionnaire sent to the local press, radio and television companies (via contacts provided by the Media Office) had resulted in a positive response and raised a number of issues. A meeting was now going to be organised with the Media Office to feedback these comments. He was also considering arranging a meeting with the media companies to look at the positive points and how they could be built upon.

NH asked that the questionnaire be sent to South Beds News Agency and also mentioned that we should be looking towards a formalised Marketing and Communications Strategy for the force and the authority.

MB stated that we recently participated in a comparison exercise with Sussex Police that included cost analysis. However, we should take account of the fact that HMIC criticised Sussex Police for the scope of their review, although this outcome should not detract us from the usefulness of the data for our purposes.

MB also mentioned Dyfed Powys were sending data from their best value review.

**ACTION:** South Beds News Agency to be sent a questionnaire (Contact Tim Corkett).

## PCAFs

MB stated that he was mainly gathering information at present, but the general move seems to be away from set PCAFs and towards more focused groups.

NH stated that the visibility and public reassurance issues needed to be considered.

MD stated that we should also look at dates of future PCAF meetings to ensure that they do not occur when other issues are happening, e.g. any clash with football matches on TV.

## 3. Local Media Involvement (Nick Hills)

This was covered within the Media section above.

## 4. Future Meeting Dates

26 February 2002 – now changed to 11am  
19 March 2002 – 2pm

## 5. Any Other Issues

NH thanked MB for the work he had undertaken to date.

No further issues were raised.

Meeting closed at 3.40pm.

# Appendix C

## Best Value Review – Public Interface Call Handling Centre – Public Call Back Questionnaire

This questionnaire seeks your views on the service that Bedfordshire Police gave to you regarding the recent call you made to us. As part of our service performance review programme Bedfordshire Police is compelled to seek out and learn from the views of our customers and I am sure that any ideas and experience you are able to share will benefit us.

1. When was the call made? Day Time

2. What was the reason for the call?

3. Was the call answered?:

- quicker than expected –
- within the expected time –
- slower than expected –
- cannot remember -

4. How long did you wait before the call was answered?  Minutes

5. When your call was answered by the Police, the Operator was:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Helpful					
Competent					
Sensitive					
Polite					
Interested in my problem					
Reassuring					

6. Were you dealt with by the first Operator or put through to a second Operator?

First  Second  go to question 7

7. How long did you wait before the call was answered?  Minutes

8. When your call was answered, the operator was:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't Know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Helpful					
Competent					
Sensitive					
Polite					
Interested in my problem					
Reassuring					

9. How satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the service that you received on the telephone?  
(Please disregard any subsequent action taken by the police as a result of your call)

Very Satisfied	
Satisfied	
Neither satisfied or dissatisfied	
Dissatisfied	
Very dissatisfied	

10. Can you suggest any way in which Bedfordshire Police could improve telephone service to its customers?

Thank you for your time

Male/Female      Age      Years  
 Ethnicity      White      Black Caribbean      Black African  
                     Black other      Indian      Pakistani  
                     Bangladeshi      Chinese      Other

## Appendix D

### Call Handling Centre – Position Statement

This document clarifies the current position and performance with regard to the Call Handling Centre. It contains the CHC management perspective on the recommendations of the Best Value Review of Public Interface, and also highlights those recommendations from previous reports into the workings of the CHC that are still on-going. Firstly, looking at the Performance Figures for the CHC:

#### 999 Calls

Current figures show continued good performance in this area, achieving 94.7% (Jan 2002) and 95.9% (Feb 2002).

The target for this year is to continue to achieve a minimum of 93% of all calls answered within 15 seconds, which is well on-line for the five-year target of 94%.

The emphasis this year has therefore shifted to maintaining 999 performance, whilst also concentrating effort on improving the non-999 calls.

#### Non-999 Calls

Switchboard performance is slightly below the target of 80% of calls answered within 30 seconds, achieving 79.85% (Jan 2002) and 74.15% (Feb 2002).

The average number of lost calls for the switchboard in 2001 was 9.5%. For this year we have seen a loss of 7.3% (Jan 2002) and 9.6% (Feb 2002), and lost calls is one of the major priorities this year within the CHC.

The Call Operator's performance has continued to improve and compares very favourably with the same period in the previous year:

	% of calls answered in target time		lost calls	
	2001	2002	2001	2002
Jan	59.3%	72.5%	26.8%	15.1%
Feb	56.8%	70.5%	28.2%	15.4%

The new local target for this year reflects this improved performance and has been increased from 60% of all calls answered within 30 seconds, to 80%.

Much work is being done to address performance (including lost/abandoned calls), and management of demand within the CHC, and some of this will be detailed in the comments section of the recommendations. The report starts with the Best Value Recommendations, some of which link to previous recommendations made via the READ Report/Luton Business School Report etc. Finally, those recommendations outstanding from the other reports will be detailed for information.

Recommendation	Owner	Comments	Completion Date	Costs
It is recommended that the positions in the CHC should be multi-skilled with a systematic career structure for all staff with enhancements based on skills acquired.	G Division Command Team. Personnel Officer. CHC Trainer.	It is recognised that multi-skilling can be beneficial to provide improved flexibility within a call handling environment. However, in order to achieve this aim, there would be a need to address the considerable change management factors involved, in respect of contracts, terms of employment, equal opportunities legislation, and probable changes in the establishment figures. There would also be a requirement to review the entire layout of the CHC to accommodate any changes.  Due to the major change processes involved, it would be necessary for this work to be carried out by a full Project Board.  NB. At the present time, some multi-skilling is being achieved on a voluntary basis, for staff development and career progression. With regard to career structures, it is accepted that this features strongly in staff retention and motivation. To this end, at the present time, much of this is already in place. The natural progression within the CHC is for staff to join as operators and then successfully apply to become call agents for their own development. Within the role of call agents there is then an increasing grading structure, which can be applied for after set periods of service. A management system is in place where staff, coming up to the relevant service level, are reminded and encouraged to apply for the upgrades. The grading increment is based on skills acquired and tested.  In addition, the CHC staff are now being trained to NVQ levels in Customer Care, on a rolling programme, both for their own development and for improved service delivery.  However, it must also be noted that many call operators are not looking for advancement, and that the average turnover of staff within any call centre is around 18 months.	Not Set	It has been estimated that the cost of the multi-skilling within the CHC would be in the region of £50,000.

Recommendation	Owner	Comments	Completion Date	Costs
<p>It is recommended that there should be an emphasis on the need to match resources to demand and annualisation of hours is a suggested solution.</p>	<p>G Division Command Team. UNISON / Federation. BV Review of Deployment.</p>	<p>It is fully accepted that matching resources to demand is an integral part of continuously improving performance within the CHC, and this issue is being progressed by the management team. This also forms part of wider work which is being carried out under the BV Review of Deployment which recognises this is a Force concern, not only a CHC one.</p> <p>In respect of the CHC resources, this involves the management team looking at flexible working patterns, periods of peak demand, and increased staffing levels etcetera. Modelling exercises are being carried out to identify any shortfalls and how these can best be managed.</p> <p>To counter a concern over abandoned or 'lost calls', staffing levels are being increased at times when most calls are being lost (identified through analysis of calls) to ascertain the impact on performance.</p> <p>Within the last month, a revised Variable Shift Agreement has been agreed with UNISON, for ratification by the Chief Constable, to assist in this area and in the use of Direction to Work.</p> <p>In addition, other areas being developed include employing a bank of reserve staff to cover any shortfalls, the use of Special Constables within the CHC at times of peak demand, and quicker security vetting so new staff can be taken on and trained more effectively.</p> <p>At the same time, Communications have been tasked with identifying any potential glitches in the systems so that all avenues are explored. There has already been a vast improvement in this area since last year.</p> <p>Further to this, activity analysis has very recently been carried out for all functions within the room, the results of which should more accurately inform the modelling process for demand management.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Increasing staffing levels will obviously incur additional expenditure, but accurate analysis of costs are not yet available.</p> <p>The use of Special Constables in the room has been done at virtually no cost (training time only)</p>
<p>The new management team has taken the opportunity to improve working relationships and it is urged to continue in this vein, particularly to enhance communication, with regular and structured team meetings to utilise the skills and knowledge available within the room.</p>	<p>G Division Command Team. CHC Managers.</p>	<p>It is reassuring that there is recognition that the new management team has had a positive impact on the CHC staff and performance.</p> <p>The management are working hard to promote a team building ethos, and an open style of management which appeals to staff.</p> <p>Team-building exercises are already being developed, to enhance working relations and integration in the room.</p> <p>Staff are fully represented in all meetings, either through their own elected representatives or the UNISON/Federation staff. There is also a staff suggestion scheme by which staff are financially rewarded for any good ideas (for example the use of Special Constables within the room was a suggestion by a member of staff).</p> <p>Any decisions made at meetings are directly fed back to staff, to aid the communication process.</p>		<p>No additional costs are incurred in this recommendation.</p>

Recommendation	Owner	Comments	Completion Date	Costs
<p>The management team is urged to consider short term gains by re-instating the system of experienced and knowledgeable operators employed as floor-walkers to assist in the answering of queries.</p> <p>They should also consider applying the DOPRA computer system to every operator position thereby allowing every member of the room to interact and enhancing the flow of information.</p>	<p>G Division Command Team. CHC Managers.</p>	<p>It is recognised that the principle of using the knowledge and experience within the room to assist others is sound.</p> <p>It is also recognised that using floor -walkers is one method of achieving this aim. However, to implement this option, additional staff would have to be employed, as existing staff could not perform two role without having a detrimental effect on performance in their existing roles.</p> <p>Therefore, currently other methods are being used to assist in the answering of queries, without lowering performance.</p> <p>These include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As previously mentioned, the use of Special Constables within the room to assist in areas of police knowledge.</li> <li>2. The issue of staff appraisal (which had to be completed in a two month time span) has now been extended over the 12-month period, to free up CHC supervisors and managers to assist staff.</li> <li>3. Currently the Oscar 1 and 2 posts cannot focus fully on CHC support as they are often involved in territorial supervision and incident management. The lack of supervision on Divisions is being addressed through the BV Review of Resilience, and this should release the Oscar posts to further assist CHC staff with any queries. Further to this, the two civilian supervisors in the room assist in answering staff queries.</li> <li>4. The employment of a full-time trainer within the CHC means that induction training has improved, on-going training can be provided, and staff should be more knowledgeable as a matter of course.</li> <li>5. Also, Standard Operating Procedures are being developed so that staff have templates for the many and varied incidents/calls that they deal with. This is an intensive piece of work which has commenced with the introduction of SOPs for hate crimes (racist incidents, domestic violence and homophobic incidents). Staff have been encouraged to assist in the production of the SOPs themselves.</li> <li>6. There will also be links to the self help database which is currently being updated by the CHC Trainer which contains the most frequently asked questions and answers.</li> </ol> <p>It is recognised that the DOPRA system is an effective method of communication in the room. The increase of terminals has been given serious consideration on several occasions but not introduced for the reasons outlined below. However, certain elements have already been improved.</p> <p>For example, the transition from the Clicktel lines to DOPRA. Previously, if a 999 call was not answered within the 15 seconds by the call operators, it went automatically to DOPRA (to which only the call agents and Oscars have access). This meant it could not be retrieved by operators if they became free. This situation has been amended, in that when the call goes to the DOPRA, it now reverts to a group access which all staff can answer.</p>	<p>On-going</p>	<p>Additional staff costs would be in the region of £20,000 per person.</p> <p>The costs for the DOPRA application would be in the region of £1,000,000.</p>

Recommendation	Owner	Comments	Completion Date	Costs
		<p>In order to introduce the DOPRA system for every member of the room, the entire CHC would either have to be re-designed (as the dual terminals will not fit in the existing structure) or the room would have to be re-located to a larger site. This would have a considerable and detrimental impact on performance, which at the moment is steadily improving.</p> <p>In addition, the high costs involved mean that this would have to be considered as a long-term budgetary issue for the service and, as such, should be the subject of a full cost benefit analysis (if this has not already been done) before acceptance.</p>	On-going	
<p>As the civilian members of staff become more experienced and knowledgeable, the organisation should consider the gradual release of police officers from the room, up to and including the Oscar 2 (Sergeant) position.</p>	<p>ACPO Command Team. G Division Command Team.</p>	<p>The issue of civilianisation is one for the service as a whole to consider, and it is recognised that this has been the move in the past.</p> <p>In respect of the civilianisation of the room per se, it must be pointed out that the majority of staff are already civilians, with only a few police officers in the call agents role. However, those few police staff provide additional police knowledge, which is a distinct advantage within the CHC.</p> <p>Police staff also offer management more flexibility than support staff who have more restricted terms of employment / contracts. In addition, as previously mentioned in this report, the average turn over for any call handling staff is around 18 months. This means that as staff get to the level of experience required, they move on and fresh staff have to be recruited and trained. This is not the case with police officers.</p> <p>Another factor not to be overlooked, is the Force decision regarding rehabilitative duties for police officers. This means there must always be places where police officers (who are not fit for full operational duties) could go, in order to aid recovery and to continue providing a valuable service to the organisation.</p> <p>With regard to the Oscar 2 posts (Oscar 2 being the only support and resilience for Oscar 1) there is great concern from both CHC and Divisional management that this post should not be civilianised. The main reason for this, being the operational role which Oscar 2 has to perform, in addition to the normal managerial aspects.</p> <p>Oscars 1 and 2 have responsibility for authorising and dealing with many police related incidents. This includes authority to arm, authority to follow in relation to vehicle pursuits, etcetera, which is not ( and should not be) within the remit of a support staff member.</p> <p>The current move is to work with Career Development to improve the status of these roles for police officers, due to the extremely important nature of their role.</p>		<p>Potential but slight saving in difference between police/ support staff pay scales.</p>

# appendix D

Recommendation	Owner	Comments	Completion Date	Costs
Development of Service Level Agreement with Divisions.	G Division Command Team and Divisional Command Teams.	<p>The agreed draft SLA is only a generic document until it can be linked to the qualitative aspects of the Standard Operating Procedures, which will take some time to complete.</p> <p>Activity analysis was carried out in March 2002 and the results of this will allow for activity-based costing to appear in the SLA.</p> <p>Consultation with BIMD regarding the format of all new SLA's is yet to be done, to ensure corporacy of approach.</p>	<p>Draft agreed September 2001.</p> <p>Revised document to be produced June 2002 with ABC included.</p>	No cost.
Improved management information.	G Division Command Team M.I.O. B.I.M.D. Communications.	<p>The existing Performance Indicators are being reviewed. The role of the supervisors within the CHC will have impact on this, as they currently handle calls as well as their own tasks to assist in performance. (See comment regarding Divisional supervisory resilience).</p> <p>More emphasis needs to be placed on qualitative aspects, and the issue of data also needs to be revisited as to accuracy, timeliness and analysis (previously lacking).</p> <p>This will be much assisted by the introduction of the Management Information Officer's post</p>	On-going. To be reviewed September 2002.	No cost.
Integration of Airwaves Project	G Division Command Team and Airwaves Project Team.	<p>There is slippage nationally on this project, but it is beneficial from an integration viewpoint that some of the CHC staff are also involved in the Airwaves project team, and the new GIS system which relates to it.</p> <p>In the interim, a mid-term solution to the radio reception problem has been introduced, using radio maps and regular checks as per the CHC User Group Decision.</p>	On-going nationally. Current estimate for Bedfordshire 2003.	Costs detailed in Airwaves Project Initiation Document.

## Appendix E

### Best Value Review – Customer Interface Enquiry Office Questionnaire

As part of the ongoing series of Best Value Reviews the Divisional Enquiry Offices will be examined as an important part of Customer Interface.

The purpose of the review is *'To ensure that the process by which a member of the public interacts with the service meets the requirements of the customer, and is appropriate in terms of both accessibility and customer care'*

The questionnaire is designed to get as wide and accurate view as possible with every member of staff being asked to answer the questions as fully and openly as possible. **You are the people who know how the job is done and how it should be done to give the best possible service to the public.**

The questionnaire will be followed up by interviews and focus groups with staff, using the questions as a guide. Please take some time to answer the questions as fully as you can and return the questionnaire to Mick Bell, Best Value Team by Friday 6 December 2001.

Thank you for your support

*Mick Bell*

#### Leadership

1. Who is responsible for performance and standards in the Enquiry Offices?

2. What are your performance indicators/standards?

3. What support do you expect from your supervisor?

4. What involvement does the Divisional Command Team have in supporting staff?

**Policy and Strategy**

1. How do you ensure that your staff are aware of strategies and policies relating to the Enquiry Offices? (Supervisors)

2. How do you use management information to ensure the best service to the public? (Supervisors)

3. How are you consulted about policy and strategy? How do you want to be consulted?

4. Do you think the following functions should be undertaken by EO Staff??

Function	EO Staff should deal	Who else would do it
Crime Recording	Yes/No	
Statement Taking	Yes/No	
RTA Recording	Yes/No	
Document Production	Yes/No	
Lost/Found Property	Yes/No	
Stray Dogs	Yes/No	
Keyholders	Yes/No	
Elimination Fingerprints	Yes/No	
Reporting of minor offences	Yes/No	
Person reporting on bail	Yes/No	
Person reporting on bail	Yes/No	
Monitoring of CCTV/Alarms	Yes/No	

Comments:

**People**

1. Have you received appropriate training to carry out your role? What training do you feel you should have?

2. How do you think an NVQ in Customer Care could improve the service to the public?

3. Is the mix between uniform and civilian staff correct?

4. Are you confident that your work station complies with Health & Safety regulations?

5. How would you change the layout of the Enquiry Office to improve the working environment?

6. What Information Technology is provided to help you do your job? Is it adequate and 'fit for purpose'?

7. What is the interaction between the EO Staff and patrol sections? How can it be improved.

### Partnerships and Resources

1. Are the shift patterns in the Enquiry Office appropriate?

2. Are our resources adequate?

Position	Adequate	Minimum Staff Required
Supervisors	Yes/No	
Civilian Staff	Yes/No	
Police Officers	Yes/No	
Comments:		

3. How are the available staff matched to the demand? For example, can we reallocate positions when there is a greater demand from visitors?

## Processes

1. How do you ensure that callers are dealt with by the correct person first time?

2. How does the interface between the Enquiry Office staff and divisional officers work? How can we improve the communication?

3. What facilities are in place to take calls in foreign languages or from callers whose first language is not English, or those with impaired hearing?

4. Is there any function you are required to do that you feel should not be part of your job? Please explain your answer.

## General Comments

Please feel free to add any further comments you feel may be useful to the review.

Name  (Optional)

Position: Civilian/Police Officer

Time Employed with Bedfordshire Police  Years  Months

I would/would not like to take part in a focus group meeting to discuss these issues

## Appendix F

### Best Value Review – Public Interface Enquiry Office – Public Survey Questionnaire

This questionnaire seeks your views on the service that Bedfordshire Police gave to you regarding your visit to this station. As part of our service performance review programme Bedfordshire Police is compelled to seek out and learn from the views of our customers and I am sure that any ideas and experience you are able to share will benefit us.

1. When was the call made? Day  Time

2. What was the reason for the visit?

3. Were you seen?

Quicker than expected –   
 Within the expected time –   
 Slower than expected –   
 Don't know –

4. How long did you wait before being seen? Minutes

5. When you were seen, the member of staff was:

	Strongly Agree	Agree Know	Don't Disagree	Disagree	Strongly
Helpful					
Competent					
Sensitive					
Polite					
Interested in my problem					
Reassuring					

6. Was the first person you saw able to deal with your enquiry?

Yes  No

7. Were you satisfied with the length of time it took for you to be dealt with? Yes/No

8. Could you hear what the staff member was saying over the counter? Yes/No

9. Could the member of staff hear you over the counter? Yes/No

10. Did you discuss your business at the counter or did you go to a more private area?

Private area (go to question 13) Counter (go to question 12)

11. Were you happy to discuss your business at the main counter or would you have preferred to discuss the matter somewhere more private?

Counter Private

12. How satisfied were you with:

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Don't Know	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Ease of access to building					
Privacy					
Queuing system					
Overall Service					

*Thank you for your time*

**Male/Female**

**Age**

**Years**

**Ethnicity**

White

Black Caribbean

Black African

Black other

Indian

Pakistani

Bangladeshi

Chinese

Other

## Appendix G

### Public Consultation Questionnaire Mobile Police Stations

1. Were you aware that Bedfordshire Police has mobile police stations?  
 Yes  No  Go to question 5

2. What involvement has your Parish had with the stations?

3. Do you believe the police stations are achieving their aims (see page 1)? Please explain your answer.

4. Has your Parish Council been consulted on the deployment of the mobile police stations covering the following areas?

Location of visit		
Time of visit		
Duration of visit		
Frequency of visits		
Advertising of visits		

5. Are you satisfied with the service provided to your parish by the mobile police stations in the last 12 months?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Consultation					
Visibility					
Timeliness of visit					
Advertising visits					
Dealing with local issues					

6. How could Bedfordshire Police improve the service you receive from the mobile police stations?

## Appendix H

### Consultation Questionnaire Public Interface – Media

*Please answer all the questions as fully as possible.*

1. What are your expectations of Bedfordshire Police Press and Media Department?

2. How would you describe the availability of Press Officers?

3. How accessible are Senior Officers/Officer in Case for comment/information?

4. How would you assess the quality of press releases from Bedfordshire Police?

5. How would you assess your relationship with the Media Office?

6. How could the relationship be improved?

7. How easy is it to obtain general background information about Bedfordshire Police or any national issues?

8. How accessible are Members of the Police Authority?

Thank you for your time. Please return the completed questionnaire to:  
Mick Bell, Best Value Team, Police Headquarters, Woburn Rd, Kempston MK43 9AX



## Public Interface

# Best Value Review



Bridgebury House Woburn Road  
Kempston Bedford MK43 9AX



**BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE**

Headquarters Woburn Road  
Kempston Bedford MK43 9AX