



STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD
Tuesday 5th November 2013

Operation Sentinel

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To update the Strategic Police and Crime Board Members on the aims and progress of Operation Sentinel.

BACKGROUND

2. Operation Sentinel is a West Midlands Police (WMP) force-wide operation aimed at enhancing the service provided by West Midlands Police and its partners to victims across the force areas that are vulnerable, especially due to a lack of confidence to engage with statutory agencies. This means they may remain hidden and/or silent, sometimes due to their cultural beliefs and behaviours or through a fear for their safety.
3. Particular focus is being applied to Domestic Abuse (DA), Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Human Trafficking, Honour Based Violence (HBV) and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
4. The operation is scheduled to run from July to December 2013 with an evaluation period in January 2014
5. Whilst there will be activity across all five areas running throughout the operation, each area will have a month of particular focus:
 - CSE: August
 - HBV: September
 - Human Trafficking: October
 - FGM: November
 - DA: December

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

6. The strategic objectives for this operation include:

- Increase our organisational knowledge and understanding of 'vulnerability'
- Improve our ability to assess threat and risk and take proportionate action
- Enable ourselves to make dynamic and empowered operational decisions
- Increase reporting levels especially from vulnerable communities
- Improve the confidence and satisfaction of victims and witnesses who experience the criminal justice process
- Reduce violent offending, particularly focussing on tackling persistent violent perpetrators
- Improve our criminal justice outcomes
- Seek to address causational factors i.e. Alcohol, Drugs, Housing Policy - with particular focus on Mental Health
- Sustain and improve statutory and non-statutory partnership working – local and national

OPERATIONAL SUCCESSES

Some examples of recent successes include:

7. On 10th October, BBC Midlands Today ran a story by their Special Correspondent, Peter Wilson. He filmed at Birmingham airport, covering the work WMP are doing under Op Sentinel to promote public engagement and better police awareness of Honour Based Violence and Forced Marriage. He interviewed Anup Manota from Karma Nirvana (a national charity that supports victims and survivors of abuse) and Inspector Debbie Cain from the Airport Police Unit. A YouTube video about the training has been viewed 1519 times at the time of writing and the move has been welcomed by forced marriage organisations on social media. Detective Superintendent Cowley from the Centralised Public Protection Unit was interviewed live on the programme, reinforcing the force's positive response to these issues and encouraging members of the public to report any suspicions they have to police.
8. Nine suspected brothels were raided by police in Birmingham on 14th October to protect victims of human trafficking who have been forced into prostitution. Addresses in the Birmingham East Local Policing Unit (LPU) area were targeted by around 40 police officers and the activity was covered by the media. Five people were arrested, four of whom have been charged and remanded into custody for money laundering and running a brothel. The fifth person remains on bail for further enquiries.
9. Various educational initiatives have been launched to help raise the level of knowledge West Midlands Police staff have in the Operation Sentinel business areas. There is an 'aide memoir' regarding honour based violence; mandatory training on domestic abuse and the impact this crime has on the children who witness it and an intranet site has been specifically developed as a resource for officers seeking advice and guidance. In addition to this, we have commenced a programme of training days for all first and second line supervisors. These days include inputs on female genital mutilation and domestic homicide, as well as an innovative learning experience with a professional theatre company that have experience working with criminal justice professionals. All of our internal training is designed so that officers and staff are better equipped to respond sensitively to incidents, giving them the confidence to conduct robust investigations that safeguard victims and bring offenders to justice.

10. West Midlands Police have now hosted three Web-chats where Force leads/experts have answered questions submitted by members of the public. These sessions enabled WMP to give out information, encourage reporting, and provide reassurance to victims that we would support them and thoroughly investigate allegations. The themes so far have been Child Sexual Exploitation, Honour Based Violence and Human Trafficking. They were well attended and supported by partner organisations, receiving positive promotion through the social media community. Questions were posed by victims and survivors of crime, professionals, concerned friends/family and members of the public.
11. Birmingham North LPU in partnership with the Public Protection Unit located a 14 year old high risk missing person in a hotel over a hundred miles away. She had been communicating with a male who was purporting to be 19 years old, the male she was found with was actually 35. The male was arrested and charged with three counts of sexual activity with a child and the missing person was safeguarded.
12. One of the Operation Sentinel objectives is to 'increase reporting levels from vulnerable communities'. September's focus was on Honour Based Violence and at the end of the month, the Force had received quadruple the average number of reports for this type of crime. These enquiries are ongoing and with the public awareness campaign being undertaken both by our Corporate Communications department and delivered more locally by officers, we are confident these increased opportunities to safeguard victims and bring offenders to justice will continue.
13. In line with the objective to 'reduce violent offending', Violence with Injury offences as a proportion of Domestic Abuse crime are lower than during the same period last year. This can be attributed to the increased awareness of officers (Operation Sentinel has provided specialist training and access to improved level of resources) and a number of initiatives to tackle violent offenders.
14. To 'improve criminal justice outcomes' and 'increase confidence and satisfaction', since the start of Operation Sentinel (end of July), we have seen significant increases across the Force in the enforcement of 'breaches of orders' (restraining orders, injunctions, non molestation orders, sex offender notifications etc). One example of this is, on the Birmingham South LPU over the last 8 week period, there has been a reduction of approximately 25% of violence with injury victims. This coincides with a 100% increase in the number of non molestation breaches and 50% increase in the number of restraining order breaches (year on year).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

15. Partner organisations have been fully engaged throughout the operation.
16. It is not anticipated that other services will be negatively impacted upon by Operation Sentinel activity. In fact, the operation supports and enhances 'business as usual'.

RISKS

17. The identified strategic risks are:
 - Knowledge and understanding of the business areas, and our organisational capacity to address them
 - Understanding of the scale of risk the identified areas pose

18. Risk mitigation includes:

- The intelligence department have now completed an assessment of all the Operation Sentinel business areas, establishing the nature and extent of the issues and the threat, risk and harm that they pose to our communities. These assessments are now being developed through the Public Protection Unit, where the leads for the relevant business areas will identify specific activity for the Force to undertake.
- Local Operation Sentinel leads (each LPU and department has one) have been tasked with an 'intelligence collection plan', so that staff are aware of what specific information the force requires to further improve our understanding of the issues and the ways we can improve service delivery.
- Monthly reporting mechanism of Sentinel activity through the command structure, reporting to ACC Rowe, which highlights any emerging risks and issues that need to be addressed.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

19. There are no identified financial implications to this operation. The operation does not have a dedicated budget and the majority of activities take place within the context of 'business as usual'. Bids for additional activity (for example, hosting a multi-agency conference) are made to Gold (ACC Rowe) from Silver (DCI Kath Davis) based on an individual business case.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

20. There are no identified legal implications to this operation.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

21. There are no identified equalities implications. Several of the Equality, Diversity and Human Rights (EDHR) working group objectives overlap with/compliment the objectives of Operation Sentinel. All of the Operation Sentinel local leads have been made aware of the EDHR objectives and asked to work with their local EDHR contact.

RECOMMENDATIONS

22. The Board is asked to endorse the operation with its support

Katherine Davis
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Op Sentinel Silver