



STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD
3rd March 2015

A report from the Chief Constable to the Strategic Police and Crime Board relating to the criminal use of firearms in the West Midlands Police area. The report includes quantitative data in relation to notifiable firearms offences and qualitative data in relation to the police and partner responses to managing the threat of firearms criminality.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Strategic Policing Crime Board with an overview of the criminal use of firearms in the West Midlands Police area. The report will facilitate and inform West Midlands Office for the Police and Crime Commissioner (WMOPCC) oversight of the response by West Midlands Police and partners to the threat and harm arising from the criminal use of firearms.

BACKGROUND

2. On 12th February 2015 the Office for National Statistics (ONS) released a series of chapter based reports in relation to Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2013/2014. Chapter 3 of that report covers the broad topic of '**Weapons**' and opens with '**Geographical distribution of firearm offences**'. This release is collaboration between ONS and Home Office analysts. It explores a variety of official statistics on violent crime and is based on interviews carried out on the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) in the year to March 2014 and crimes recorded by the police period over the same period. Chapter 3 of the ONS report is available online at:

<http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/crime-stats/crime-statistics/focus-on-violent-crime-and-sexual-offences--2013-14/rpt-chapter-3.html#tab-Geographical-distribution-of-firearm-offences>

3. Chapter 3 presents analyses of offences involving weapons recorded by the police in 2013/14, specifically of firearms and knives or other sharp instruments. The firearms data collection covers any notifiable offence involving firearms.
4. The report generated significant media and public interest in the West Midlands Police area and this report outlines quantitative data in relation to firearms criminality and qualitative data in relation to the police and partner responses to managing the threat of firearms criminality. This report represents a more bespoke and locally based data set that provides further depth to the broad based national data in the ONS report.

5. The National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS) aims to provide a world leading intelligence capability that builds upon existing good practice to ensure that we are in the best possible position to allow UK law enforcement agencies to quickly solve crimes where firearms have been used. NABIS work with UK police forces to analyse ballistic material and build a picture of the threat of gun crime. A NABIS media release responding in broad terms to the ONS data release précised that data set and reported significant decreases in national gun crime criminality and the fact that firearms continue to be involved in a very small proportion of total recorded crime (0.2%). That press release is available online at:

<http://www.nabis.police.uk/news/Gun-Crime-Drops-Five-Per-Cent-Since-Last-Year>

6. West Midlands Police work closely with NABIS. A significant proportion of the national NABIS infrastructure is based in the West Midlands Police area. Later in this report the West Midlands Police NABIS submissions for the past two years are outlined in further detail (Page 9 paragraph 37).

Firearms and Gun Crime

7. Gun crime is an emotive term. In the UK where, firearms are rarely used in crime, there is a considerable focus on cases when firearms are used. When the term gun crime is described there is perhaps a gap between what the gun crime figures record and the community perception.
8. This paper explains the recording of gun crime and what this means, the trend in the force, the actual threat posed by lethal firearms in the community and action by West Midlands Police.
9. The Deputy Chief Constable is the ACPO lead for the Criminal Use of Firearms and chairs the United Kingdom Law Enforcement Threat Board to coordinate the response to criminal firearms.

The Crime Recording Standard

10. There is a defined set of recorded crime offences that have been grouped as “gun crime” by the Home Office.

Gun Crime is crime (violence against the person, robbery, burglary and sexual offences) in which guns are taken to be involved in an offence. A gun is taken to be involved in an offence if it is fired, used as a blunt instrument, or used as a threat. Where the victim is convinced of the presence of a firearm, even if it is concealed, and there is evidence of the suspect's intention to create this impression.

11. The Force completes a data return called the Crimsec 30 data to the Home Office. This is the dataset used in this report. CrimSec 30 contains firearms and gun crime statistics with specific criteria around three elements; the type of crime, the type of firearm and how firearm was used.

12. Firearms and gun crime data are sourced and publicised in different ways:

- WMP Gun Crime data: Crimsec 30 via Signals From Noise.
- ONS report: - Focus on Violent Crime and Sexual Offences, 2013/14: 02. Appendix Tables (Excel sheet 1403Kb) Violent Crime and Sexual Offences 2013/2014. (Chapter 3 Table 3.12 Page 5 – hyperlink is on Page 1 Paragraph of 2 of this paper). Source: Police Recorded Crime from the Home Office – Using Crimsec 30 return, which is then reconciled again with the Force and therefore subject to change.
- iQuanta definition: Using the CrimSec 30 data return, but they take out CS Gas and Pepper Spray. This is also Provisional data without reconciliation.

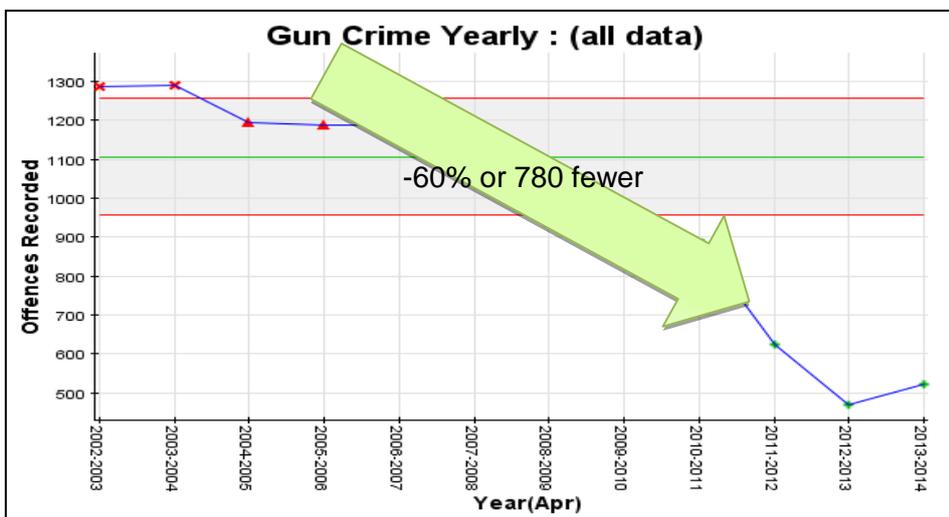
13. These groups of data are simply a statement of recorded crime where actual weapons, including CS and pepper spray, air weapons and ball bearing guns, are used or where a victim is convinced a gun may be present and the offender aims to give this impression.

14. This data is not an accurate measure of the threat posed by lethal firearms in the community and the extent to which they are held and used in the pursuit of crime.

15. This data, as with all other crime recording data, is subject to the accuracy forces devote to crime recording. West Midlands Police has the highest crime recording accuracy in the country following a national review by HMIC.

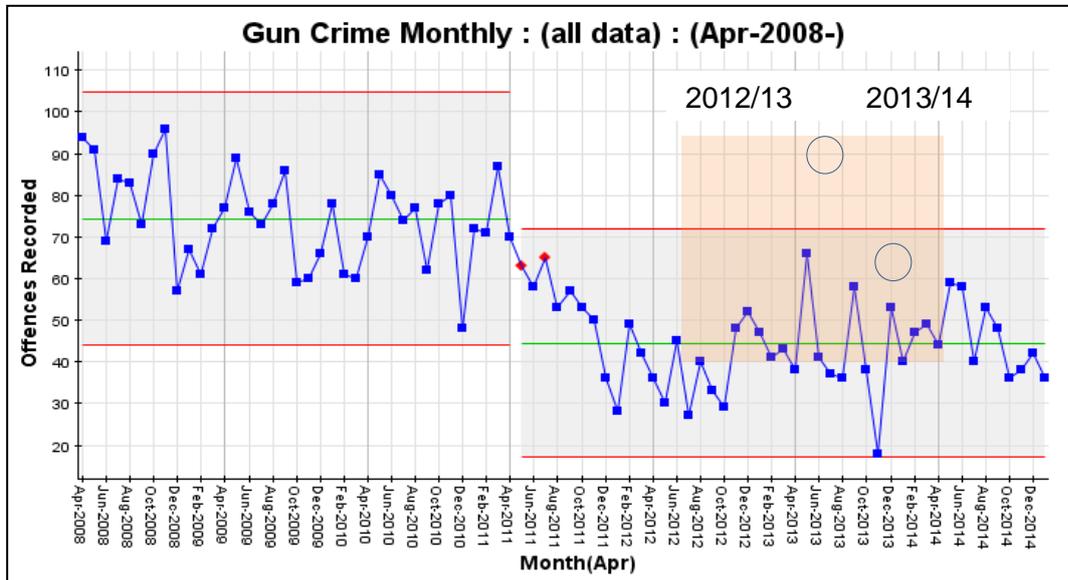
West Midlands Police Gun Crime

16. All data below is based on the Crimsec 30 definition. In the last 10 years since 2003/4, Gun crime has reduced by 60%. In 2002/3 the Force recorded around 1300 gun crimes and since then has fallen almost every year.



17. Gun Crime is not showing any significant increases. The press reports have compared binary numbers against two year time frames as indicated below (page 4 gun crime monthly data chart). However looking at the monthly trend, it has been very stable for the last 4 years, at an average of 45 per month. And the last 4 months have been below this average. The ONS comparator year of 2013/14 was generally stable month to month. There was a particularly high month in May but also the lowest month for over ten years in November 2013 with just 18.

18. May 2013, circled, saw a higher proportion than usual of 'Possess Firearm with intent to cause fear of Violence'. In many cases firearms had been seen in people's possession and then reported to the police. This increases crime recorded but also has the concomitant benefit of increasing our intelligence picture.



19. The top 80% of Gun Crime offences in 2013/14 are below. Almost half of Gun Crimes are Robbery; wither personal or business robbery. Possess a firearm which causes fear accounts for 12% of Gun Crime Offences.

Offence	Contribution %	Cumulated %	Number
03403 - Robbery Personal Property	29.1	29.1	151
03401 - Robbery Business Property	15.0	44.1	78
00823 - Possess Firearm Cause Fear	12.1	56.3	63
00806 - ABH	11.2	67.4	58
00501 - Wounding with intent GBH	4.2	71.7	22
00891 - Malicious Wounding	3.3	75.0	17
03404 - Assault with Intent to Rob Personal Property	3.1	78.0	16
10501 - Common Assault and Battery	2.9	80.9	15

20. The press reports based on the ONS data suggest that WMP now have more gun crime than London. Another data table from the ONS data shows otherwise; 33% of offences involve a firearm in the Met, compared with 11% in West Mids.

Figure 3.9: Proportion of firearm offences, excluding air weapons, in four police force areas and the rest of England and Wales, compared with population profile of those forces, 2013/14^{1,2}

England and Wales

Police force area	Offences involving firearms	Population ³
	<i>Percentages</i>	
Metropolitan	33	15
West Midlands	11	5
Greater Manchester	8	5
Merseyside	4	2
Rest of England and Wales	43	73

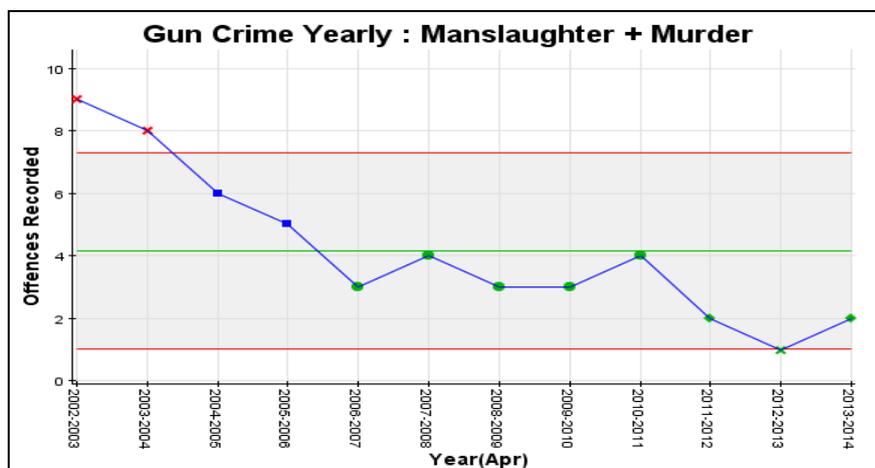
1. Source: Police recorded crime, Home Office

2. Police recorded crime data are not designated as National Statistics.

3. The population figures are based on mid-2013 estimates from the Office for National Statistics.

Fatalities

21. The number of murders/manslaughters involving a firearm the Force records per year has fallen from 9 in 2002/3 to 2 in 2013/14.



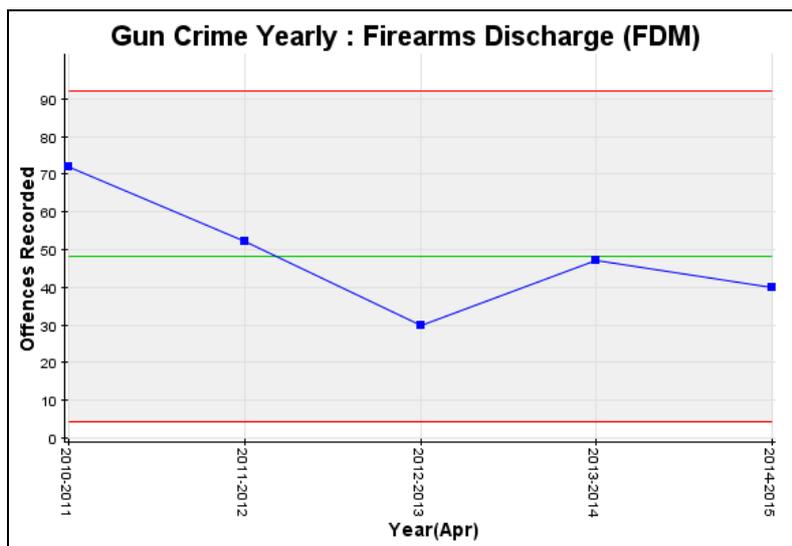
22. There has not been a gun fatality in the West Midlands for 18 months. This is not a position shared by the other metropolitan police forces that make up the bulk of the UK gun crime.

Discharged Firearms

23. Firearms discharges are regarded as a strong indication of the actual prevalence of lethal purpose weapons amongst criminals. This is one of the critical areas monitored by the UK threat group and NABIS. Discharges provide an insight into the nature and type of weapons used and the circumstances.

24. A firearm is discharged in around 50 crimes per year, (based on the special interest marker which was introduced in 2010). This is only 10% of all crimes involving firearms and this is rigorously tracked.

25. It is important to note that comparable figures between forces are difficult in this area as there is a difference in definition being used in some force areas to log discharges, for example one force will only record discharges it deems “gang related”. National data is not published on discharges for operational reasons. However West Midlands Police, even accepting the variations in recording, does not have the highest rate of discharges by incident or population.



Firearms usage

26. WMP record how the firearm was used:

- Over half are ***used as a threat only***.
- ***Used causing injury*** fell in 2013/14 from 27.3% to 21.3% in 2012/13.

	2012/13		2013/14	
	Volume	%	Volume	%
3 - USED, CAUSING INJURY	129	27.3%	111	21.3%
4 - USED, CAUSING PROPERTY DAMAGE ONLY	29	6.1%	38	7.3%
5 - USED AS BLUNT INSTRUMENT	8	1.7%	6	1.2%
6 - USED AS A THREAT	252	53.3%	285	54.7%
7 - OTHER USE	40	8.5%	46	8.8%
8 - USED, NO INJURY OR DAMAGE	15	3.2%	35	6.7%
TOTAL	473		521	

Type of weapon

27. The CrimSec 30 specifies the type of firearm that should be included in the return. Over the last two years most firearms involved are described as handguns. There has been no significant change in the types of firearms recorded in the last two years.

	2012/13		2013/14	
	Total	%	Total	%
43 - SHOTGUN - SAWN OFF	18	3.8%	21	4.0%
44 - SHOTGUN - LONG BARRELLED	15	3.2%	16	3.0%
45 - HANDGUN - CONVERTED IMITATION	0	0.0%	1	0.2%
49 - HANDGUN - OTHER	104	22.1%	125	23.8%
50 - HANDGUN - IMITATION	17	3.6%	16	3.0%
51 - HANDGUN - UNKNOWN	132	28.1%	150	28.6%
52 - RIFLE -OTHER	3	0.6%	2	0.4%
56 - BALL BEARING GUN	63	13.4%	53	10.1%
58 - BLANK FIRER	1	0.2%	0	0.0%
59 - OTHER IMITATION	2	0.4%	4	0.8%
60 - CS GAS	42	8.9%	46	8.8%
61 - PEPPER SPRAY	21	4.5%	19	3.6%
62 - MACHINE GUN	1	0.2%	0	0.0%
63 - STUN GUN/CATTLE PROD	24	5.1%	36	6.9%
67 - FIREARM - OTHER	16	3.4%	29	5.5%
68 - SUPPOSED FIREARM - TYPE UNKNOWN	11	2.3%	7	1.3%
TOTAL	470		525	

What is the gun crime threat in the West Midlands?

28. There has been a considerable reduction in gun crime as per the Home Office category and in the use of lethal weapons by criminals in gang related or criminal violence. The force is less affected by actual incidents of shootings of people with lethal purpose weapons resulting in death or serious injury than other metropolitan areas.
29. The level of public concern about gun crime has also reduced compared to the past where gun crime was a more prominent concern in our communities. The Force actively surveys the public's perception of gun crime through its Feel the Difference Surveys. Current results (Wave 36 June 2014) show that:
- 94.2% of West Midlands respondents said Gun crime was a problem nationally, whereas only 15.8% said it was a problem in their local area.
 - 85% of respondents said WMP are working effectively to protect communities from Gun Crime.
 - 7.2% of people thought there was more gun crime than in previous years.
30. However West Midlands Police alongside the Metropolitan Police, Greater Manchester Police, Merseyside Police and West Yorkshire Police account for the overwhelming majority of offences involving firearms and discharges of lethal weapons.
31. As part of work by the UK Threat Group to assess Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) involved in firearms use and supply it has been identified that the West Midlands Force is home to a significant proportion of groups who seek to supply firearms. There remains continued evidence groups seek access to weapons and ammunition. Accordingly both through the Regional Organised Crime Unit and the West Midlands Force CID considerable resources are devoted to tackling the problem as part of the local effort but also as part of the UK response. The recent events in Europe have reinforced the risks posed by terrorists accessing firearms and this remains a feature of the force's response.

These efforts are as follows:

National Ballistic Intelligence Service (NABIS)

32. The West Midlands Force is the lead national force for the National Ballistic Intelligence Service which is mainly based in Birmingham with a second forensic facility in Manchester. NABIS is the most advanced ballistic tracking and intelligence service in the world.

Intelligence

33. As part of the UK wide effort to tackle the supply of firearms the UK government is the co-driver of the European Union EMPACT Firearms supply with Spain. The Deputy Chief Constable is supporting this work with the National Crime Agency. In order to drive up submissions of intelligence between EU states and the UK on potential supply routes West Midlands Police has seconded an officer for six months to lead the development of this intelligence with a focus upon the West Midlands and North West.

Operations.

34. There is considerable focus placed on all intelligence on firearms. The Head of Force CID has direct oversight of these intelligence items to ensure an effective response. There have been many operations by the force but some notable operations are:

Operation BARTON

35. Following a six-week trial several men were convicted of a range of offences including possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life, reckless arson and riot. This followed their involvement in shots fired at officers and at the force helicopter in August 2011, during the period of disorder suffered in this force and elsewhere. As a result of this operation firearms were recovered and formed a significant strand of the prosecution case.

Operation COOKIE

36. Several Birmingham men accused of handling guns and ammunition appeared before Magistrates in January 2015 all are charged with conspiring to acquire, use, supply or possess criminal property, specifically guns and ammunition. This case is being handled by detectives from West Midlands Police's Serious and Organised Crime Unit. Eight guns and over 500 rounds of ammunition have been seized as part of this long-running and intelligence-led policing operation. This matter has been subject of a media release and the above is public domain information. Further detail cannot be supplied at this stage as the matters are sub-judice. The weapons recovered are currently being examined by experts at the National Ballistics Intelligence Service to establish any possible links with crimes committed anywhere in the UK

NABIS Hub Submissions

37. West Midlands Police figures in relation to NABIS Database entries and hub submissions for the financial periods 2012/13, 2013/14 and the 1024/15 financial year to date. Please note that NABIS hub submissions do not represent a count of the number of individual ballistic items that are sent for examination, they are grouped together by Incident.

Year	Number of Submissions
12/13	98
13/14	97
14/15 (up to 31/12/14)	82

Database Entries

Year	Number of Incidents	Number of Incidents Classified as Crime	Number of Ballistic Items (including inferred weapons) ¹
12/13	182	64	315
13/14	148	75	462
14/15 (up to 27/02/15)	106	63	586

¹ i.e. 315 items in column 1 represents the totality of ballistic items recorded on the NABIS Database by WMP as an incident (182) reported to NABIS (Database entries), out of which 64 items are recorded in the crime category. One incident may deal with multiple submissions, so that 182 incidents represent 315 ballistic items.

38. Database entries are created by WMP authorised database users and should represent any incident where ballistic material is recovered or where the presence of a firearm can be verified as a result of property damage or injury to a person and any incident where a licensed weapon is lost or stolen. (data supplied by NABIS Database Business System Administrator Helen Holder).

Regional hub to support National Crime Agency Operation Zander.

39. Operation Zander (NCA Operation) exploring dynamic opportunities to seize weapons. This has been a successful operation and remains a live operation. In addition West Midlands Police are seeking to improve the flow of intelligence and opportunities to address gun supply/use across borders by engaging with assets based in The Hague (Europol). West Midlands Police now has an officer representing UK Policing in The Hague, seeking to improve flow of intelligence and opportunities to stifle gun supply/use across EU Borders.
40. In addition to the operations précised in paragraphs 32-38, there are other live operations targeting firearms at a force, regional and national level. Operational sensitivity and operational integrity prevent further detail becoming public domain information at this stage.

Prevention.

41. Force Gun Amnesty which netted 163 weapons of which 33 were NABIS submissions. This Operation included the active engagement of young person workers whom police had built relationships with through the "Fearless" Crime Stoppers campaign to promote the campaign and opportunity to remove guns from streets.
42. An on-going knife surrender campaign called for by the Youth Commissioners of West Midlands PCC's Office and Community Groups, continues to result in introduction of "Word For Weapons" Surrender Bins. These bins are aimed at knives as it was always envisaged that guns would be deposited following the pattern in London. In December 2014, two guns were recovered from a bin in Wolverhampton of which one has been NABIS linked to gun crime. There are now eight bins across Birmingham and Wolverhampton with four further bins requested by Community Groups. Outside Sponsorship support from large supermarkets, negotiated on occasions by police for Community, has assisted funding this initiative.
43. There eight bins across Birmingham and Wolverhampton are at the following locations:

Birmingham

- 1) Sparkbrook - Aldi, promoted by Sampson Road Community Residents Association
- 2) Lozells -New Testament Church of God
- 3)Erdington - New Testament Church of God
- 4) Edgbaston Fiveways -Tesco supermarket
- 5) Aston -Tesco

Wolverhampton

- 6) Heath Town- New Testament Church of God
- 7)Whitmore Reans - Tabernacle Church Staveley
- 8) Perry Barr-The Hub, Sports community centre

44. PC Pedley and Marcia Shakespeare combine in “Precious Lives” bespoke presentations to young person’s groups in a variety of settings. Education is a key plank to reducing firearms crime. Together they have delivered to over 40,000 young people. The settings are often dictated where police receive intelligence about young persons and tension, weapons or targeted into groups following an incident.

An assessment of the current threat posed by criminal use of firearms in the West Midlands Police force area.

45. The threat posed by the criminal use of firearms within the West Midlands Police Force and the west Midlands region are constantly under review and is informed through a variety of reporting mechanisms including Intelligence, Recorded Crime Data and Community feedback/community Intelligence.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None

ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Given the likely public and media interest in this report following wide scale discussion and media reporting on gun crime issues facing West Midlands Police the WMOPCC have requested West Midlands Police liaise with Richard Costello in the Police and Crime Commissioner’s office regarding media activity in support of its publication. This can be managed through the Chief Constable’s Office, West Midlands Police Corporate Communications Department and the West Midlands Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Chief Constable Sims QPM – West Midlands Police