



STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD
1st September 2015

TASER – USE OF FORCE UPDATE

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on Taser usage within West Midlands Police (WMP) since the reports provided to SPCB in December 2014 and February 2015.

BACKGROUND

2. The Taser is a single-use device designed to temporarily incapacitate a subject, through use of an electrical current, which temporarily interferes with the body's neuromuscular system. It is one of a number of tactical options available when dealing with an incident with the potential for conflict.
3. During 2007 the Home Office ran a pilot for the use of Taser in the UK, by non-firearms officers, across ten police force areas. Following positive feedback from the pilot scheme, the provision of Taser was extended to all police forces during 2007/8. Taser was introduced for 24/7 WMP Local Policing Units (LPUs) during 2010, with a minimum of one vehicle available per LPU.
4. Taser provides officers with an additional tactical option to deal with violent subjects and may be considered a lower use of force than, for example, using CS spray or restraining techniques. Taser may reduce the risk of injury to both officers and subjects as distance may be maintained until control is gained. Often the mere presence of an officer with Taser can subdue an otherwise aggressive subject and potentially violent incident.
5. Authorised Taser Officers (ATOs) may be sent to violent incidents, subjects with weapons (excluding firearms) and where dangerous subjects could be anticipated. ATOs are selected and trained to deal with incidents using the National Decision Making Model to use a proportionate response to an incident and go through annual reaccreditation following successful completion of their initial course to ensure their training is up-to-date with current force policy.

6. WMP officers currently use the X26 Taser that can be used in direct contact or at distance from a subject. Taser may be used in several ways as detailed below and it should be noted that any deployment of Taser ranging from 'Drawn and Aimed' to 'Fired' is recorded as a use of force;
- 'Drawn and Aimed' – Officer removes the Taser from its Holster and points it at the subject;
 - 'Red Dot' - The Taser has a laser sighting system which allows the officer to mark the subject with a red dot. This has the advantage of letting the officer know they are on target and also letting the subject know that they have been targeted;
 - 'Arcing' - This is aimed at deterring a subject(s). This is achieved when the officer squeezes the trigger without the cartridge attached and the electric current flows between the two contacts at the end of the Taser. An audible and visual display of electricity crackling across the two contacts can be seen and heard;
 - 'Fired' – The Taser cartridge contains a pair of wires with barbs attached that carry the electric current to the subject's body. The cartridge is clipped on to the front of the Taser. The Taser works by delivering an electrical charge to the body firing two barbs from an attached cartridge into the subject. Further use is possible as long as the barbs remain attached; and
 - 'Angled Drive Stun' - Taser is designed to safely incapacitate a person at distance but sometimes distance cannot be achieved. On some of these occasions it will be appropriate for an officer to incapacitate the subject by carrying out an Angled Drive Stun. This involves activating the loaded Taser close to the subject's body and then placing the Taser against another part of their body to incapacitate them.

TASER USE OF FORCE STATISTICS OVER LAST THREE YEARS

7. Table 1.0 details West Midlands Police use of Taser over the last three years by type of use up to and including July 2015.

Type of Use	Year			
	2012	2013	2014	2015 (<Jul)
Drawn/Aimed ¹	200	167	172	132
Arced	37	22	14	7
Red Dotted	587	453	447	277
Fired	222	187	233	108
(Angled) Drive Stun	11	8	18	13
TOTAL	1057	837	884	537

¹ Until recently "drawn" and "aimed" were recorded together as were "angled drive stun" and "drive stun". From 2015 those definitions have been listed as separate entities.

Table 1.0 – No. of Taser Deployments by Type per Annum²

8. Displaying the data from Table 1.0, Figure 1.0 allows quick comparison of deployment type across each calendar year and comparison of those types within each year.

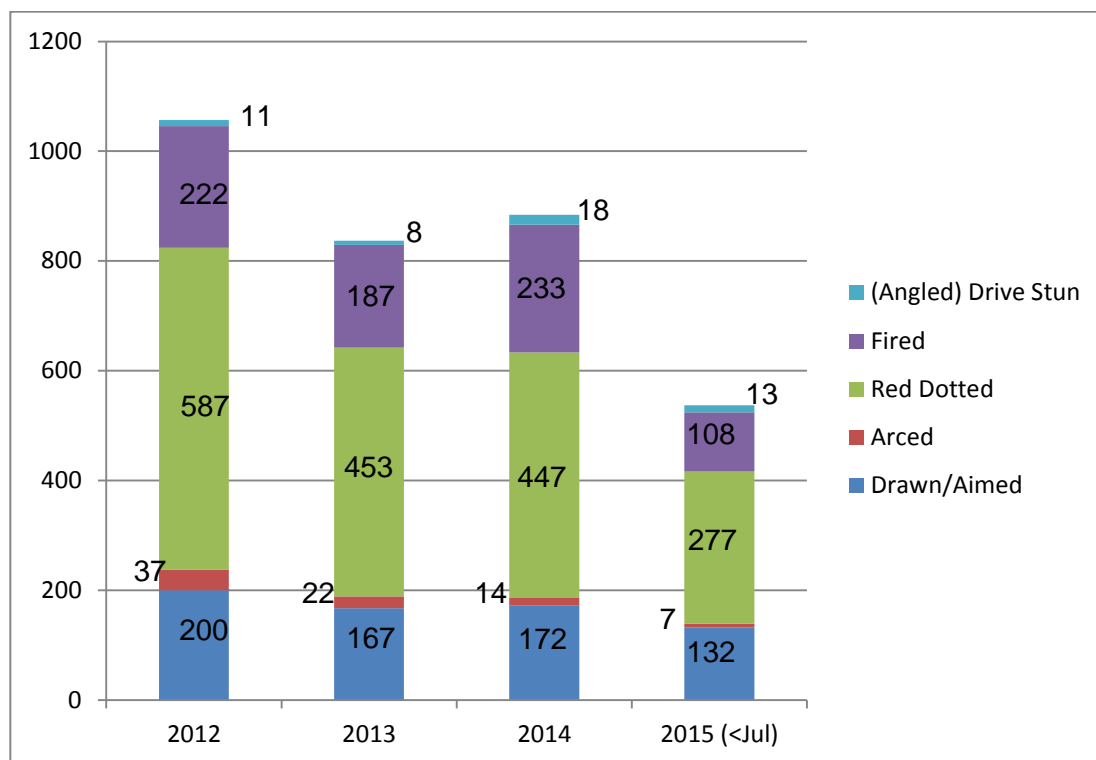


Figure 1.0 – No. of Taser Deployments by Type per Annum

SPLIT OVER 2014-15 BY LOCAL POLICING UNIT AND CORRELATION TO VIOLENT CRIME

9. To give some context to Taser use, Table 2.0 compares total Taser deployments by LPU against the number of recorded violent crimes over the last 19 months; the 2014 calendar year and up to and including July 2015.

² The above listed deployments include incidents involving Taser being deployed against dogs and where Taser has been deployed by one or more ATOs against one subject. Therefore the actual number of subjects having Taser used against them will be slightly less.

Taser Use Vs. Violent Crime Figures (2014-15)				
LPU	Taser Use	% of total	Violent Crime	% of total
BE	208	14.6	6523	12.7
BN	92	6.5	3197	6.2
BS	131	9.2	5463	10.6
BW	208	14.6	8068	15.7
CV	193	13.6	6026	11.7
DY	77	5.4	4082	8.0
SH	51	3.6	2604	5.1
SW	218	15.3	5238	10.2
WS	113	8.0	4716	9.2
WV	129	9.1	5393	10.5
Off WMP	1	0.1	N/A	-
Total	1421		51310	

Table 2.0 – Taser deployments per LPU vs. Recorded Violent Crime

10. Comparison of Taser use versus violent crime by LPU shows a correlation between the two; the LPU's use of Taser is similar to the violent crime figures when compared as a percentage of total use and a percentage of recorded crime. For example, Birmingham West & Central accounts for 14.6% of the Force's Taser use and has 15.7% of all recorded violent crime.

11. Taking the data from Table 2.0, Figure 2.0 provides a visual comparison of the two by LPU.

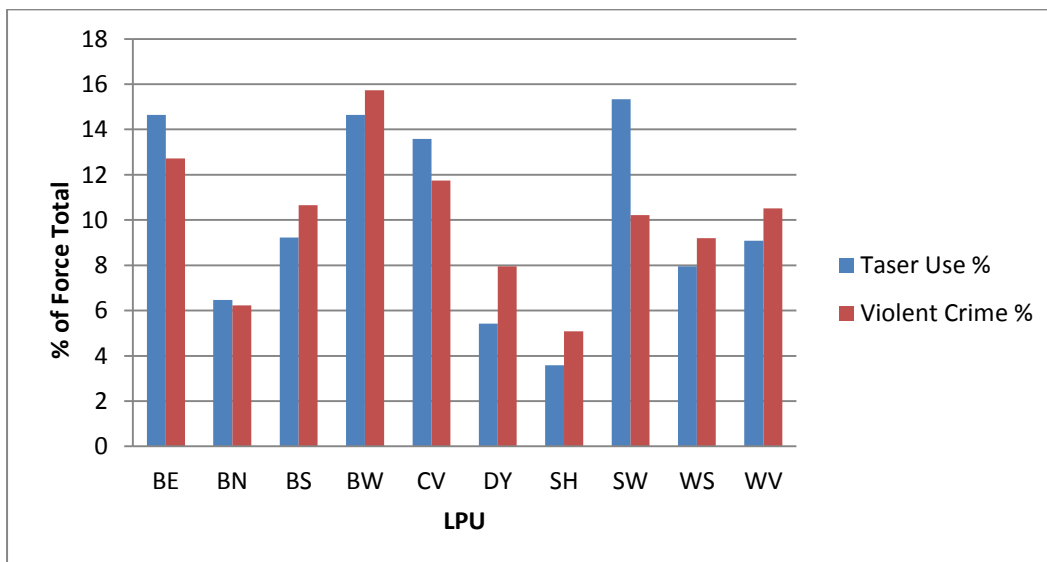


Figure 2.0 – Taser Use vs. Violent Crime

12. The majority of LPUs have a correlation between their use of Taser and levels of violent crime within a margin of +/- 2%.

BREAKDOWN OF TASER USE BY GENDER, AGE, ETHNICITY AND MENTAL HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

13. Table 3.0 lists basic recorded details of subjects dealt with by Taser since 2014 up to and including July 2015. Details include gender, age; ethnicity and whether any aggravating factors were suspected at the time, such as mental health issues or intoxication (drink and/or drugs). These results are split by calendar year, given as a combined total for the last 19 months and as a percentage of the Force's total, for comparison.

		All Taser Deployments on LPU Areas			
Subject		2014	2015(≤Jul)	Combined	% of Total
Gender	Male	756	498	1254	88
	Female	39	35	74	5
	Not Stated ³	82	3	85	6
Age	<18	47	45	92	6
	18-38	575	357	932	66
	39-59	165	127	292	21
	59>	6	3	9	1
	Not Stated	91	5	96	7
Ethnicity	Asian	81	56	137	10
	Black	119	99	218	15
	Chinese / Other	8	2	10	1
	Mixed	42	33	75	5
	White	535	338	873	61
	Not Stated	99	9	108	8
Ailment	Mental Health	367	233	600	42
	Intoxicated	523	310	833	59
Total		884	537	1421	

Table 3.0 – Breakdown of subject characteristics

14. Nearly half of all subjects were classed as having a mental condition at the time of contact (this may be either a predisposition or classed as an Emotionally or Mentally Distressed Individual (EMDI) by the officer); and 59% of subjects where Taser was used were believed to be intoxicated.

COMPARISON OF USE TO MOST SIMILAR FORCES

15. Listing the number of Taser units possessed by WMP and other forces, how many ATOs each force currently has and how many Taser deployments were recorded, Table 4.0 allows for comparison of WMP against other similar police forces.

³ The above data includes non-person subjects i.e. dogs, which fall within the Not Stated categories for Age and Ethnicity. There were 7 dogs subject of Taser usage in 2014 and 1 so far in 2015

16. For comparative purposes, West Mercia and Staffordshire Police Forces have been chosen as part of the West Midlands Region, whilst Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and West Yorkshire Police (WYP) are WMP's Most Similar Forces.

	WMP	W. Mercia	Staffs	GMP	WYP
No. of Taser Units	632	126	264	500+	435
No. of ATOs ⁴	436	174	428	674	507
No. of Taser Uses	452	117	199	476	154
Total Officers ⁵	7266	2048	1787	6900	4940

Table 4.0 – WMP vs. Comparative Police Forces (Jan-Jun 2014)⁶

NUMBER OF TRAINED OFFICERS

17. Table 5.0 provides an update on the current number of trained Taser officers showing the split between LPUs and specialist departments. The number of ATOs is accurate up to 1st July 2015 and is based on the number of initial Taser courses and annual reaccreditations over preceding 12 months.

18. The Operations Department figure does not include Firearms Officers who qualify in a specific AFO Taser qualification and are therefore not classed as qualified ATOs.

LPU / Dept.	ATOs
BE	37
BN	35
BS	40
BW	37
CV	29
DY	30
SH	35
SW	36
WS	34
WV	34
PPU	1
OPS	55
L&D	4
CMPG	31
Total	438

Figure 5.0 – Number of Taser Officers⁷

⁴ The total number of ATOs for GMP and WYP most likely include their firearms officers and thus, their numbers appear much higher than WMP, West Mercia and Staffordshire.

⁵ Total officers for the comparative forces are based on HMIC estimates (2013).

⁶ The comparative figures for the other forces are taken from multiple open sources, including FOI requests, government publications and HMIC reports. Comparative data is only available for January to June 2014.

19. The Redesigning Response project as part of WMP2020 is still in the options appraisal stage and so it is not possible to offer initial thoughts on Taser distribution as part of WMP2020.
20. Distribution of Taser across the force area is currently largely equal between LPUs as can be seen in table 5.0 (34.7 ATOs per LPU on average). Detailed analysis of Taser usage and violent crime will be undertaken as part of WMP2020 to understand how Taser will need to be distributed in line with the response model designed.

RECORDING AROUND SUBJECT/ CRIME LOCATION

21. Taser usage is not currently broken down any further than LPU level. The location of the Taser use, as determined by the completing officer, is recorded on the 'Taser Deployment Form' which is collated by the force Taser Single Point of Contact. There is currently no system solution in place to capture and map this. The form does not capture crime type where a crime is committed that is connected to the deployment of Taser.
22. Provision of a similar system for mapping use of Taser to eSearch for Stop and Search may not offer great benefit due to relatively low numbers for Taser usage when compared with Stop and Search.
23. All alterations to eSearch have to date been undertaken by the WMP ICT department and any further developments would need to be considered as part of the WMP2020 project. It is within the capabilities of the eSearch system that a bolt-on for mapping Taser use could be added, however the minimum recording standards for Taser (in line with current National Police Chiefs Council recording requirements) are very different to stop and search and this would potentially increase the costs associated with recording Taser use.

TASER COMPLAINTS

24. From 1st April 2015 to date there have been five complaints received involving Taser usage. Of the five complaints two were referred to the IPCC in April 2015. The complaints were broken down as follows;
 - 3 – deployment
 - 1 – not deployed
 - 1 – red dotted
25. Of the five complaints there are three ongoing investigations, one filed by disapplication and one locally resolved.
26. WMP was notified of the change in policy at the IPCC on 17th June 2015 that no longer requires forces to make mandatory referrals of all Taser complaints. Since that date there have been no referrals made to the IPCC and only two complaints relating to Taser recorded during this time (both subject of ongoing investigations).

⁷ *The number of ATOs per department will vary annually due to movements between departments.*

27. In comparison, during the 2014 to 2015 performance year WMP received twenty two complaints relating to Taser as follows;

- 9 – deployment
- 2 – red dotted
- 1 – officer had hand on Taser
- 7 – arced
- 3 – threatened not deployed

28. Of the complaints received last performance year – there were two disapplications, one locally resolved, four not upheld, one withdrawn and there are fourteen ongoing investigations (eight of which are with the IPCC as Independent Enquiries)

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None Apparent

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None Apparent

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board is asked to note the contents of this report.

Assistant Chief Constable Gareth Cann