



**STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD**  
**5<sup>th</sup> July 2016**

**West Midlands Firearms  
Threat**

**Aim and Purpose**

1. The purpose of this report is to summarise the response to the previously reported rise in firearm related crime within the West Midlands. It articulates the position of the investigations into firearm incidents that have taken place since the summer of 2015.
2. Operation Captiva remains as the force wide strategic response to firearm related crime which is led by ACC Carl Foulkes.

**Context and Approach**

3. Gun Crime is low in the UK compared to almost every other developed nation. Where it does occur it is concentrated in the UK's main conurbations. West Midlands Police is the second largest force in the country and has historically had one of the highest levels of gun crime alongside other large Metropolitan forces such as Greater Manchester Police, Merseyside Police and the Metropolitan Police.
4. Gun crime is recorded in a series of ways. There is a grouping of criminal offences recorded by the ONS which may involve direct use of a firearm or infer the possible presence of a weapon. West Midlands Police are normally either the highest or second highest force in this crime category per 1,000 population with the Metropolitan Police.
5. Just under 3 in every 5 (57%) firearms offences recorded in the year ending March 2015 occurred in 4 police force areas: Metropolitan, West Midlands, Greater Manchester and Merseyside, all of which cover large urban areas. In comparison, just over a quarter (27%) of the population of England and Wales reside in the areas covered by these 4 forces.
6. In the year ending March 2015, there were 9 firearm offences per 100,000 people in England and Wales. For the 4 urban forces mentioned above the rates were: 20 per 100,000 in the West

Midlands police force area, 19 per 100,000 in the Metropolitan police force area, 16 per 100,000 in the Greater Manchester police force area, 12 per 100,000 in the Merseyside police force.

7. The Chief Constable as the national lead has raised concerns with Chief Constable's over the reliability of this data. Gun crime has been, is and will remain an issue for the force. The Chief Constable is the National Lead for the Criminal Use of Firearms and chairs the UK threat group. West Midlands Police has recently written the new Applied Professional Practice for Gun Crime Investigation for UK policing.
8. The National Ballistic Intelligence Service (NABIS) is operated by West Midlands Police for the benefit of UK policing. NABIS will examine all firearms or ballistic material recovered by forces to understand the intelligence picture on use and availability of weapons. NABIS in particular are able to infer what weapons, from the material from discharges, may be in use within the criminal market place.
9. In the summer of 2015 the West Midlands saw an increasing threat from firearms after a number of years of relative stability. Over a period of 3 months the force saw an increase in discharges of firearms from an average of 5 per month to 10 and tragically 4 firearms related murders. This was supported by intelligence from NABIS which saw an increase in inferred weapons in the force area. Whilst the focus of the increased threat was Birmingham it was not solely focussed on the city with firearms discharges occurring in Dudley, Coventry and Wolverhampton.
10. It was and is believed that the cause of this rise related to disputes over, or robbery of, drugs combined with an increased (although still limited) availability of firearms and a growing confidence of gang nominals which resulted in more firearms discharges.
11. The force recognised that this unacceptable rise threatened lives and public confidence and under the leadership of ACC Foulkes commissioned Operation Captiva which would form the overarching response to firearms. The focus of Operation Captiva has and remains:
  - To reduce the number of firearms related deaths on the streets of Birmingham
  - To identify, disrupt and reduce the number of firearms available across the West Midlands
  - To reduce the number of firearms discharges across Birmingham
  - To reduce the wider number of firearms discharges across the West Midlands police area
  - To enhance community confidence and information reporting
12. Whilst the operation has had a strong operational focus Captiva was also used to review operating processes and benchmark against other forces.
13. Under the operational silver C/Supt Bell a review was commissioned of our approach, supported by colleagues from Merseyside police. Merseyside Police have been identified as applying specific good practice through the UK threat group. This resulted in a series of recommendations developing into an action plan covering Intelligence, Investigation,

Partnerships, Operations and Communities and these have formed the pillars of our approach since.

14. WMP also recognised that it could not achieve the step change in relation to firearms alone and as such agreed a new approach with the National Crime Agency to pool intelligence and staff to improve our understanding on firearms availability, supply and those responsible. This has resulted in both higher quality intelligence products and operational activity.
15. All the activity under Operation Captiva is led through a bi-weekly Silver meeting where all departments and affected LPUs report back on actions and progress to date to C/Supt Bell. This has brought focus and grip around the firearms threat across the force and allows the prioritisation of resources through the Force Daily Management Meeting where every firearms intelligence log is reviewed and Force Tactical Tasking which oversees the current force threats.
16. To support this process WMP has established a dedicated intelligence team, realigned local policing resources to focus on gangs and firearms and re-prioritised the force Prevent team to disrupt gang activity. Additionally firearms officers receive focused tasks in relation to locations and individuals to disrupt firearms activity and ACC Foulkes has set clear expectations in relation to the operational response from all Commanders.
17. The threat from Firearms remains the force priority and has been the case for the last 9 months.

## **Operations**

18. West Midlands Police has consistently recognised that Operational activity alone will not mitigate the firearms threat but it clearly plays an important part in managing threats, arresting offenders and taking firearms off the streets.
19. A fundamental element of Op Captiva is to ensure that when we have firearms intelligence we are acting on it as quickly as possible using either firearms or unarmed officers depending on the threat assessment. This approach combined with an increasing level of investigators and operational staff focused on firearms has enabled the force to move firearms intelligence far more quickly with a daily review of what is outstanding and progress made to date.
20. Since the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016 there have been 88 firearm warrants executed in the West Midlands police area and 13 of these achieved a positive result removing 13 firearms from criminals within our community.
21. Examples of results that proactive operations have achieved in June 2016 are:
  - A firearms warrant was executed on an address in Tipton, two loaded handguns and live ammunition were recovered from the house and a 35 year old man was arrested on suspicion of possession of firearms and ammunition, as well as drugs offences.
  - Firearms warrants in Wolverhampton resulted in the recovery of a large amount of drugs and two firearms. Two men and two women were arrested on suspicion of possession of firearms and possession of Class A and Class B drugs with intent to supply.
  - A firearms warrant in Coventry has resulted in the arrest of a wanted male linked to robberies and the recovery of a Mach 10 Firearm.

## Significant Investigations

22. Whilst the force continues to ensure that we dynamically deal with intelligence we also have significant investigations on going. It is vital that when serious gun crime offences are committed the community understand West Midlands Police recognises it is important people are brought to justice. Some of the more significant investigations include:
23. During the summer and autumn of 2015 a series of firearms incidents on the Birmingham West and Central Local Policing Unit (LPU) took place which included over 20 firearm discharges linked to 2 Birmingham Organised Crime Groups (OCGs). West Midlands Police commenced an operation to identify and bring to justice members of the OCGs responsible. To date, two males have been charged with conspiracy to murder others, firearms and ammunition offences and endangering life. They are currently remanded in custody awaiting trial on the 12th September 2016.
24. On the 8th October 2015 Connor Smith tragically suffered fatal gunshot wounds on Forde Way Gardens, Hawkesley. A substantial murder enquiry commenced which led to three males being charged for murder. A trial took place at Birmingham Crown Court in April of this year. Phillip Baillie was convicted of manslaughter, robbery and firearms offences and was sentenced on the 6th May 2016 to twenty years imprisonment. Leon Frye was sentenced to thirty years imprisonment for murder and firearms offences.
25. One of the most high profile shootings and challenging investigations within Birmingham occurred on the 30th October 2015. This resulted in the shooting of two individuals on Soho Hill, Birmingham. Tragically Derek Myers died of gunshot wounds and a second victim has been left with life threatening/life changing injuries. To date, one male has been charged with murder and a second with attempt murder. Two additional males have been charged with possession of a firearm with intent to endanger life. A fifth male is on bail for related offences and enquiries continue. The trial date is set for 14th November 2016.
26. A robbery occurred on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February 2016 at Direct Source 3 Ltd, Rae Street South, Digbeth where 3 offenders acting with a 4<sup>th</sup> male have attended the location. 2 of the males with handguns have entered the business premises and after tying up the staff, shot the manager, Mr Akhtar Javeed. 4 suspects have been identified, 3 of which have been charged with Murder, Conspiracy to commit robbery and Firearms offences. One male remains outstanding and is subject to on-going investigations to locate him. The Trial is due to start on the 8<sup>th</sup> August 2016.
27. On the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2016 in St Marks Crescent in Ladywood a vehicle in which a young man, Kenichi Philips, was a passenger was shot at after a dispute with other males. Tragically Kenichi suffered fatal gunshot injuries. After a long and complex investigation 3 suspects were identified; 2 of which have been arrested and charged with murder, a further male remains as wanted and is being actively sought by officers. The trial is due to start on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2016.
28. Whilst we continue to tackle those that use and possess firearms we also focus on removing those that supply them. In November 2015 a gang of men from Birmingham were jailed for

supplying guns and ammunition to criminals across the country. In total 18 men were given custodial sentences including Nosakhere Stephenson (a well known criminal). This was the culmination of a highly complex undercover operation by the West Midlands Police's Serious and Organised Crime Unit with support from the National Ballistics Intelligence Service (NABIS). This operation resulted in the recovery of a total of eight firearms, including a Mach 10 machine gun and pump action shotgun, as well as thousands of rounds of ammunition. The appeals court quashed their original sentences in March 2016 and ordered increased the sentences for 16 offenders, who have now received sentences totalling more than 200 years.

29. Proactive operations, undercover policing and intelligence led activity have a huge part to play in tackling firearms, excellent police work is equally as important. As the profile in relation to firearms across the force has risen so has the number and quality of arrests, stop checks and intelligence logs submitted; examples of these outcomes include:
30. During a regular policing operation two men in Birmingham rammed a police vehicle which was attempting to stop them, they were later found to have a handgun and Class A drugs in their car and subsequently imprisoned for nine and a half years and seven years in custody during a hearing at Birmingham Crown Court in March 2016.
31. In February Lawrence Morgan, a Birmingham teenager, was given a six year prison sentence after officers stopped him near a parade of shops with a loaded gun in his bag after he was searched. When specialists from West Midlands Police's Firearms Unit examined the weapon, they found it was loaded with four rounds of live ammunition.
32. It is important to note that crimes involving firearms continue to attract substantial sentences from the courts and we regularly publish this information as we believe it does deter offending.

### **Partnership Working**

33. It is vitally important that the action against gun crime is not owned and led by just the police. Whilst policing has an important role bringing those committing offences to justice and ensuring offenders are targeted; creating a community intolerant to gun crime needs to be owned by local people. Focussed specifically in the Birmingham area and supported by Birmingham West and Central LPU it is being delivered on a number of levels supported by partner agencies and communities and examples of this work include:
  - i) An OPCC led, community supported weapons surrender which took place in February 2016, West Midlands Police fully supported this excellent initiative which resulted in 158 knives being removed from the streets and one imitation firearm.
  - ii) Vaisakhi 2016. WMP recognises that the firearms threat impacts on all communities and we received support for an advert within the event brochure (10,000 copies circulated) and also through a stand at the event to encourage wider reporting of incidents and information sharing.
  - iii) Facebook Live Event in April 2016, which showcased firearms officers on patrol, Local Policing response units and an overview from the Chief Constable to both raise awareness of the threat from firearms and encourage community information.

iv) St Georges Task and Finish Group, focusing on three main areas to enhance the quality of life for the community who live there. The partnership strategy includes enforcement, environment, housing, and social issues to reinforce the message that firearms are not wanted in our communities.

34. West Midlands Police will continue to actively support the OPCC Gangs and Violence Commission, which is a partnership based approach to listening and responding to views of the wider community. It will work together across both statutory, voluntary sectors and wider partners to develop community based solutions and wider policy recommendations. The Commission will also explore strands including education attainment, economic development and engaging faith communities.

### **Communications Strategy**

35. West Midlands Police recognises that some people are reluctant to report firearms information directly to us, as such the force has worked closely with the national Crimestoppers charity. The recent marketing campaign has been devised to encourage families and friends of people who may be carrying guns, to give information about those weapons to the police anonymously. The campaign appeal has a simple message:

**Guns – Tell us what you know, not who you are.**

36. The target audience is twofold:

- i) Mothers of sons carrying guns
- ii) Girlfriends of gun carrying boyfriends

This approach is based on national and local evidence that these groups can have the biggest impact on the young men who are carrying, storing and using firearms. Prior to the campaign the team considered how the campaign can best impact and reach out to the target audience and as such it consisted of a multi-dimensional approach, the highlights being:

- i) High profile back-lit billboards on the M6 and the A38M (main route into Birmingham)
- ii) An innovative audio advert recorded with a local 'grime artist', on 3D surround sound to be played on music being downloaded from legal download sites such as Spotify.
- iii) A 'Wideo' which is an animated advert incorporating the audio, promoted across Facebook.
- iv) A series of business card style flyers for nail bars and hair salons.

37. The estimated audience for each element of the campaign equates to over 13,000,000 individuals. Every firearm seizure and every conviction for a firearm offence is being proactively shared across media networks and within the communities the firearms are recovered from to

increase public awareness, increase trust and confidence and encourage more intelligence sharing.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

38. West Midlands Police now has taken significant action to investigate serious offences and bring cases before the courts. We have challenged our operating practice and have improved our agility in securing and acting upon intelligence.. We continue to work with statutory partners, the NCA and ROCU to ensure every opportunity to disrupt firearms supply and offending is taken. This work will be sustained as gun crime has not gone away although the concerning regularity of events at the end of 2015 and the start of 2016 in Birmingham has lessened. It is now appropriate the strategy becomes more preventative in tackling the motivation of the people behind the weapons.
39. Over the coming months and supported by the OPCC, we will continue to develop our approach to work with and reach out to communities who can support us in removing firearms and those that use them from our streets. We are also working with colleagues from the ROCU and evidenced based policing unit to use case studies to identify the key warning signs earlier in people's lives so those that may become firearms victims and offenders to move to a more preventative approach.
40. To conclude West Midlands Police is achieving an overall reduction in the medium to long term in relation to overall recorded firearm incidents, firearm related crime and crimes involving firearm discharges.
41. Reducing the number of firearms related deaths on the streets of Birmingham and identifying, disrupting and reducing the number of firearms available across the West Midlands is key and all efforts will be put in place to achieve these objectives.
42. The result of recent firearm related investigations and the sentences delivered at court to those individuals within our community who continue to carry and discharge weapons on the streets of the West Midlands illustrates the significant effort West Midlands Police and partners have invested in tackling the firearm threat.
43. West Midlands Police supported by the CPS, will continue to send a clear message If you have access to a firearm, carry a firearm or discharge a firearm in the West Midlands, you will be pursued with vigour, you will be convicted of your crime and you will receive a substantial custodial sentence as a consequence for your actions.

**Chief Constable**