



west midlands
police and crime
commissioner

AGENDA ITEM	#
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Strategic Policing and Crime Board

21 April 2020

Police and Crime Plan Priority: Emergency Police and Crime Plan

Title: West Midlands Police responds efficiently and effectively to COVID-19, and works in partnership to protect the public of the West Midlands

Presented by: ACC Vanessa Jardine

Purpose of Paper

1. The purpose of this paper is to set out how West Midlands Police (WMP) is responding efficiently and effectively to COVID-19 and how WMP is working in partnership to protect the public. The paper will include:
 - An assessment of the impact crime patterns and how the COVID crisis has impacted
 - How WMP maintains the service to victims of Domestic Abuse
 - How WMP are utilising the new COVID-19 related powers
 - To what extent the partnership structures such as the Strategic co-ordination group are operating effectively
 - How WMP are deploying staff to cope with the crisis

Background

2. West Midlands Police response to coronavirus is currently the highest priority in the force. This is a global health emergency and the West Midlands region is a hotspot for this deadly disease. WMP have been planning the response to COVID19 since the beginning of February 2020 and there have been some changes in the policing priorities because of this emergency. It is paramount that WMP support the effort to save lives and protect the NHS by stopping the infection rate and ensuring our policing response is efficient and effective to support this.
3. Whilst this is the biggest priority presently for WMP it is acknowledged that this will impact on many areas of policing business. The response to this is continually assessed, we have strong partnerships across the West Midlands policing region and beyond and these partnerships are crucial in ensuring we are doing the right things for our community and in response to this global crisis.

An assessment of the impact of crime patterns and how the COVID crisis has impacted.

4. Through the Force Tactical Delivery Board (FTDB), all volume and serious and organised crime has been plausibility assessed to understand the probability of any changes that will occur due to the current COVID crisis.
5. The FTDB process has been changed to a weekly process which has enabled any changes or developments in crime to be tracked and scanned at an early opportunity and ensure that force actions can be tasked out, outside of the daily management.

Volume Crime plausibility assessment

6. Key crime types have been assessed as follows: residential burglary; commercial burglary; personal robbery; Theft shops and stalls; Violence with injury (Non-Domestic Abuse (DA)); Domestic Abuse; Child Abuse; Hate crime and vehicle crime.
7. Residential Burglary accounts for 7% of usual Total Recorded Crime (TRC). With the majority of the population at home, the opportunity to commit traditional residential burglaries is significantly reduced and the volume will decrease significantly. A number of Modus Operandi (MO) around distraction burglary are beginning to emerge and are likely to develop. Those in receipt of government aid (food packages, etc.) as an identified vulnerable person may also be at risk. As predicted,

residential burglary is currently reducing significantly with a 35.6% reduction Year to Date (YTD).

8. Commercial Burglary accounts for 2% of usual TRC. It is likely there will be opportunistic break-ins of closed premises which will likely be reported when premises begin to re-open. These are likely to be a variety of opportunistic and organised offences. Specific business types may be targeted, like pharmacies and supermarkets. As predicted, commercial burglary has reduced and currently the reduction is 27.4% YTD. A number of offences are emerging around closed premises which are being monitored.
9. Personal robbery accounts for 3% of usual TRC. Volume offences will decrease with traditional robbery locations no longer being populated: night time economy, schools/school transport, shopping centres and takeaways. There is opportunity for victims to be targeted in remote locations, either opportunistically or for hard to come by goods. There are also reports of key workers being targeted for ID passes or other items.
10. Commercial robbery accounts for 1% of usual TRC. With most businesses closed, there is a significantly reduced opportunity to commit robberies. However, those that remain open are at greater threat if supplying hard to come by items and this is likely to be exploited. There is also likely to be activity targeted against delivery drivers transporting food, pharmaceuticals and care packages to the vulnerable however, this has not been experience yet.
11. Overall, robbery is currently reduced showing a 59.8% reduction YTD, as was predicted.
12. Theft Shops & Stalls (TSS) usually accounts for 6% of usual TRC. With most shops closed and restrictions on movement there will be a significant decrease in these offences. Shops that remain open will be at risk especially as need and anxiety increases. TSS is showing a 48.8% reduction on last year. Offences have moved out of city and town centre hot spots to the supermarkets that remain open in residential areas.
13. Violence with Injury (VWI) (Non-DA) accounts for 8% of usual TRC. The volume of offences will decrease with traditional violence locations no longer being populated: NTE, schools/school transport, shopping centres and takeaways. However, as tensions increase, there is likely to be more disorder related violence where people are coming in to contact this may include shops and residential areas that are not observing restricted movement. Tensions will lead to violence being directed at key

workers, there have already been incidents of COVID19 being weaponised. Whilst these type of incidents are likely to increase, Non-DA VWI offences are showing a 69.8% year to date.

14. Domestic Abuse accounts for 17% of usual TRC. Although demand is reducing overall, the number of offences related to self-isolation and restrictions on movement are increasing already. Hidden offences will increase in volume, third party reporting will be less likely due to the isolation and as tensions rise it is likely that there will be escalations in the severity of violence in some cases. These cases will create future demand for WMP, presenting as more complex and high risk cases later on. DA is currently 9.9% higher YTD than 2019; albeit April was the lowest month of last year. This continues to be monitored and WMP response to DA is specifically discussed within this paper.
15. Child Abuse accounts for 5% of usual TRC. Although demand has already begun to reduce, it is likely the number of offences related to self-isolation and restrictions on movement increase as children are taken out of the safety net of education and places with those they are most at risk from. As tensions rise it is likely that offending will increase in volume and severity. These cases will create future complex demand for WMP, when schools reopen and beyond. WMP Public Protection Unit (PPU) are working to continue to support and monitor those who are most vulnerable.
16. Hate Crime accounts for 3% of usual TRC. An increase in Hate Crimes relating to the current situation has already begun, with reports of Sinophobia and wider targeting of Asian communities and businesses or those perceived to have the virus. Tensions from far right groups are also emerging, predominantly targeting perceived religious gatherings (mostly Muslim and Jewish). This will be exacerbated by the start of Ramadan later in the month. As tensions rise, hostility is likely to increase. This may cause longer term tension in some communities with hidden offences very likely. Hate crime is 40.0% lower than in 2019, tensions are monitored daily
17. Vehicle crime accounts for 11% of usual TRC. Self isolation and restrictions in movement will limit the opportunity to take vehicles and/or vehicle contents and the majority of vehicles will be at occupied premises. Border controls will also disrupt supply chains. Vehicle crime is showing a 38.5% reduction YTD.
18. WMP currently has a mission in response to volume crime. This is continually assessed and the assessment has been developed into strands of offending, each with a strategic lead. This has enabled further development of WMP approach and

understanding of current crime patterns during this period as the COVID situation continues to develop.

19. Figure 1 (below), highlights the main categories for recorded crime and displays the current month to date and year to date data and percentage difference. The above paragraphs explain how crime has changed and is highlighted by the current year to date statistics.

Recorded Crime - Main Categories (up to 10/04/2020 05:55:33)

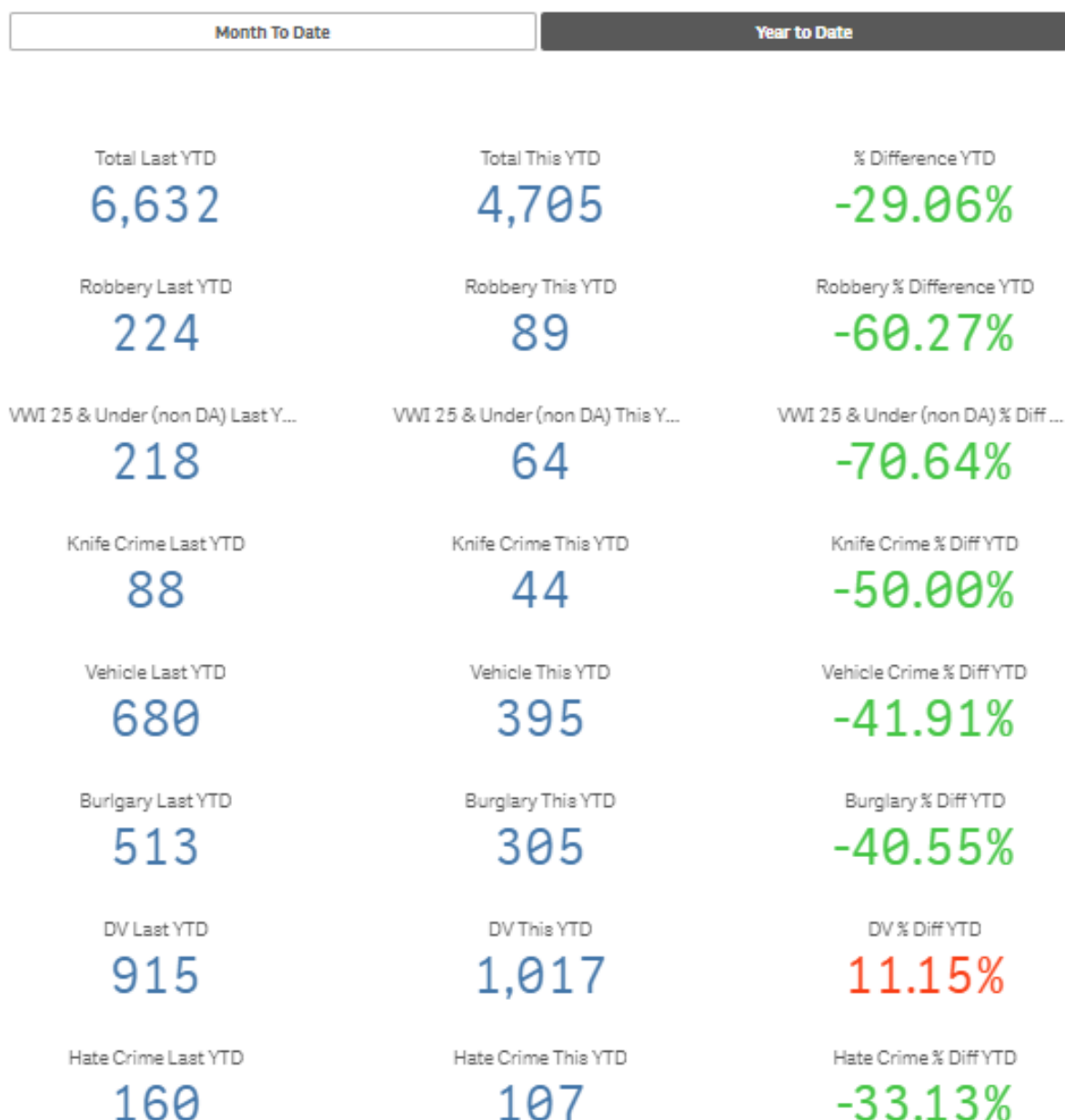


Figure 1 Recorded crime main categories – data presented is 1 April 202 to 9 April 2020, inclusive.

How WMP maintains the service to victims of domestic abuse

20. The paper will cover the key aspects of domestic abuse including: reporting, investigation and safeguarding. West Midlands Police has not reduced the service offered to victims of Domestic Abuse.
21. DA is a priority for WMP, with all officers and staff committed to delivering the highest possible service to victims. WMP has specialist teams who investigate DA, with the most serious offences being dealt with by detectives in Complex Adult Abuse Investigation teams. Furthermore, there are specialist DA Safeguarding teams, who lead safeguarding on all high risk victims and lead the multi-agency safeguarding response. All of these are part of the PPU led by a Detective Chief Superintendent. Investigation and Safeguarding teams operate from five sites across the Force: Perry Barr, Oldbury, Walsall, West Bromwich and Coventry.
22. Offences of DA have risen significantly since 2014, with an average of 120 offences being recorded each day in 2020, and January 2020 seeing the highest month on record with just over 4,000 recorded crimes. Along with the rise in recorded crime, the number of outstanding offenders has risen to a peak of 1,356 in January 2020. To deal with the increased workload, the Public Protection Unit, whilst supported by the wider Force, initiated 'Operation Overview 2', which saw officers from across the Force seconded into Adult Investigation Teams. The operation was directed by a Superintendent with governance through FTDB. The PPU have also recruited additional Police Staff Investigators (PSI's) to increase the Adult Investigation capacity. While reporting has remained constant, the level of outstanding suspects has reduced to 605 (as of 08/04/2020).
23. The Covid-19 Pandemic control measures introduced by the government present a particular risk within DA criminality. Members of the public, apart from key workers, have been directed to stay at home to protect the NHS and to save lives. Whilst this needs to be in place, it reduces opportunities for victims of DA to report offences due to the presence of the abuser within the household. It also has the potential to increase the risk of tensions and abusive behaviours within the home.

Reporting

24. The Reporting mechanism for DA and general message for victims are both unchanged. If a person believes they are being abused they can report through the Live Chat Facility on the WMP website, if Live Chat is not available they can call 101.

If the person believes they are in immediate danger or there is a threat to their life, they can call 999.

25. If a person believes someone they know is being abused, the advice is to speak to the person where safe to do so and advise them to contact the Police themselves. If they do not want to report the abuse or cannot, then the person can report it on their behalf using Live Chat, 101 or 999 depending on whether the person is in immediate danger or not.
26. Additionally, our current communications message publicises the silent solution (pressing 55 during a silent 999 call), this alerts the police to a genuine emergency and signifies that the caller is unable to speak. If there are serious injuries, the advice is still to seek urgent medical help. Abuse does not have to be physical and comes in many forms.

Communications

27. WMP are running a messaging campaign which includes social media messaging and use of the WM Now App to remind victims and the wider community that WMP are still very much there for them.
28. The PPU are also currently engaged in a working group tasked with creating a regional campaign which reminds members of the public that victim services remain available to them regardless of Covid-19 from Police, to specialist support, to housing, etc. It also reminds victims of their rights to safety and support regardless of the Covid-19 legislation and tells them how to access the support. This campaign seeks out unique ways of getting the message to the most isolated victims who may not be leaving the home often and in some cases may not leave the home at all. This aims to make reporting and finding information quicker, easier and more accessible both for victims, and for community members trying to support them.
29. Key stakeholders involved in this work include: Police and Crime Commissioner's Office; Violence Reduction Unit; PPU, Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC); Public Health England; WMP and OPCC Communications; Independent Domestic Abuse Advisors (IDVA) Service and a number of local leads on behalf of partners.

Support from External Partners

30. Through day to day contact and messaging, members of the public (including all victims spoken to) are regularly advised that victims of DA can also seek support from independent specialist support groups including:

- Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid
- Black Country Women's Aid
- Coventry Haven
- Wolverhampton Haven
- Wolverhampton Domestic Violence Forum
- National Domestic Abuse Helpline

Responding to Reports of Domestic Abuse

31. Domestic abuse remains a priority for WMP and this is further supported through the Force Tasking and Coordination volume crime mission, where domestic abuse is a specified *priority* work stream. WMP are providing a predominately unchanged service to victims of DA however, in order to assist the management of demand, and ensure wherever possible compliance with Government direction regarding social distancing, our primary and investigative response to DA may take place via telephone. This will only take place for crimes which are classed as standard risk through Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment (DARA), any other crime risk will be reviewed by a supervisor before determining whether a face to face investigation or support should continue.

32. There is no change in our response to calls where, due to the threat, risk and harm, an immediate response is required. This is usually when the offender is still present at the location.

Investigation and Safeguarding

33. Incoming reports of DA are risk assessed into high, medium and standard risk categories using the DARA risk assessment tool. Reports are reviewed and prioritised by the PPU review and allocation team. Reports are then allocated to specialist investigation teams based on the victim's locality. Alongside this, high risk cases are also allocated to the relevant Safeguarding team for action. Adult Abuse

Detective Sergeants review the report and allocate to a lead investigator who will make contact with the victim and progress the investigation. Safeguarding Detective Sergeants review the report and allocate to a Safeguarding Officer who will make contact with the victim and consider any onwards safeguarding referrals such as Independent Domestic Violence Advisors, Social Care and Housing. At this point, referrals to the local Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference will also be made by the Safeguarding Officers.

34. Suspects who are not already in custody will be discussed at the Neighbourhood Policing Unit's (NPU) daily Tactical Review Meeting and allocated to Neighbourhood officers for arrest.
35. If a criminal prosecution is not achievable, consideration will be given to securing a Domestic Violence Protection Order (DVPO). The PPU has a specialist team who complete the application and court process for such orders and arrangement have been made with Birmingham Magistrates Court that all applications will be heard via telephone conference during the Covid-19 emergency.

Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference

36. The responsibility for the Coordination and Administration of the MARAC sits within the PPU. It is a multi-agency forum which discusses the safeguarding of the region's highest risk domestic abuse cases.
37. The team associated are agile and were immediately able to resort to agile working and virtual meetings once the risks of Covid-19 became apparent.
38. A decision was made early on to move meetings virtually, with support from WMP Information Management, whereby the meetings themselves have been able to continue as normal without the very significant risk of infection to a key group of professionals.
39. The effectiveness of this new virtual way of working has been dependent upon the organisation of the MARAC team but most significantly, dependent on the engagement and cooperation of parents, which has been excellent.
40. There is no change to the process for referring victims to MARAC and no change to the service received or processes thereafter, it is simply all virtual during this period.

41. Referral rates into MARAC continue to be monitored and partners who are facing challenges due to staffing issues during this time are aware that the MARAC team will support them in finding ways to access the process regardless

Crime Portfolio

42. In order to deal effectively with any increases in demand around DA, support for investigations is available from the Force Criminal Investigations Department (FCID). Daily conference calls between both departments and the wider force allow both forward planning and dynamic staff movement.

43. Year to date, total recorded crime, positive outcomes and percentage rates for DA are highlighted in Table 1 below.

2019/20			2020/21		
TRC	Positive Outcomes	Rate	TRC	Positive Outcomes	Rate
41553	3996	9.6%	806	137	17.0%

Table 1 DA positive outcome and percentage rates YTD comparison

44. During the Covid-19 pandemic DA will continue to be a priority for WMP. The service to victims has not been reduced and WMP will continue to align the appropriate level of trained resources into adult investigation and safeguarding to ensure the protection and safeguarding of victims.

How is the force using new COVID-19 powers?

45. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 came into force on 26th March 2020. Included in these regulations are specific powers in relation to restrictions on movement and gatherings. The specific powers state that if an officer believes someone is outside of the place where they are living without reasonable excuse they can:

- direct that person to return to the place where they are living
- give the person concerned any reasonable instructions the officer considers to be necessary

- use reasonable force in the exercise of the power to remove the person to the place where they are living

West Midlands Approach

46. WMP have reinforced that these regulations have been introduced to respond to a public health emergency. It is important that we keep the public's trust throughout this anxious time. Officers have been using a four-step escalation approach when dealing with these situations:

- Engage – approach individuals with a neutral mind-set. Talk to people first. Remember majority of people will be complying with the restrictions
- Explain – using your professional judgement, if that person is in breach of the guidelines or does not understand, explain it to them. Make an effort to understand their situation. Ask individuals, groups or businesses whether they have heard about the new guidance, and how quickly they can comply with it. This should be done by stressing the risks to public health and the NHS
- Encourage – Emphasise the benefits of staying at home and how this will protect the NHS, save lives and help the most vulnerable in society
- Enforce – as a last resort use your powers to stop any activity which goes against the restrictions. Any enforcement must be necessary and proportionate and should be considered as a last resort

Fixed Penalty Notices

47. Where someone is believed to have committed an offence under these regulations and is 18 or over, a fixed penalty notice of £60 can be issued, which will be lowered £30 if paid within 14 days. The amount then increases to £60 payable within 28 days. If payment is not made the matter is referred to Magistrates court. If a person commits an offence for the second occasion the penalty increases to £120. The penalty will double for each subsequent issue (this is capped at £960).

48. To date specific powers have been used 546 times, table 2 highlights the data for instructions given.

Instruction Given	
Return to where you live	492
Any other reasonable instruction	54
Total	546

Table 2 data of 'Instructions Given' in line with specific powers from 1 April 2020 to midnight on 13 April 2020.

49. Officers have the ability to issue fixed penalty notices (fines) to those persons who breach these instructions and to date 34 notices have been issued. The final option is to arrest and in the reporting period only 2 people have been arrested. This is highlighted in table 3 below.

Outcome	
Dispersed	449
FPN	34
NFA	59
Arrest	2
Summons	2
Total	546

Table 3 Outcome of enforcement from 1 April 2020 to midnight on 13 April 2020.

50. To date West Midlands officers have engaged with many people and groups with only a very small percentage leading to the use of police powers to disperse or the issuance of fixed penalty notices.

To what extent are partnership structures, such as the Strategic Co-ordination Group operating effectively.

51. West Midlands Police have a Command, Control and Co-ordination (C3) arrangements which are joint with Warwickshire and work across the West Midlands and Warwickshire conurbation. The Multi-Agency response to COVID 19 will be delivered through Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) and Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) arrangements. The SCG is led by ACC Vanessa Jardine from WMP.

52. The Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) sets the strategic direction of the local planning, preparation and response to any disruptive challenge affecting the West

Midlands Conurbation by COVID-19. The Group will contain strategic-level representatives of organisations (see below for membership). Joint arrangements with Warwickshire have been put in place to enhance coordination and alleviate pressure on regional partners located within the boundaries of both LRF areas.

53. The Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) is the multi-agency tactical-level working group that will enable West Midlands Conurbation partners to respond jointly to the challenges of COVID-19.
54. Each organisation retains command and control of its own personnel, albeit working towards the common mission and objectives agreed Strategic Co-ordinating Group SCG.
55. Each organisation ensures business continuity and command resilience; the ability to function effectively over extended periods of time with clear arrangements for the handover of functions between appropriately trained personnel.
56. Each organisation established clear spans of command including reporting lines, accountability and responsibility for both internal and multi-agency activity.

Multi-Agency Arrangements

57. Information sharing continues through the COVID19 pages of Resilience Direct, via multi-agency information cell and through the SCG and TCG meeting structures. Partners ensure arrangements are in place to monitor these pages regularly for changed content.
58. **Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG):** SCG teleconferences now take place daily as do the TCG teleconferences. This ensures swift tactical translation and delivery of actions. The battle rhythm for SCGs during the response period has continued to adapt to local need and activity.
59. **Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG):** The TCG mirrors the battle rhythm of the SCG. The TCG liaises closely with the Local Health Resilience Partnership. Both groups having cross over membership to ensure consistency and good information sharing. The TCG will stand up 3 core sub-groups:
 - **Multi-agency information Cell**
 - **Media & Communications Cell**
 - **Excess Death Working Group**

60. The TCG also retains the ability to use its existing sub-group structure to expedite priority work areas when required.

61. The Multi-agency information cell leads the partnership on reporting into central government.

Multi-Agency Decision Making and Reporting Structure

62. Table 4 below illustrates the core groups that have currently been stood up. Any other working groups will be established by the SCG or TCG as and when the need arises

Group	Frequency	Geography	Administration
SCG	daily	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	WMP
TCG	daily	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	Warwickshire Police
Multi-agency information Cell	7 days a week – office hours	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	Daily reporting to central government
Media & Communications Cell	7 days a week with out of hours arrangements	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	LRF sub-group
Vulnerable People Cell WG	Daily	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	
Mortality Planning Group	Weekly	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	Coronial Office and Leanne Deathridge (Walsall CC)
Nightingale WG	Daily	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	
Transport Group	Weekly	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	

Voluntary sector group	Weekly	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	
Recovery Group	Weekly	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	
Local Health Resilience Partnership (LHRP)	Weekly at present	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	CSW Resilience Unit and BCC

Table 4 Core groups in response to COVID19

Stakeholders and Membership

63. The following organisations will be invited to attend the SCG and TCG:

- All Category 1 responders in the WMP Conurbation (Emergency services, Local Authorities, the local Health Economy (including acute and mental health trusts, PHE, NHSE) and the Environment Agency.
- Relevant local Category 2 responders (CCG, Highways England, HSE, utility & transport companies)
- MHCLG RED Government Liaison Officer
- Military representative
- Specialists or other stakeholders as required (e.g. representatives of LHRP, Local Enterprise Partnerships, and Higher Education Sector etc.)

64. As can be seen the infrastructure of the partnership arrangements has grown significantly and reflects the early investment by the region in planning for the response phase (and the start of the recovery phase). This includes holding a multi-agency table top exercise prior to social distancing measures being invoked. Commitment of attendance at the appropriate level and commitment to a joint endeavour has become stronger as the crisis has continued. Progress has been made in all of the areas detailed above (table 4). There have been many challenges but the progress made for the temporary mortuary, which is on track to be operating

on time (17th April), is testament to the leadership of key individuals but also to the partnership arrangements and relationships in place. The SCG and TCG now run daily, both have consistent and suitable attendance and we have worked hard to ensure cohesive administration across both groups. This assists in the consistent application of the agreed strategy and priorities as well as action tracking and auditable recording of meetings and decisions. Feedback from Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has been very positive and indicated that our multi-agency arrangements are well progressed and a head of many other areas.

How is the force redeploying staff to cope with the crisis?

65. Internally there is a Gold, Silver Bronze command structure in response to COVID19. Details from the SCG and TCG are fed through these respective groups where necessary. This is also where the strategic, tactical and operational response to COVID19 is decided. There is a staged approach to ensuring continued delivery of critical services throughout the COVID19 crisis which was an action set in the Gold command structure to Silver Command structure.
66. WMP have identified critical functions for the force and ragged green, amber and red in terms of criticality. Red critical functions are functions that are 'essential' critical activities that must not stop. Amber and green functions are also identified. There are elements of some amber functions that are red because a major incident has been declared. As a result of this the resilience of these functions are factored in as part of the GSB command resilience (ECS, Corporate Communications, and Intelligence with the JIC).
67. Taking into account demand and resourcing predictions, knowledge of the skills/training/equipment required for these functions to operate and professional judgement identify the greatest threats amongst the critical functions. These have been identified as:
- a) Force Contact
 - b) Custody
 - c) Firearms
 - d) Public Order
68. For these areas it has been agreed that a series of fast time projects will take place each with a clearly identified Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) / Lead. These projects utilise WMP business transformation support and the resilience and

planning Silver group to access the relevant support from People & Organisation Development (POD), Finance etc. These projects will report into GOLD for escalation to the FET via the Resilience and Planning Silver. The TOR for these groups include:

- Immediate options and action to ameliorate anticipated resilience issue expected imminently and during any initial peak of COVID19 in the West Midlands area.
- Medium to long term solutions to ensure resilience throughout the next 12 months building on our understanding of how COVID19 is expected to affect the UK during that period.

69. In parallel to this work the remaining RED business areas and departments service level options will be swiftly assessed and presented to ensure resilience of those areas in addition to details of where additional resources may be found to support. This should wherever possible be led by each Head of Department, building on the work already undertaken. Trying to do all of this work centrally slows down the resourcing cell. This work will however need to be coordinated and presented as appropriate for consideration and sign off by Gold Command and/or Force Executive Team.

70. Agreed areas of delegation or escalation around short and medium/long term options include:

- Crime – Investigation, prisoner handling, case progression, forensics & safeguarding (PPU, FCID)
- Security portfolio - Investigations including CAB and surveillance
- Command Cadre Resilience including FET, K&E, Negotiators & CBRN
- IT&D – network team
- Offender Management – MAPPA & Sex & Violent Offender Management
- Shared Services (supplies of vital equipment).

71. The WMP staffing picture is discussed every day at Gold Command meetings so is continually reassessed however the processes and work streams that are currently in place plan for the short, medium and long term picture of staffing.

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