



west midlands  
police and crime  
commissioner

AGENDA ITEM 6a

## Strategic Policing and Crime Board

16 June 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 give an update on 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 updates on:

- Our assessment of how the COVID-19 crisis is affecting crime patterns
- How we are maintaining our service to victims of domestic abuse
- How we are continuing to protect children and vulnerable people online
- How we are using new COVID-19 powers
- How we are protecting NHS and essential workers
- How we are operating effectively with partners
- How we are deploying staff to cope with the crisis
- How we are supporting volunteering and community activity

## **Background**

2. West Midlands Police continues to prioritise the response to COVID-19, maintaining a major incident response in partnership with the Strategic Coordination Group. The planning response to COVID-19 commenced at the beginning of February 2020. West Midlands Police continues to 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.

## **Volume Crime Plausibility Assessment**

2. The assessment of crime and demand during the current COVID-19 period is routinely reviewed as we transition back to business as usual. It forms part of the Force Tactical Delivery Board (FTDB) process which has a weekly monitoring process and monthly tasking meeting.
3. The tasking process enables tracking and monitoring of COVID-19 related offences, emerging threats and the gradual return to normal crime patterns as restrictions continue to be lifted.

## *Recovery Phase Crime Hypothesis*

4. The government announced its recovery strategy<sup>1</sup> 11/05/2020, with a phased roadmap outlining when and how different restrictions would be lifted. This has been used as the basis for a Recovery Phase Crime Hypothesis.
5. A matrix has been created to assess the likelihood of changes occurring, at each phase, to different key crime types. The matrix will be updated as further change is confirmed or announced.

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<sup>1</sup> Our plan to rebuild: The UK Government's COVID-19 recovery strategy  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/our-plan-to-rebuild-the-uk-governments-covid-19-recovery-strategy>

6. It has been 2 weeks since the UK went into phase two of recovery (13/05/20) and so far crime patterns have changed in line with the hypothesis. This is summarised below.
  
7. The first phase of lifted restrictions has seen more people return to work, use public transport and take unlimited outdoor exercise with members of other households. As a result, there has been an expected increase in recorded domestic abuse, hate crime and public order and violent offences.
  
8. Domestic Abuse is on a continuing upwards trend as it was throughout the last performance year. Offences last week (18/05/20) were higher than Christmas week, a traditional seasonal spike period. Increased incidents of Domestic Abuse are still likely whilst there restrictions are in place. As the restrictions begin to relax there will be an increase in reporting of incidents and this is being evidenced. Offences usually see a significant seasonal peak in July however, currently offences have consistently risen from December. Much of the increase has been driven by efforts to increase the accuracy of crime recording so the usual seasonal rise would still also be anticipated. However, the usual drivers of a summer peak (school holidays, more time at home, hot weather and alcohol consumption) have already been experienced for a period over lockdown, which may flatten out offending over the summer period.
  
9. Hate offences did not reduce during phase one of restrictions, but they have changed in nature. Slightly more offences have been reported involving online/mobile methods and significantly more have involved disputes with neighbours. Although this may decrease as people leave their homes, it is also likely to cause longer term disputes and repeat reports with people still spending more time in homes and gardens throughout the summer. A large proportion of offences have involved coronavirus in some way; specific offences against those from Chinese communities, Pakistani communities and other individuals, with common accusations of 'spreading' the virus. There is also significant intelligence around far right groups and anti-policing sentiment which have not yet resulted in offences. Wider offences against 'authority figures' are likely to increase as frustrations with limitations to daily life continue. With the further lifting of restrictions it is likely that these tensions will increase as people come into more contact with each other.

10. Hate crime on public transport accounts for 40% of offences. It is likely that there will be a return to traditional hate offences, when combined with additional COVID-19 offences will increase the overall volume. The week Commencing 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020 saw the highest ever volume of recorded hate offences.
11. It is anticipated that as children begin to return to educational settings from 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020, there will be an increase in reports of child abuse. However, due to the nature of the phased return this rise will be in line with the normal seasonal term time volume of Child Abuse and the usual fluctuation in workload, although cases may be different and for example; include more neglect, complexity, and severity. Currently there are reduced opportunities for concerns to be identified through professional interaction and practice, and more new teacher/child relationships as children return to school could create the need to build trust over a longer period. There is potential for more serious cases of neglect due to the length of time children have been off school.
12. The majority of term time reporting is usually cases of neglect in primary school aged children, all of whom should be able to have some time back at school in the summer term. It is likely that an increase in online exploitation has occurred with children being at home with more access to social media. As restriction are lifted, this may result in children attempting to make physical contact with those they have met online increasing the risk of Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE).
13. Violence involving young people aged under 25 had fallen to very low levels since the closure of schools and Night Time Economy (NTE) and movement was restricted. This has steadily begun to increase as we have moved into phase two of recovery. It is likely that this will only increase as each phased change to restrictions is implemented, with the NTE reopening likely to be the greatest driver of change.
14. Serious Acquisitive Crimes remain low. Robbery has seen a slight increase in offending since phase two began and more people have begun to move around. However it is likely that burglary and vehicle crime will see a slow incremental rise back to normal levels as many people remain at home.
15. Business offences also remain low. There will be an increase as more businesses open up in the coming weeks (notably the scheduled re-opening of all non-essential

shops week commencing 15<sup>th</sup> June 2020), there will still be limited opportunity for Theft from Shops & Stalls with social distancing measures in place. More business burglaries will be discovered as owners return to premises. Nationally there has been an increase in business robberies, but this has also not yet been realised within the region.

16. It is likely that as further phases of recovery are announced, policing any restrictions becomes more difficult. Tensions are likely to increase as the public becomes less compliant. It is expected that over the summer months we see some return to 'usual' summer demand, with increased violent offending albeit in different locations to usual such as parks, other public spaces and private residences then slowly returning to city and town centres.
17. Changes to volume crime trends and patterns will continue to be monitored through the FTDB process.

#### **How we are maintaining our service to victims of domestic abuse**

##### *Domestic Abuse Demand*

18. Domestic Abuse remains a force priority. An overview of domestic abuse is presented at the weekly force tasking meeting, which ensures that immediate safeguarding and suspect management actions are prioritised. During May investigations have been further supported by additional operational resources who have undertaken 200 standard risk investigations and this is being supported by a Domestic Abuse specialist Sergeant and Inspector.
19. The monthly Domestic Abuse operational group continues to meet, attended by all relevant force departments and Neighbourhood Policing Units. This meeting is chaired by Detective Superintendent Simpson, who progresses long term actions through this meeting.
20. Daily domestic abuse reporting levels have risen and remained higher than average since the VE day bank holiday weekend on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2020. The last update to the Strategic Police and Crime Board detailed a peak of 146 offences per day, however we are now regularly seeing over 150 Domestic Abuse crimes per day being

reported. Ordinarily our offences range between 105 and 129 crimes per day. Demand is monitored on a daily basis which allows for any demand criticality to be seen and responded to. Table 1 gives an overview of Domestic Abuse total recorded crime between 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020 and 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

YTD Average	Range	18- May	19- May	20- May	21- May	22- May	23- May	24- May	25- May	26- May	27- May
114	105 - 129	129	146	142	150	140	154	133	130	150	158

Table 1. Domestic Abuse Total Recorded Crime from 18 May 2020 – 27 May 2020

#### Positive Outcomes

21. Year to date DA positive outcomes continue to show an increase which currently stands at 10.5%, as seen in table 2 below. The average monthly positive outcome rate for May 2020 is currently 90 per week, compared with 60 per week in May 2019.

2019/2020			2020/2021		
TRC	Positive Outcomes	Rate	TRC	Positive Outcomes	Rate
41543	3997	9.6%	7189	757	10.5%

Table 2. DA positive outcome and percentage rates YTD comparison

#### Communications

22. WMP continue to regularly promote reporting of DA across a variety of media outlets, utilising #NoExcuseForAbuse the local media campaign and also #YouAreNotAlone the National media campaign.

#### Emerging threats/Opportunities

23. The release of lockdown and the gradual return to schools and workplaces is likely to generate a further increase in demand for reported Domestic Abuse. Whilst work has taken place to apply predictive modelling to this assumption the situation is unprecedented and therefore hard to accurately predict.

24. The situation with Magistrate and Crown Courts reduced sittings remains a considerable threat for the progression of Domestic Abuse cases through the Criminal Justice System. Criminal Justice Services are leading the work on identifying how to deal with the significant backlog of cases, and the public protection unit are engaged with these discussions.

#### **How we are continuing to protect children and vulnerable people online**

25. The National Crime Agency have reviewed their ability to assess referrals, which has generated a backlog of 4000 cases during COVID-19. As a result there has been a 50% uplift in staff to ensure this backlog is managed. It is unknown at this time what impact this will have for West Midlands Police, but the current local position has resulted in a backlog increase of just 45 lower risk cases, which is much less than anticipated levels. The team has now returned to near normal functionality, since COVID-19. This will result in speedier referral assessment.

#### *Performance*

26. Between 1 April 2020 and 28 May 2020, the Online Child Sexual Exploitation Team (OCSET) has executed 27 Section 8 PACE warrants on high harm individuals. OCSET's current operating principles in response to COVID-19 has enabled business as usual to be maintained. Due to the complexity of online offending, enquiries are ongoing for referrals received during lockdown period.

#### **How we are using new COVID-19 powers**

27. The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (England) Regulations 2020 came into force on 26 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 a person 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

28. WMP continue to reinforce that these regulations have been introduced to respond to a public health emergency. The trust of the public remains pivotal and officers continue to utilise a four-step escalation approach (4E) of engage, explain, encourage and as a final option enforce. Any enforcement must be necessary and proportionate and should be considered as a last resort.

#### *Data*

29. The current total of directions to leave on the West Midlands Police app is 2,811. A brief overview of how we compare from ACRO Criminal Records Office data as of 25 May 2020 is shown in Table 3 below.

<b>Force</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Last 2 weeks</b>
<b>West Midlands</b>	<b>393</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Greater Manchester</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Metropolitan</b>	<b>1035</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>South Yorkshire</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>West Yorkshire</b>	<b>881</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Warwickshire</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>West Mercia</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Staffordshire</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Lancashire</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Thames valley</b>	<b>878</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Devon and Cornwall</b>	<b>906</b>	<b>71</b>

*Table 3. ACRO data comparison across force areas – 11 June 2020*

#### *Direction to Leave*

30. Directions to leave have a number of outcomes including: dispersal, fixed penalty notice, summons and arrest.

31. There have been a total of 2,811 directions to leave from March 2020 to 11 June 2020. Over this period whilst there have been peaks and troughs, throughout March,

April and May there has been a notable decrease in directions to leave in June (See Appendix A, Figures 1, 2 and 3). This coincides with the government's relaxation of the lockdown and the changed approach from "stay at home, protect the NHS, save lives" to "stay alert, and control the virus, save lives". The number of directions to leave has decreased due to the increase in freedom of movement and the ability to see people from other households.

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32. Our baseline for assessing disproportionality is the 2011 census. We base ratios on the rate of an activity rate against the people the census says make up that ethnic group. Whilst the census has been updated with estimates since it was carried out, it is some years old. It is acknowledged that more recent estimates show that the demographics and population of the West Midlands is far more diverse than in 2011. The data also shows that 29% of people were aged 18 to 39 years, 27% were aged 40 to 59 years and 22% were aged 60 years and over.

33. During the period 59% of directions to leave have been given to white people, 20% to Asian people and 10% to black people. This means within the West Midlands policing area, Asian people are 1.3 times more likely to be stopped than a white people, and black people are 2.1 times more likely to be stopped than white people. When this is broken down in to ward area the ratio does reduce for the majority of Neighbourhood Policing Unit areas.

34. Birmingham West NPU has issued the highest number of direction to leave, however it shows Asian people are 0.7 time more likely to be given a direction to leave than a white people, and black people are 1.8 times more likely to be given a direction to leave than a white people (see appendix A, Figure 5). Wolverhampton NPU has issued 167 directions to leave compared with 517 issued by Birmingham West NPU. In Wolverhampton, black people are 3.0 times more likely to be given a direction to leave than a white people, and Asian people are 0.9 times more likely to be given a direction to leave than white people. (See appendix A, Figure 6). This equates to 85 directions to leave for white people, 22 directions to leave for black people and 20 directions to leave for Asian people.

35. The data also shows that direction to leave are disproportionately used by age. 25-39 year olds have received 33.9% of directions to leave and 18-24 year olds have received 22.6% of directions to leave. If this is compared to the census data the two age categories would need to be combined showing 18 to 39 years olds have received 56.5% of directions to leave which is 27.5% above the 2011 census data.

36. Fixed penalty notice data shows a similar trend to the direction to leave and as the lockdown relaxed the number of fixed penalty notices has decreased which is in line with what we would expect (see appendix A, Figure 7).

37. There have been 481 fixed penalty notices issued as a direction to leave. 51.5% have been issued to white people, 27.8% have been issued to Asian people and 8.3% have been issued to black people. This shows that Asian people are 2.0 times more likely to be given a fixed penalty notice than white people, and black people are 1.9 times more likely to be given a fixed penalty notice than white people.

38. The age data for fixed penalty data is disproportionate against 25-39 year olds at 47.6% and 18-24 year olds at 27.6%. This is significantly higher than the census data.

39. Whilst it is acknowledged that broader data is disproportionate these levels decrease when looking at neighbourhood policing units. The numbers of directions to leave are low with 75% being for dispersal and 17% for fixed penalty notices. This is in line with a really robust 4E approach with a strong emphasis on engage, explain and encourage.

#### **How we are protecting NHS and essential workers**

40. The initial response to COVID-19 involved a tiered response to locations:

- Tier 1 sites were identified as those hospitals responsible for critical healthcare provision, testing sites and Local Authority hubs
- Tier 2 sites included iconic retail locations, including larger supermarket
- Tier 3 sites were the smaller shops and local supermarkets

41. The patrol strategy was update on the 13 May 2020 following a change in government guidance. The priorities remain unchanged:

- Protect key locations
- Provide a proportionate response to Enforcement, utilising Engagement, Explanation and Encouragement first
- Protect and reassure vulnerable communities
- Prevent large scale criminality at key locations

42. Tier 1 locations now have dedicated Police Constables and/or Police Community Support Officers, conducting at least 20 minute patrol within every 2 hour period. Resources are dedicated for their entire tour of duty, patrolling Tier 1 locations and are not to be diverted to other incidents except in emergency situations, on a nearest resource principle.

43. All other sites, which may include previously identified tier 2 and 3 locations, are now patrolled based on high footfall areas and locations where potential issues may arise. Patrols in these areas will feature as part of the local patrol strategy, paying greater attention to locations, such as shopping areas, parks and open spaces, or other locations where people tend to congregate.

#### **How we are operating effectively with partners**

44. As of 26<sup>th</sup> May there has been no change to table 5 below. It is however likely that this will change both in terms of which boards sit and the frequency of those boards over the coming weeks as we understand more the role of the SCG in 'Trace, Track and Test'. It is likely that SCG frequency will reduce.

Group	Frequency	Geography	Administration
SCG	Mon, Weds, Fri	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	WMP
TCG	Mon, Weds, Fri	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	SCG/TCG
Testing Group	Weekly	West Midlands Region	Health
PPE Sub group	Monday & Thursday	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	SCG/TCG
Mortality Planning Group	Weekly	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	Coronial Office and Leanne Deathridge (Walsall CC)
Nightingale WG	In hibernation	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	
Transport Group	Weekly – this has now become a recovery transport group	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	
Voluntary sector group	Activated as required.	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	
Recovery Co-ordinating Group (RCG)	Weekly (first met 7 <sup>th</sup> May 2020)	West Midlands conurbation & Warwickshire	

Table 5. Infrastructure of WMP partnership arrangements

45. The partnership arrangements continue to work well with ongoing commitment from all relevant agencies to send consistent and appropriately senior or skilled attendees. The sub-groups have grown and adapted to suit the evolving crisis but continue to be an effective means of resolving issues at pace. The SCG is currently exploring what the next phase of ‘response’ looks like. The main feature of these discussions have been on furthering how the local and regional arrangements for ‘Trace, Track and Test’ (TTT) look in terms of leadership, co-ordination and decision-making, and how they will lock into national arrangements. It is clear that the final arrangements will also need to align closely into our recovery structures.

46. The priorities of the SCG continue to be testing (as described above), care homes, release of the lockdown, ongoing shielding work & PPE (including future stocks).

#### **How we are redeploying staff to cope with the crisis**

47. The number of self-isolation and sickness are now below 300 staff. As the track and trace develops this may increase the number of people who have to self-isolate however presently there has been no significant impact.

48. Principles have been developed that can be adopted to manage demand during the post/partial lifting of restrictions including surge options, this also includes planning for any uplift in self-isolation cases due to track and trace.

### **How we are supporting volunteering and community activity**

49. Neighbourhood Policing Unit (NPU) Partnership teams continue to engage with each of the 614 community volunteers who contacted WMP to offer support at the commencement of COVID-19. The continued engagement has assisted the understanding of the 'volunteering journey' adopted by each Borough partnership (Local Authority/Voluntary Sector/Neighbourhood Policing Unit). Furthermore it has assisted the understanding of how NPU's can maintain new volunteering relationships to upscale existing active citizen groups and consider how community volunteers could be deployed within West Midlands Police . This will help inform the Force Strategy for volunteering moving forward.
50. A number of examples have been provided by NPU Partnership Teams that explain how 'community volunteers' were actively deployed to support the wider Local Authority (LA) and Voluntary Sector Volunteering work. In the main, volunteers were deployed within their local geography to support food hubs or support food deliveries to some of the most vulnerable members of the community.
51. Some NPU's and LA's did *not* deploy any of the community volunteers who contacted WMP and offered support. The barriers to active deployment appear to include volunteer reluctance to work within a wider LA led volunteering programme, complications with DBS vetting and most commonly, the sheer volume of community volunteering support outstripping roles and functions that could be utilised.
52. NPU Engagement and Consultation Officers (ECO's) have continued to meet weekly to primarily ensure NPU engagement with established Active Citizen (AC) Groups was maintained and enhanced. The collective response by the NPU ECO's has been exceptional. They have not only increased contact and communication with Active Citizen Groups such as Neighbourhood Watch and Safer Streets, but have also developed new forms of community engagement, such as digital Key Individual Networks. This has enabled WMP to communicate and reassure local communities concerning our response to COVID-19 and importantly, mobilise a vast network of active citizen volunteers to help prevent crime.
53. A detailed Force Volunteering Action Plan has been completed and will be advertised internally and externally from the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 to explain the activities taking place

across the Force as part of the National Volunteers Week. This activity will build on the engagement and activity developed during CoVID-19.

54. As part of our celebration of National Volunteers week a letter of appreciation and thanks will be shared with Community Volunteers, Active Citizens Groups and Cadets who offered support to WMP and local communities.

**Authors:** Chief Superintendent Peter Henrick, Head of Public Protection Unit; Chief Superintendent Claire Bell, Head of West Midlands Police Operations/Chief of Staff for COVID-19; Superintendent Ed Foster, Silver Command Resourcing; Chief Superintendent Paul Drover, Head of Intelligence; Chief Superintendent Lee Wharmby, Silver Command Resourcing; Superintendent Martin Hurcomb, SW NPU.

## **Appendices**

Appendix A – *Direction to Leave and Fixed Penalty Data*

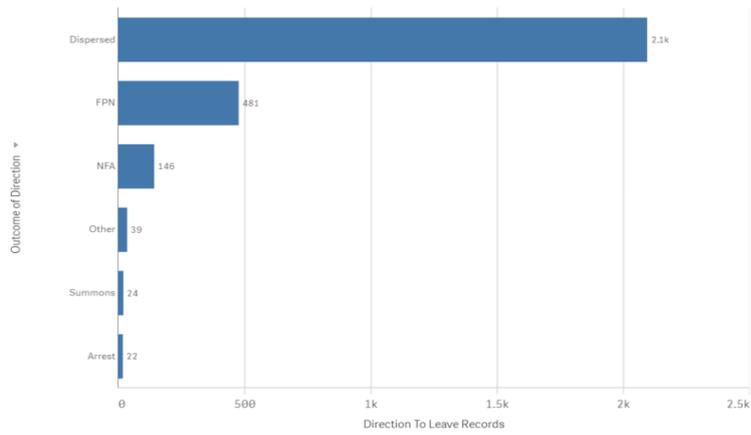


Figure 1 Direction to leave data 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 to 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020

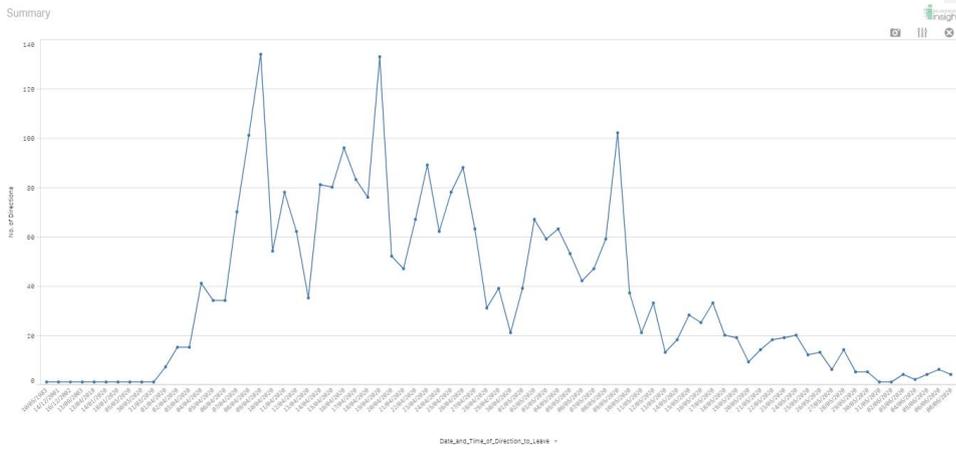


Figure 2 Direction to leave data 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 to 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020

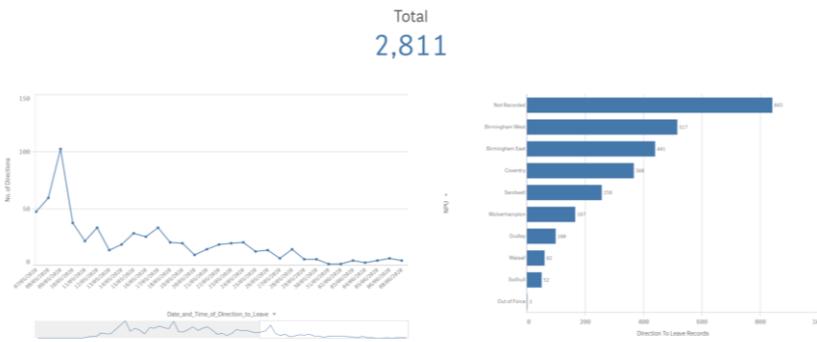


Figure 3 DTL data 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 to 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**Proportion of Ethnic Minority DTL compared to White DTL\*\***

\*\*A value of 2.1 means that a member of an ethnic group is 2.1 times more likely to be a subject of a Direction to Leave compared to a member of the white population

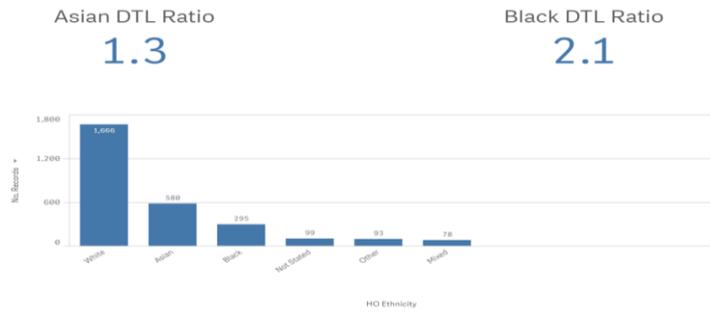


Figure 4 Direction to leave ethnicity data 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**Proportion of Ethnic Minority DTL compared to White DTL\*\***

\*\*A value of 1.8 means that a member of an ethnic group is 1.8 times more likely to be a subject of a Direction to Leave compared to a member of the white population

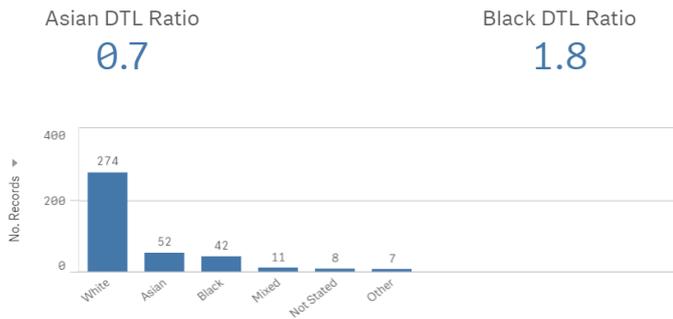


Figure 5 Direction to leave ethnicity data – Birmingham West Neighbourhood Policing Unit 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 to 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**Proportion of Ethnic Minority DTL compared to White DTL\*\***

\*\*A value of 3.0 means that a member of an ethnic group is 3.0 times more likely to be a subject of a Direction to Leave compared to a member of the white population

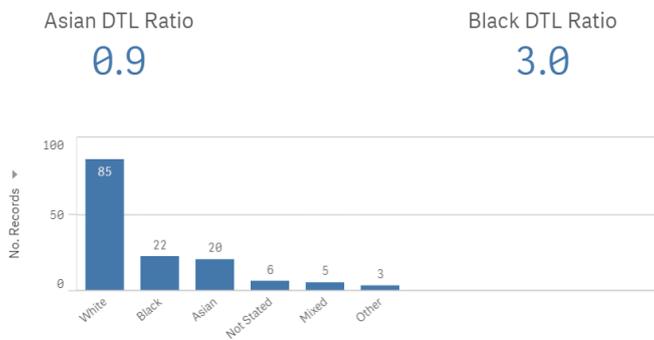


Figure 6 Direction to leave ethnicity data – Wolverhampton Neighbourhood Policing Unit 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 to 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020

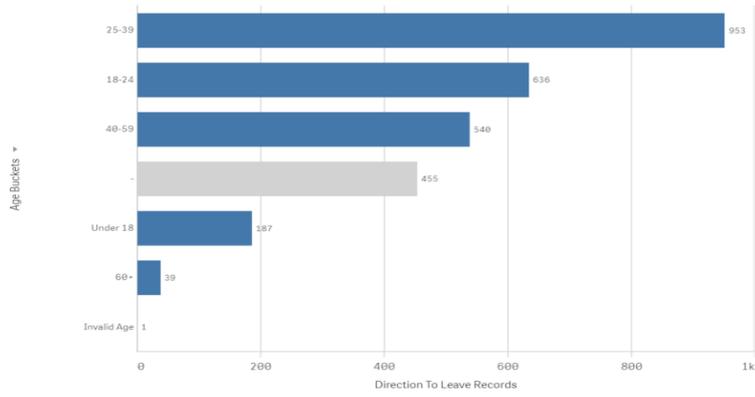


Figure 5 Direction to leave Age data 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 to 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020

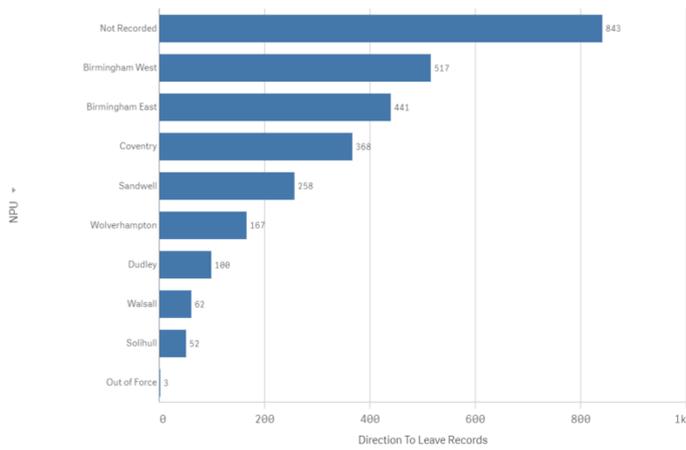


Figure 6 Direction to leave Neighbourhood Policing Unit data 11<sup>th</sup> May 2020 to 8<sup>th</sup> June 2020

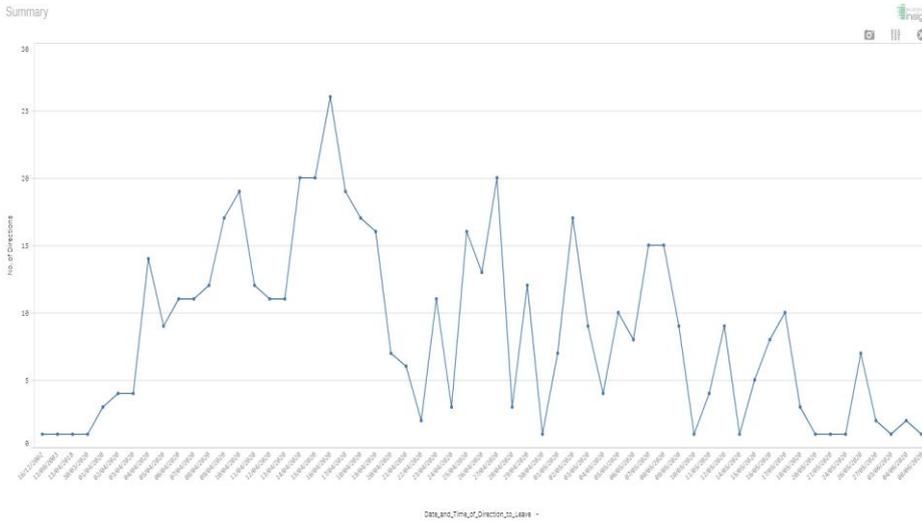


Figure 7 Fixed Penalty data 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 to 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**Proportion of Ethnic Minority DTL compared to White DTL\*\***

\*\*A value of 1.9 means that a member of an ethnic group is 1.9 times more likely to be a subject of a Direction to Leave compared to a member of the white population

Asian DTL Ratio

2.0

Black DTL Ratio

1.9

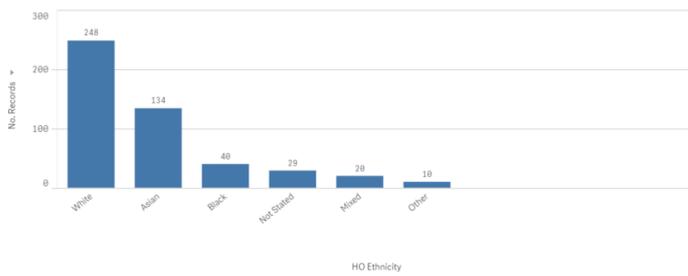


Figure 8 Fixed Penalty data 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 to 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020

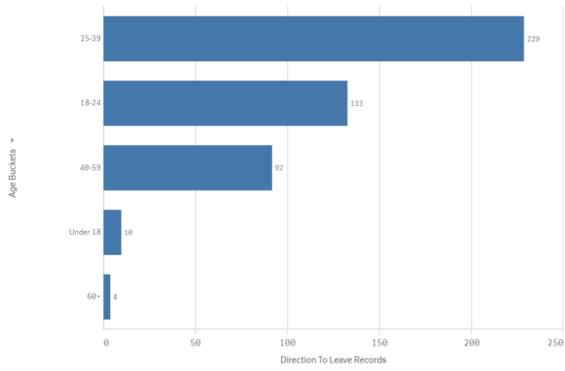


Figure 9 Fixed Penalty data by age 10<sup>th</sup> May 2020 to 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020