



**Police and Crime Plan Priority: Responding To National Threats**

**Title:** CT/SPR/SOC

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**Purpose of paper**

1. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate to the board compliance with the statutory duties placed on the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Constable relating to the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR). It will also provide information and an overview of progress against the Police and Crime Plan priorities in the section "*Playing our part in responding to national threats*".
2. The paper includes updates on:
  - **Countering Terrorism** – the work of Counter Terrorism Policing West Midlands CTU (CTP WMCTU) and West Midlands Police to deliver the national CONTEST counter-terrorism strategy;
  - **Preventing Public Disorder** – the work of West Midlands Police to deliver Public Order Public Safety (POPS) events in 2020, encompassing training in light of COVID-19 and preparedness for events in 2021/2022;
  - **Tackling Serious and Organised Crime** – the work of the Regional Organised Crime Unit for the West Midlands Region (ROCUWM) covering performance, governance, partnership working and the current threat picture.
3. Due to the extent of the update provided, the sections will be clearly demarcated by thematic area.

**Background**

4. This paper provides an update to the last briefing to SPCB on 21 January 2020.

5. The SPR was issued in 2012 in execution of the Home Secretary's statutory duty to set out the national threats and the appropriate national policing capabilities required to counter those threats. While many threats can be tackled by individual police forces within their own force areas, national threats such as terrorism, civil emergencies, serious and organised crime, public order, a national cyber security incident and child sexual abuse/exploitation require a coordinated or aggregated response in which resources are brought together from a number of police forces. Forces often need to work collaboratively, and with other partners, national agencies or national arrangements, to ensure such threats are tackled effectively.
6. The SPR was reviewed in 2015 and is presently undergoing a second review. West Midlands Police ROCU, CTU, and Intelligence departments were consulted on both the national threats and policing response in November 2020. Returns were made nationally via WMP's Strategy and Direction Team.
7. PCCs and Chief Constables are expected to plan and prepare together in support of national arrangements. The policing response that is required nationally to counter these threats, in partnership with other national agencies sets out:
  - The combined national capacity of all police forces to respond to these threats, expressed in terms of the outcomes sought – these are drawn, wherever possible, from publicly available national Government strategies. PCCs and Chief Constables must have regard to this aggregate capacity when considering the respective contributions they will make;
  - The capabilities that police forces, often working collaboratively, need to maintain in order to achieve these outcomes;
  - The requirement for consistency among forces for certain key specialist capabilities where the resources from more than one police force need to be integrated, or work effectively alongside each other. In some instances this requirement for consistency may need to involve other key emergency services and agencies;
  - The connectivity arrangements by which resources from several police forces may effectively be coordinated or mobilised, together and with those of other agencies – such as the Security Service or National Crime Agency (NCA).
  - The combination of consistency and connectivity forms the basis for interoperability between police forces and with other partners.
8. PCCs are required to have regard to this SPR when issuing or varying their police and crime plans. They must keep the police and crime plan under review in light of any changes made to the SPR by the Home Secretary.
9. The PCC and Chief Constable should follow the SPR unless they are satisfied that, in the particular circumstances, there are good reasons not to. They should not depart from it without good reason (and should be prepared to be able to justify any departure from it on a case by case basis).

## Countering Terrorism

### Overview of the threat picture

10. On 3 November 2020, the UK threat level from terrorism was raised to SEVERE which means that a terrorist attack is highly likely.
11. Within the West Midlands force area, the threat from Islamist Terrorism remains the highest risk, despite the reduction in Da'esh capability. CTP WMCTU investigations continue to identify the presence of Islamist ideology within the region. The move to self-initiated, low sophistication methodology has continued to be observed, maintaining risk as the ability by authorities to detect these individuals is reduced. Some of those extremists who travelled overseas remain at large and would pose a significant risk to the region should they return.
12. Right wing terrorism (RWT) continues to be the fastest-growing terrorist threat in the UK. There continues to be a risk from self-initiated attacks using low sophistication methodology motivated by extreme right wing sentiments as evidenced by a number attacks globally seen in the last twelve months. White Supremacist, White Nationalist and Cultural Nationalist sentiments all remain in the force area.
13. Left Wing, Anarchist & Single-Issue Terrorism (LASIT) is an overarching category of terrorism which focuses on a broad range of ideologies including militant animal rights, incel, anti-fascism and anarchism. The threat from these groups within the force area continues to remain low.
14. The threat from Northern Ireland Related Terrorism (NIRT) and India Related Terrorism (IR) within the region continues to be low.
15. National counter-terrorism policing continues to work with the UK Intelligence Community (UKIC) to respond to 'allied matters' including counter espionage, counter intelligence, counter-proliferation and hostile state actors.

### Developments and Performance against the CONTEST Strategy

#### PURSUE

16. Over the past 12 months, CTP WMCTU has conducted a significant number of terrorism investigations and supported a number of successful terrorism prosecutions. Between 1 April 2020 and 5 December 2020, CTP WMCTU carried out 25 arrests which resulted in nine convictions and eight recalls to prison.

17. The investigations and trials in 2020 have been varied and include some notable examples:
18. In February, a 37-year-old convicted terrorist, serving a six year sentence at HMP Dovegate in Staffordshire following his conviction in 2017 for being a member of the banned organisation Da'esh, had his sentence extended after being found guilty of using family members to smuggle memory cards into prison hidden in children's books. His brother was also found guilty of Prison Act offences.
19. In February, a 19-year-old Solihull man was charged with assisting another person to commit, prepare or instigate an act of terrorism and a 49-year-old Solihull man was charged with funding terrorism. Both men are awaiting trial.
20. In February, a 52-year-old Coventry man was charged with five counts of distributing extremist material and one count of possessing terrorist material. As part of the same investigation a 38-year-old man was charged with five firearms offences. Both men are awaiting trial.
21. In March, a 22-year-old Coventry man was handed a 22 month sentence after pleading guilty to possessing explosives and a stun gun at his home address.
22. In May, a Birmingham man, who had previously been referred to and taken part in the Prevent programme, was given a community order after threatening a police officer with a knife in Stechford police station front office. Following a hospital assessment he was released into supported accommodation with a Rehabilitation Activity Requirement of 40 days.
23. In June, three men and a woman were sentenced to between 18 months and five and a half year imprisonment for membership of the banned extreme right-wing neo-Nazi group National Action. Their convictions were the culmination of a two year investigation into right-wing terrorism which had already seen eight other people imprisoned for National Action membership as well as other offences.
24. In August, a 35-year-old Belfast woman was sentenced to 24 years imprisonment following an investigation by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), West Mercia Police and CTP WMCTU. The conviction followed the re-trial of the woman for the attempted murder of a PSNI police officer in 2013.
25. In October, a 28-year-old convicted terrorist living in Birmingham was sentenced to four months imprisonment, suspended for two years, for breaching Terrorism Act conditions which required him to notify CTP WMCTU of any changes to his financial situation, communication devices or travel plans.
26. In October, a 26-year-old man was jailed for three years after being found guilty of four counts of possessing information of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism. The Italian national, an electronics

and telecommunications student, had travelled to Birmingham from Italy and had made a recording pledging allegiance to Da'esh.

27. In November, a 17-year-old Rugby youth was convicted of nine counts of collecting terrorism material and the commission, preparation and instigation of terrorism after he became a member of the online neo-Nazi group Feuerkrieg Division (FKD). He was found in possession of over 90 documents on firearms, explosives and military tactics and online material with an extreme right wing rhetoric. He was sentenced to five and half year's imprisonment.
28. In November, a 38-year-old woman was charged with terrorism offences related to the distribution of extremist material and remains in custody awaiting trial.
29. And, in November, a 65-year-old man was arrested at his home in Belfast in connection with the murders of 21 people in the 1974 pub bombings in Birmingham. He was later released without charge.
30. The specialist CTP WMCTU Nominal Management Team continues to work with the National Probation Service to manage convicted terrorists living within the region. The Team is working with National Counter-Terrorism Policing to learn from recent terrorist atrocities including Fishmongers' Hall (November 2019), Streatham (February 2020) and Reading (June 2020).
31. Work is also ongoing to develop an effective operating model to support *Pathfinder* nominals – these are individuals assessed to be involved in extremist activity whilst in prison for non-terrorism offences. This work is being supported by the CTP WMCTU Regional Prisons Intelligence Unit (RPIU).
32. Finally, In order to ensure the highest standards in evidence gathering, CTP WMCTU has continued to maintain its ISO accreditation for its Digital Forensics recovery and examinations (ISO 17025) and remains on track to receive similar accreditation for physical crime scene examinations (ISO 17020).

## PREVENT

33. CONTEST (2018) sets out that the objectives of PREVENT are to (1) tackle the causes of radicalisation and respond to the ideological challenge of terrorism; (2) safeguard and support those most at risk of radicalisation through early intervention, identifying them and offering support; and (3) enable those who have already engaged in terrorism to disengage and rehabilitate.
34. In 2019, HMICFRS inspected UK policing's contribution to the PREVENT programme. The inspection examined what capability was in place in police forces to support PREVENT; whether there was consistency in the way in which police forces operate with regional counter-terrorism (intelligence) units and other organisations; and whether there was effective sharing of information within policing, with other agencies, and their joint approach to communication with the public about Prevent.

35. Following the inspection, HMICFRS made four national recommendations to which National CT Policing added a further nine recommendations. These thirteen recommendations set out a 'PREVENT Duty minimum standards' for every police force against which each police force can benchmark themselves.
36. The minimum standards include: each force has a Force PREVENT Strategic Lead (FPSL) who has access to continuous professional development; each force develops PREVENT SPOCs; each force has performance measures to assess their operational contributions to PREVENT; each force has a PREVENT training strategy and provides regular CT threat briefings to all staff; each force has appropriate strategic and tactical CONTEST board structures; Counter Terrorism Local Profiles are used to inform partnership delivery plans to drive local PREVENT activity with a focus on the higher risk areas; each area has a local communications and engagement plan.
37. Within West Midlands Police, these PREVENT minimum standards are overseen by the Force CONTEST Board chaired by the Assistant Chief Constable (Security). In 2020 a new Chief Superintendent Force Prevent Strategic Lead was appointed who chairs a Force PREVENT Board. In addition, each Local Authority within the West Midlands has a bespoke PREVENT delivery plan to reduce threat, risk and vulnerability locally.
38. PREVENT referrals in 2020 were much lower, month on month, than in 2019 due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Traditionally the majority of PREVENT referrals outside of policing have come from within education where teachers are alive to changes in behaviour. Now that they are not having that face-to-face contact with students we are seeking alternative ways of reaching out to family and friends to build the trust, confidence and understanding needed to increase referrals.
39. A National Safeguarding website launched in October 2020 supported by the *ACT Early* campaign in November 2020. The website is a 'one-stop' shop for advice about radicalisation and how to report any concerns.
40. The extensive national marketing campaign for *ACT Early* was supported locally by West Midlands Police heavily promoting the website - communication has gone out to CT Advisory Group members, Local Authority leads, Regional NHS and Education lead, local CONTEST Boards, local Channel Panels, PREVENT ambassadors and the Regional PCC Coordinator. Faith groups have shared the website details and it is being mentioned at every partnership meeting. Positive feedback has been received both internally and from partners stating that the website is easy to understand and navigate.
41. To date, over 350 West Midlands non-Counter Terrorism police officers and staff have signed up to be PREVENT Ambassadors. Their role includes cascading key messages to colleagues, partners and communities as well as promoting Prevent messages. They are provided with regular training, support, tactical advice, communications and engagement to raise awareness on key issues.

42. A review of the PREVENT referrals received last year has shown an increase in racist ideologies which have the potential to progress into Extreme Right Wing ideologies amongst some vulnerable people. A table top learning exercise is being developed for 2021 to reflect this Extreme Right Wing increase in referrals.
43. Autism in young people continues to be an increasingly common characteristic within PREVENT referrals. As a result, additional continuous professional development training is being organised in early 2021 for PREVENT staff to help them recognise and support young people with Autism.
44. CT Policing also recognised in 2020 that there was a need to mitigate the risk of reduced multi-agency support as a result of CoVID-19, especially reduced availability and willingness of Intervention Providers to provide physical interventions. Each Local Authority within the West Midlands has a Channel Panels, which provides multi-agency support to those who are at greatest risk of radicalisation. These are now being held virtually to ensure that the appropriate risks are still being assessed and the appropriate support given. Revised Channel guidance has been published and communicated to all Local Authorities.
45. The Regional Vulnerability Support Hub (VSH) continues to provide access to and guidance on mental health services for some of the most vulnerable within our communities who are at risk from radicalisation. A collaborative study, between CTP WMCTU, NHS, and University College London to understand the characteristics, needs and risks of individuals referred to the West Midlands VSH is progressing. The aim of study is create a unique database to understand the characteristics, needs and risks of individuals referred to look for patterns and themes in order to tailor Prevent interventions by 'groups' extracted from the dataset.
46. The specialist CTP WMCTU Safeguarding Team are now responsibility for Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and West Mercia as well as West Midlands safeguarding cases. This includes implementing a national safeguarding approach to the children of Syrian returnees should they return to the West Midlands.
47. In 2021/22 a Regional Community Resilience model is being introduced and 27 Targeted Initiative Fund applications across the region have been supported. Birmingham, Walsall, Sandwell and Coventry will continue to be National priority areas for PREVENT in 2021/2022 and will be able to apply for national funding.
48. A Regional Counter Terrorism Advisory Group (CTAG) is being developed in line with national guidance with an independent chair to give the community a voice in regards influencing CT decisions. The last meeting took place in October 2020 with positive feedback from participants. The next meeting is due to take place in January 2021.

49. Finally, a UK Government commissioned Independent Review of PREVENT has been postponed pending the appointment of new chair. Birmingham City Council are progressing their own review in the meantime, which is planned for early 2021.
50. Discussions concluded regarding the regionalisation process of LA funding/prioritisation. Birmingham, Walsall, Sandwell, Coventry, and Stoke on Trent will be priority areas for 2021/2022 and can apply for funding.

## PROTECT

51. In 2020, public sector agencies have prioritised their responses to the CoVID-19 pandemic and private industry has been severely disrupted. This has resulted in many organisations being unable to engage with CTP WMCTU through site closure, furlough and other impacts.
52. Despite these impacts, national performance statistics indicate that CTP WMCTU PROTECT staff within the region and West Midlands Police have provided a greater level of service continuity to crowded places, national infrastructure and other key sites than has been seen in other UK regions.
53. Despite efforts to innovate in providing CT awareness and training over video-conferencing software, the coronavirus impacts on public and private sector have drastically reduced the volume of products delivered.
54. In addition to normal business, CTP WMCTU has provided significant support to the West Midlands Police's response to CoVID-19.
55. Support to both local policing and regional local authorities continues to be provided to create and augment local authority PROTECT & PREPARE governance structures.

## PREPARE

56. CTP WMCTU continues to support the National Plans Review and Assurance Schedule (NPRAS) which seeks to review, train, test and exercise every CT major incident plan. The aim is to ensure that West Midlands Police, CTP WMCTU and the regional Blue Light are better prepared to jointly respond to any type of terrorist incident within the force area following the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Protocols (JESIP). To date, 9 out of 18 local plans have been reviewed and updated with a further three undergoing national review.
57. Exercising specific to Coventry City of Culture 2021 events has been delivered to multiagency partners in 2020, improving preparedness.
58. Collaborative work is ongoing to plan multiagency exercising for 2021, including a national military exercise, regional mass casualty exercise and Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games exercising.

59. The Manchester Arena Inquiry continues, with testing and exercising, organisational learning and preparedness being key themes. *Martyn's Law* and proposals for new '*Protect Duty*' legislation in 2021 will significantly affect public and private sector responsibilities in terms of PROTECT & PREPARE.

#### Borders

60. During the CoVID-19 pandemic, criminal attempts to exploit the borders have been disproportionately high. Despite passenger traffic dropping to approximately 10% of last year's numbers, travel document fraud offences remain at 75% of last year's figures. CTP WMCTU officers are still making arrests for criminal matters of passengers trying to enter the country.
61. CTP WMCTU maintains a focus on trying to stop the financing of terrorist activity and have continued to seize sizeable quantities of cash from passengers under POCA at Birmingham Airport. Closer integration with the Financial Investigators will see them working alongside Borders officers at the airport to a greater extent in the future.
62. HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) have commenced work on an Inland border Facility (IBF) at Birmingham Airport. The intention is to use the site to provide customs and transit checking activities required for hauliers from 1 January 2021 as a result of EU Exit.

#### *BREXIT and Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games*

63. Throughout 2020 CTP WMCTU continued to work closely with partners to ensure the Region was prepared for all outcome scenarios and were in the best position possible come the end of the transition period and beyond. CTP WMCTU will continue to liaise with the CT Policing network to identify and respond to any threats or emerging issues.
64. CTP WMCTU are working closely with Operation UNITY, the West Midlands Police response to Birmingham 2022, and supported by the wider CT Policing network, will play an integral role in ensuring the Games are safe and secure.

#### *Regional Collaboration (Project AMPLIFY)*

65. Project AMPLIFY was set up in 2019 to develop a collaboration between Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Mercia and West Midlands police forces for the delivery of Counter Terrorism services. The project was split into two distinct phases.

66. Project AMPLIFY 1 (October 2019 to April 2020) was designed to bring together all regional Special Branches to create a robust baseline for reviewing and transforming CT services across the region
67. Project AMPLIFY 2 (April 2020 to March 2021) is designed to implement a Target Operating Model to provide a single integrated, regional CT service
68. In April 2020 Project AMPLIFY 1 successfully delivered the first phase of the collaboration of counter-terrorism services for Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Mercia, and West Midlands police forces. Underpinned by a formal collaboration agreement all CT resources within the West Midlands region are under the direction and control of the Head of CTP WMCTU and West Midlands CTU was rebranded CTP WMCTU in line with the National CT Policing network.
69. Throughout the year, Project AMPLIFY 2 has completed a review of CT services, identifying where change is required in order to deliver a single, integrated CT service to protect the communities within our region. These changes will be implemented in readiness for April 2021 when a new formal collaboration agreement will be signed, providing the platform for full collaboration of CT services for future years.

#### *CTP Next Generation*

70. The *CTP Next Generation* programme is the next evolutionary leap for the national CT Policing network and the strategic reinvestment needed to effectively respond to current and future terrorist threats. It is an eight month programme, over two phases, running from May 2020 to December 2020.
71. Phase 1 was to set out a series of detailed strategies to complement the existing Counter Terrorism & National Security Policing Strategy and, from them, design a future blueprint for how the network will operate.
72. Phase 2 was to turn the strategy and future blueprint into a reality by identifying where the network will need to invest and change at a capability level. This was known as the Strategic Efficiencies & Reinvestment Review (SERR)
73. The SE&RR will now conclude at the end of January, when any significant change requirements will begin to be implemented.

#### *CoVID-19 and Counter Terrorism*

74. Throughout the pandemic, CTP WMCTU has maintained full capability and service delivery across all of its functions. All CTP WMCTU premises are 'CoVID Secure' and there has been compliance with all force guidance.

75. The ongoing safety of CT officers and staff has been paramount and the work to make our workplaces as safe as possible has allowed the CTP WMCTU to continue to keep people safe from terrorism.

## **Public Order Public Safety (POPS)**

### Capability

76. West Midlands Police has worked hard to maintain POPS resilience against the threat of CoVID-19. POPS training was halted in March 2020, re-starting in September 2020. NPCC authority was provided to extend training qualifications for a period of six months. To recover from this, the Midlands Regional Tactical Training Centre (MRTTC) worked with the College of Policing to revise POPS training. This resulted in a reduction of contact time with officers during attendance at MRTTC but continuing to meet the national standards. The amount of officers trained to the national standards has actually increased slightly from the turn of the year as a result.

### Deployments

77. The Black Lives Matter protests over the summer period caused significant demand for West Midlands Police. Feedback on the policing of these events during a recent HMICFRS inspection was positive. The style/tone adopted by commanders ensured community cohesion and public health were kept at the forefront, enabling the force to maintain good relationships with the community.

### Forthcoming events

78. Football is not expected to return in any significant capacity for POPS policing for several months.
79. Anti-government protests are likely to continue whilst the tier system is in place. To date, West Midlands Police have been able to police all these events without requiring any additional support from the region and intelligence monitoring would suggest that this will remain the case in the foreseeable future.
80. West Midlands Police are likely to see mutual aid requests to support other forces as a result of Brexit.
81. Significant events in the UK in 2021 include the G7 and COP26, however the full extent of support required from WMP is not yet confirmed.

### Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games

82. CT Security Coordinators (SecCO) have assessed that the overall threat assessment for the games in relation to protest/public order is currently LOW. A

cross-partner intelligence group has been established, which will assess the threat from protest and horizon scanning locally, nationally and internationally.

83. A working group involving various internal and external stakeholders specifically for protest/public order has formed and is due to commence in February 2021 and a dedicated public order tactical advisor and public order planner will be in role in January 2022 to support the operation.
84. There is no current intelligence regarding public order concerns, but WMP have already budgeted for a public reserve (including intelligence officers, evidence gatherers etc) throughout the operation and covering all operational hours.

## Tackling Serious and Organised Crime

### Effective performance, management and accountability

85. National ROCU performance is measured through activity that results in the disruption of Serious and Organised Crime (SOC). This refers to activity undertaken by a ROCU that has an impact on an Organised Crime Group (OCG) or individual's capability to offend, or where a threat or vulnerability is diminished, for a period of time. ROCUs therefore seek to understand the impact the organisations activity has had either in a lead capacity or in a supportive capacity to another agency.
86. The Regional Organised Crime Unit for the West Midlands Region (ROCUWM) have led on 691 SOC disruptions and supported forces/other law enforcement agencies (LEA) with a further 451 SOC disruptions over the last 12 months. Overall ROCUWM have increased their lead activity compared to the 12 months prior (▲43%).
87. There has been a small decrease in support disruptions compared to the previous twelve months (▼36%). This reduction is attributed to change in process of recording activity for supportive ROCUWM capabilities and does not represent an overall reduction in activity undertaken by ROCUWM in support of other agencies.
88. Activity and outcomes from ROCUWM (both lead and support) over the last 12 months is as follows:

Activity / Outcome	Dec 2018 to Nov 2019	Dec 2019 to Nov 2020
Prepare	20	12
Prevent	261	133
Protect	180	181
Pursue	726	815
Arrested	765	560
Charged	336	209
Convicted	211	174
Years Sentenced	1504	816

Firearms	41	44
Ammunition Rounds	403	1070
Cocaine (KG)	101.76	626.81
Heroin (KG)	10.68	7.22
Other Class A (KG)	13.31	113.81
Other Class B (KG)	10.72	20.09
Safeguarding Persons	371	137

89. ROCUWM have continued to respond to the highest threat, risk and harm posed within the West Midlands region through complex management and prioritisation of threat during the pandemic and Operation VENETIC (the UKs biggest ever law enforcement operation - made public in July). Compared to the previous year, ROCUWM have recovered over 500kg more Cocaine demonstrating a significant increase; an increase also seen across almost all SOC commodity seizures.
90. Prepare and Prevent outcomes have reduced during the last year. Following the HMIC Inspection in March 2020, all four strategy areas will have dedicated resource oversight to support ROCUWM delivery in these areas.
91. Drugs remain the crime type with the most ROCU led disruptions, reflecting the criminality uncovered through Operation VENETIC. ROCUWM have also increased activity tackling the drugs threat from 'County Lines' when compared to 2019 due to creation of the County Lines Task Force in 2020.
92. ROCUWMs second and third most disrupted threats are Online Child Sexual Abuse and Cyber Ransomware attacks. Despite 2020 presenting a challenge to all law enforcement agencies, ROCUWM continued to disrupt all threats outlined in the Regional Control Strategy.
93. The Regional ROCU Executive Board make sure the ROCU is held to account for delivering an efficient and effective response to SOC in line with the control strategy. The highlights and key themes from the performance document are then presented to the regional Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners on a quarterly basis.

*Working with National Crime Agency (NCA) and Regional Forces*

94. The National Crime Agency embed staff within each ROCU and share a close working relationship. ROCUWM also works closely with the NCAs Regional Organised Crime Co-ordinator (ROCC) to support our operational efficiency and effectiveness. Furthermore, the National Crime Agency are a partner in the monthly Regional Tactical Tasking & Co-ordination (RTTCG) meeting. ROCUWM is able to access National Crime Agency resources when necessary to support the challenges in tackling SOC. In November 2020, the West Midlands region went live with the national Serious and Organised Crime System Tasking (SST). This is a critical, multi-agency project with the aim of establishing a single, whole-system approach to fighting Serious and Organised Crime.

95. The National Crime Agency are also a partner in the Strategic Governance Groups which are aligned to Commodities, Vulnerabilities and Prosperity priorities. These groups produce, own and implement strategic action plans through de-confliction and rationalisation of national plans, whilst being cognisant of local priorities. In 2021, the Strategic Governance Groups structure, frequency and accountability will be developed by a national project led by the Network Operations Capability (NOC).

#### Operation VENETIC

96. In spring 2020, UK law enforcement made a massive breakthrough in the fight against serious and organised crime after the takedown of EncroChat, a bespoke encrypted global communications network service used exclusively by criminals.
97. For ROCUWM, this resulted in the identification of 357 handles (a handle is unique identifier for a user or username) in the region, of which some have been attributed within the West Midlands Police force area. These handles will provide further investigative opportunities and will be assigned to a Senior Investigation Officer. 13 were considered suitable for allocation/adoption by other Law Enforcement Agencies outside of the West Midlands region, 41 were not suitable for further investigation, and 15 have Internet Protocol (IP) data and may only be reviewed for attribution only.
98. The table below shows the number of people arrested and charged, amount of drugs and firearms seized. In total, nearly £7m cash has been seized as part of Operation VENETIC. A proportion of this money may be available to reinvest in future ROCU policing capabilities.

Values	ROCUWM Lead	ROCUWM Support	Venetic Total
Disruption Events	56	8	<b>64</b>
Arrested	72	9	<b>81</b>
Charged	15	3	<b>18</b>
Years Sentenced	2	16	<b>18</b>
Safeguarded Adults	0	1	<b>1</b>
Cocaine (KG)	418.5	140	<b>558.5</b>
Cannabis (KG)	22		<b>22</b>
Cannabis Plants	184		<b>184</b>
Firearms	6	1	<b>7</b>
Ammunition	99	5	<b>104</b>

#### County Lines Task Force

99. In April 2020, West Midlands Police were allocated £1.3million from the Home Office to establish a County Lines Task Force, targeting the highest harm lines across the region and becoming a centre of excellence for the regions approach to tackling county lines.

100. The approach of tandem disruption of the consumer market place and proactive enforcement of line holders has resulted in over 360 people arrested across the region to date, in excess of 59 young people safeguarded, and over 90 county lines closed.
101. In addition to pursue activity, which now surpasses the home office target for end of financial year performance, a tandem funded project offering support to young people involved in county lines has identified the region as a centre of excellence.
102. Having received the most referrals to its service, this demonstrates a holistic approach by both law enforcement and partners towards supporting vulnerable individuals being exploited by organised criminality.

#### Other ROCUWM Capabilities

#### **Serious Organised Crime Unit (SOCU)**

103. The current caseload is 54 Investigations (as compared to 31 Investigations in the same period last year) of which:
  - 15 are in the pro-active phase with covert assets and tactics deployed.
  - 22 are in the pre-charge and/or overt phase with investigations ongoing without covert tactics deployed. Of significance, there are 3 cases which have a combined estimated total of 75 further arrests to be made over the next quarter. Activity has been prioritised to service Operation VENETIC demand. Plans are being developed to make further progress on cases which were pre-VENETIC now as demands begin to reduce for covert activity for VENETIC cases, including for financial support for temporary additional investigative support if it can be sourced.
  - 17 are in the post-charge/Criminal Justice stage, either prepared for and awaiting trial or with ongoing investigation, in response to Crown Prosecution Service Action Plans. One of our most significant and complex case involves a number of defendants. In January 2021 several related trials are starting and will be supported with dedicated resource.
  - 17 investigation are as a direct consequence of, or have intelligence or evidence linked to, one or more Operation VENETIC packages.

#### **Regional Economic Crime Unit (RECU)**

104. Within the RECU the Financial Investigation Team have 79 investigations, the Regional Fraud Disruption Teams have 18 cases and the Asset Confiscation Team have 110 live cases.
105. A significant case is currently being prepared for trial and will be scheduled in 2021.

#### **Regional Cyber Crime Unit (RCCU)**

106. The Regional Cyber Crime Unit (RCCU) and the Regional Dark Web Operations Team (RDOT) have supported regional forces with 19 investigations throughout 2020 of which 11 were for West Midlands Police including digital forensic and cryptocurrency advice. Some of these investigations have international links to organised crime.
107. The RDOT investigations during the year resulted in a seizure of 40kg of controlled substances and around 1 million pharmaceutical tablets.
108. An RCCU investigation also resulted in the recovery of over 100,000 compromised credentials which have been shared with partner agencies.
109. RCCU staff are now trained to give digital forensic support for computers and mobile devices following work with West Midlands Police Digital Forensic Unit in accordance with ISO accreditation.

### **Technical Intelligence Development Unit (TIDU)**

110. The West Midlands Technical Intelligence Development Unit (WM TIDU) continue to be a market leader in relation to the development and deployment of Targeted Equipment Interference (TEI) capability across West Midlands Police.
111. The unit has supported on average 3.5 West Midlands Police led investigations per week throughout 2020. These range from deployment under Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 to intrusive deployment under the Investigatory Powers Act 2016 in support of sex offender management, child sexual exploitation, acquisitive crime and wider organised criminality.

### **Surveillance**

112. The ROCUWM has a number of dedicated mobile, static and technical support surveillance teams located across the West Midlands Region. The teams provide surveillance support in response to pre-planned or dynamic tasking requests from within the ROCU WM or partner agencies.
113. In November 2020 the Investigatory Powers Commissioner's Office (IPCO) inspected West Midlands Police for its surveillance capability and undertook a review of the Covert Authorities Bureau (CAB). The initial findings highlight that standards were high, especially in light of the volume and risk of work undertaken.
114. In 2020 the unit has experienced capacity issues with reduced staffing levels and a need to carry out monthly training due to new national requirements. With support from the Diversity and Inclusion team, the unit reviewed its recruitment process. Several changes were made, such as introducing a buddying scheme for prospective candidates. These improvements resulted in an increase in both applications and recruitment of underrepresented groups and BAME officers.

### **Communications Data Investigation Unit (CDIU)**

115. The Communications Data Investigation Unit (CDIU) is the single point of contact (SPoC) between West Midlands Police and the communications industry. The SPoC promotes efficiency and good practice in ensuring only practical and lawful requirements for communications data are undertaken.
116. To date in 2020 the CDIU have lawfully acquired approximately 50,000 items of communications data, under both crime and emergency provisions, for a range of investigations. The unit provides a guaranteed 24/7 response for urgent incidents such as those where there is an immediate life at risk and/or crimes in action. In 2020 the CDIU has worked closely with a range of units across West Midlands Police, ROCUWM and CTP WMCTU to support a number of live deployments in order to effect arrests.
117. External inspection is provided by the IPCO whose remit is to provide an independent oversight of the exercise and performance of the powers and duties contained under the Investigatory Powers Act 2016.
118. The West Midlands CDIU was inspected by IPCO in October 2020 and was assessed to demonstrate a good level of compliance with the Act and the Codes of Practice by acquiring Communications Data lawfully and for correct statutory purposes. Furthermore, the CDIU was found to be performing its roles of guardian and gatekeeper effectively and providing sound advice to authorising officers, designated senior officers and applicants.
119. In 2021 the unit is set to increase by a further 6 staff members to enable more comprehensive 24/7 provision servicing both urgent and routine incidents.

### **Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN)**

120. The Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN) which is a further ROCU capability, coordinates information and activity and across partners such as Trading Standards, Immigration, Border Force and HMRC.
121. A recent review of GAIN was published in December 2020 and acknowledges that improvements can be made around governance, performance and partner membership. Encouraging, however, since its inception in 2012 the number of referrals continue to rise, with police forces making up the majority of these.
122. During the last quarter, the West Midlands GAIN has supported dual investigations linked to SOC between the Federation Against Copyright Theft and the Insurance Fraud Bureau.
123. The newly formed Joint Unit Waste Crime Unit, led by the Environment Agency has used the GAIN coordinators to facilitate operational planning meetings on OCGs.

### **Future Funding**

124. The ROCUWM budget for 2020/2021 is set at £30.4m with £6.5m funded through Home Office grants and £23.9m funded directly by the regional Police Crime Commissioners (PCCs) through an agreed formula.
125. The ROCUWM is forecasted to be significantly under budget in 2020/21 due to vacancies carried across various ROCUWM functions throughout the year.
126. Operation VENETIC has been a significant challenge for ROCUWM during 2020/2021. Not only has this impacted on delivery across the ROCUWM, but also has led to a significant increase in overtime costs across all functions.
127. This has been countered by significant cash seizures based on Operation VENETIC activity. A proportion of this may be reinvested within ROCUWM to develop capabilities in 2021/2022.
128. Current planned reductions in cyber-crime and cyber-protect Home Office grant funding in 2021/22 will diminish the ROCUWM cyber capabilities. It is hoped that funding from Operation VENETIC will be made available for 2021/2022 to avoid a reduction in capability.
129. Following the Spending Review it was announced that ROCUWM would see an uplift in police officers in 2021/22 as part of the Police Uplift Programme. Further confirmation as to the numbers and/or specific roles is pending.
130. At the time of this report ROCUWM is still awaiting confirmation of Home Office grant funding for other roles.

#### *Emerging Serious and Organised Crime threats*

131. The travel downturn and reduction in passenger numbers across different modes, due to continual changes in the UK's quarantine exemptions, list may lead to more commodities being transported via "Roll On Roll Off" or RoRo freight rather than flights from near Europe. This could impact on the region as the M6, UK's longest motorway, traverses it.
132. Due to EU Exit, as of 1 January 2021 new rules at the Borders have been introduced. The ongoing impact may be increased queues at passport controls and a points based immigration system for EU citizens. This may increase demand for Organised Immigration Crime and Human Trafficking OCGs, and for fraudulent documentation.
133. The lockdown measures from the UK Government to stop the spread of CoVID-19 has had various impacts on SOC offending. Lockdowns increase the threat of child sexual abuse and exploitation, cybercrime and fraud.

134. During the main lockdown in spring 2020, drugs prices increased as supply routes were impacted. Some drugs commodities were more resilient than others and cocaine and cannabis were less impacted by lockdowns and the travel downturn compared to the heroin markets. OCGs responded by stockpiling drugs. The long lockdown has appeared to decrease the effect of modern slavery and human trafficking (although is a temporary effect given the longer global travel downturn) and most firearms offences.
135. With the potential of numerous CoVID-19 vaccines being distributed into and around the UK soon, the risk of fraud, counterfeits and acquisitive crime increases.

### **Next Steps**

136. The board is asked to note the contents of this report.

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