



## STRATEGIC POLICING AND CRIME BOARD

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2021

Report: Reducing Violence

### Police and Crime Plan Priority: Reducing Violence

Presented by: ACC Richard Baker

#### 1. Purpose of Paper

This is a Violence Reduction Unit (VRU) and WMP companion paper. The purpose of this report is to provide the Strategic Police and Crime Board with an update on:

- The performance of West Midlands Police in relation to serious youth violence.
- How West Midlands Police, the Violence Reduction Unit and the OPCC are working together to prevent and reduce serious youth violence.
- How West Midlands Police and the Violence Reduction Unit are working with the education sector (as per the Police and Crime plan).
- From partners the difference that the Violence Reduction Unit is making to their violence reduction activity.

#### Background and Context

2. Serious Youth Violence (the focus nationally is worded under 25 Violence with Injury) is a wide-ranging challenge which affects individuals, families and communities. It comes in multiple forms, takes place within different contexts and situations and cuts across culture, race and socio-economic status.

3. The UK Government and West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner have both set Youth Violence as a priority. A number of police forces (including WMP) have received Home Office Serious Youth Violence Funding to specifically target under 25 violence with injury and knife crime. These funds are channelled in two main streams; into the Violence Reduction Unit and to fund additional policing activity.
  
4. The Home Office monitor three primary metrics under this fund: -
  - A reduction in hospital admissions for assaults with a knife or sharp object and especially among those victims aged under 25
  - A reduction in knife-enabled serious violence and especially among those victims aged under 25
  - A reduction in all non-domestic homicides and especially among those victims aged under 25 involving knives
  
5. The Government's focus on under 25 violence with injury includes a wide range of offending. These includes wide range of offending such as school linked offences, robbery, serious and organised crime, urban street gangs, night time economy, county lines exploitation, violence against women and girls and firearms enabled crime. This is a multi-dimensional and complex problem. The drivers of youth violence have been subject to a number of studies including the recent Crests review of Violence and Vulnerability (February 2021) and the Youth Violence Commission Final Report (July 2020), which found out that the factors driving violence are: -
  - Trauma and normalised behaviours
  - Exclusion from education and lack of skills
  - Child poverty and inequality
  - Lack of youth services and investment in early years
  - Poor local infrastructure
  - Unsafe/crowded/unaffordable housing
  - Lack of employment opportunities/well paid employment
  - Poor/absent parenting and neglect

Criminal exploitation will target those subjected to these circumstances.

In considering these drivers it presents an acute challenge to the West Midlands region. The WMP region is complex in terms of diversity and vulnerability – factors that are key drivers in recent patterns of violence. Drivers of violence:

- Deprivation – 1<sup>st</sup> out of 39 police forces (Deprivation is defined differently in Wales)
- Unemployment – 2<sup>nd</sup> out of 42
- Low educational attainment – 1<sup>st</sup> out of 42 Police forces
- Homelessness – 1<sup>st</sup> out of 42 Police forces
- Proportion of young people – 1<sup>st</sup> out of 42 Police forces
- Diversity – 2<sup>nd</sup> out of 42 Police forces

In recent years the proportion of children at risk and in care has grown alongside high rates of school exclusions.

6. Within the West Midlands region, manifesting as the highest rate of violence with injury in England and Wales – 11.2 reports/1000 population and the third highest rate of knife crime – 108 reports/1000 population. Nationally there is a shift to younger offenders & victims.
7. In addition to these challenges, societal issues around deprivation are anticipated to be exacerbated by Covid where it is predicted the region will be hard hit due to young population, economic reliance on hospitality and retail and areas of significant deprivation.
8. We see acute hotspots in city/town centres followed by areas impacted most by deprivation and crime – inner city Birmingham, North and Central Coventry, Smethwick and parts of Wolverhampton and Walsall. Analysis indicates a greater proportion of our offenders and victims for violence come from areas of deprivation.

### **Crime Data Integrity**

9. The majority of offending is at the less severe scale with section 47 assaults and harassment related offences. A review of Crime Data Integrity has seen crime recording practices improve and the number of crimes recorded increase. In November 2020 a Log Quality Team was established and in early 2021 WMP adopted CONNECT – new crime recording software.

10. This saw an increase in offences recorded - for instance, where a caller reports seeing a male with a knife but the male is never located and no knife is recovered, a knife crime is now recorded.
11. CONNECT software improves recording when knives were involved with 'knife used' rising by almost 800 offences against 2019/2020 baselines (assessed as partly driven by this recording software).
12. It is a challenge to quantify the exact impact of Crime Data Integrity and new software, but informed analytical assessments believe this has led to approximate increases of 4% in recorded crime. Practical examples of where more crimes are recorded include reports from members of the public on incidents that we find no trace of on arrival (- e.g. a person with a knife - these may now be crimed from initial report). 'Spiking' offence reports have seen an increase due to heightened awareness. 'Spiking' offences made up 11% (95 offences) of under 25 Violence with Injury in November. Only 7% (11) of them resulted in a positive drugs test (albeit there may be factors such as alcohol spiking that would not necessarily indicate), these offences are recorded far more frequently without supporting evidence or information and there will undoubtedly be cases where over consumption play a part or a desire to not admit to taking illegal substances.
13. Under no-criming rules, Additional Verifiable Information is required to negate the fact a crime occurred. Requests of this nature are often rejected due to the level of assurance required to negate a crime, which needs to be new information and capable of being verified to a standard that is often unachievable, despite significant assurance a crime has not taken place. Examples have included single individuals making numerous repeat allegations that have clearly not occurred, yet police have to record under criming rules.

### **Strategic Focus and WMP Violence**

14. The force ambition is to implement a Violence Prevention Strategy which reflects the complexity surrounding the drivers of violence whilst also demonstrating our commitment to tackle them, with the community and partners, over the longer term. The creation of this strategy will commence following the publication of the Force Strategic Assessment and the Force has recently agreed an Interim Violence Strategy.

## Interim Violence Strategy

15. WMP is committed to strong enforcement against violent crime, however enforcement on its own is not the sole answer. Violence is a multi-faceted challenge and requires not simply a statutory response but also the full commitment of the wider community. We have to try to prevent it happening in the first place as well as to mitigate its effects for those on the receiving end of negative impacts. This requires early intervention using available evidence, insight and data to ensure we have the best possible impact on reducing violent crime and its consequences. Activities associated with these principles cannot be undertaken in isolation. Collaboration with various partner agencies is essential to deliver necessary actions – a whole system approach. The strategy's Key Principles are: -

- **Building strong foundations** - Scope the issues relating to violent crime by gathering data and intelligence, engaging with our communities, analysing the evidence, and implementing a public health approach.
- **Primary prevention** - To prevent individuals becoming involved in violence by advocating for early years support and seeking to maximise early help offering. Recognising when intervention is needed at an early stage and putting appropriate support in place at a population level.
- **Secondary prevention** - To lessen the harm and reduce risk from, and to those already involved in violence by recognising those who are vulnerable to exploitation and intervening to prevent further harm. Encouraging a culture of professional curiosity and training staff about contextual safeguarding and trauma informed practice.
- **Tertiary prevention**- To lessen the harm and reduce risk by supporting those who have been harmed and intervene to support them to cope, recover and rebuild their lives.
- **Enforcement and criminal justice**- Work in cross-cutting ways, developing innovative practice to ensure our young and vulnerable people are not unnecessarily criminalised using alternative methods of justice. We will deliver effective enforcement across the region and maximise the safety of individuals vulnerable to exploitation.
- **Attitudinal change using effective communication** - Work with communities and organisations to challenge the narrative of violence and empower people to be safe in our region.

16. The following strands will be a core focus in developing our delivery plans and corresponding activities across all violence focused areas (under 25, Violence Against Women and Girls, Serious Organising Crime, Night Time Economy).

- Involve youth, people, and community voice
- Understanding the problem
- Improve investigation of violent offences
- Increase provision and use of Out of Court Disposal and Restorative Justice
- Raise awareness of risks of specific crime categories e.g. knife crime
- Develop WMP workforce
- Drive effective use of police and partner operational interventions to suppress violence
- Build closer connection between Violence Reduction Unit and WMP and partners
- Develop Offender Management/Early Intervention principles

17. Under the Interim Violence Strategy, a strategic violence board is chaired by Assistance Chief Constable Richard Baker (Local Policing) bringing together key WMP stakeholders with the Violence Reduction Unit. This has a specific focus on targeting under 25 violence, knife and gun crime.

The strategic objectives of the Violence Board are as follows:

- To prevent young people becoming involved in violence (Primary Prevention)
- To lessen the harm and reduce the future risk from, and to those already involved in violence (Secondary and Tertiary Prevention)
- To lessen the harm and reduce the risk of future violence generated from or taking place within identified geographical locations and premises accessed by the general public and young people

18. Membership of the Violence Board includes the Violence Reduction Unit, Serious and Organised Crime lead, Head of Intelligence, Guardian, Night Time Economy Lead, Local Policing and Investigations.

19. The prevention and reduction of Serious Youth Violence is a priority for West Midlands Police. The Force has dedicated two senior leaders, Chief Superintendent Andy

Parsons and Superintendent Gareth Morris, who are responsible for the coordination of the wide-ranging under 25 violence force response under Operation Guardian.

20. Within this response WMP has a dedicated operational resource, the Guardian Task Force, a team of 22 officers with enhanced training around behavioural tactics to support focused operational activity in hotspot areas. The taskforce brings a structure with them to deployments to promote enhanced local engagement to set objectives with the community around violence and apply scrutiny to stop and search and police tactics.

### **Police and Crime Plan 2021**

21. Following its publication in October, WMP have reviewed our Interim Strategy and Guardian delivery plan against the Police and Crime Plan. The Delivery Plan for Guardian has been updated with references to the specific aims within the Police and Crime plan. It is assessed that the force strategy and delivery plan support the objectives of the Police and Crime Plan 2021.

### **Violence as a Tactical Priority**

22. Under 25 violence is a tactical priority for West Midlands Police (WMP) and is reviewed monthly at the Force Tactical Delivery Board where decisions are made on where to invest the Guardian Taskforce and other force resources. Force Tactical Delivery Board is informed by a dedicated under 25 violence Performance Meeting chaired by Chief Supt Parsons. This monthly meeting reviews tactical patrol plans, problem solving activity, investigative focus and outcomes.
23. Supported by the Violence Reduction Unit's Strategic Needs Assessment, every force hotspot has been provided with a bespoke violence profile. These profiles overlay socio economic, education and health data with policing intelligence and crime patterns. They provide a comprehensive assessment of crime patterns, overlaid with Organised Criminal Gangs, County Lines and offender/victim profiles.
24. These profiles are used to inform Neighbourhood Policing Unit Violence Reduction Plans. These take a place-based approach with partners through Community Safety Partnership structures to deploy targeted hotspot patrols and problem-solving activity.

25. Where Organised Crime Groups and recurrent groups of offenders drive more serious youth violence, a tiered approach is in place to manage offenders and those at risk. A scaled version is being rolled out to other parts of the force and higher analysts are considering a system of measures to determine success and progress with each cohort. The two indicative models shown below are overseen by trained senior detectives – trained in Professional Investigative Practice (PIP) (Levels 1-4).

PIP 4 Model for High Threat

Scaled Example  
(Overseen by PIP2/3)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Tier 1 — ROCU</li> <li>❖ Tier 2 – FPVT – Reactive and Proactive intervention to maximise Criminal Justice (CJ) outcomes.</li> <li>❖ Tier 3 – Gangs team – Targeted Offender Management (OM) and Proactive activity.</li> <li>❖ Tier 4 – Neighbourhood – Intelligence gathering / Disruptions / Patrol</li> <li>❖ Tier 5 – External agency/Partnerships led activity – Intervention Education / Early Help arena. Young Persons Officers (YPOs)/SLOs</li> <li>❖ Tier 6 – Within the prison system – OM &amp; OPT</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Tier 1– Reactive and Proactive intervention to maximise CJ outcomes. Key risk nominals targeted by identified CID investigators</li> <li>❖ Tier 2 – Neighbourhood Task Force/LOMU– Targeted Offender Management and Proactive activity.</li> <li>❖ Tier 3 – Neighbourhood – Intelligence gathering / Disruptions / Patrol</li> <li>❖ Tier 4 – External agency/Partnerships led activity – Intervention Education / Early Help arena. YPOs/SLOs</li> <li>❖ Tier 5 – Within the prison system – OM &amp; OPT</li> </ul> |
|---|--|

26. Within Neighbourhood Policing Unit Partnership Teams, Schools Liaison Officers and Young Persons Officers focus support on those identified for early help and key schools identified through local profiles. These approaches have seen success in Coventry and Birmingham. In Coventry 23 gang injunctions were obtained.

**Preparing for the Serious Violence Duty**

27. The force has an identified point of contact for implementation of the Serious Violence Duty - Chief Superintendent Andy Parsons. Working with Neighbourhood Policing Unit Commanders, relevant departmental heads and colleagues in the Violence Reduction



Unit, readiness for duty responsibilities within the force will be overseen through the Strategic Violence Board.

28. In its current form, the force is well placed for the duty becoming law and will be seeking to influence the inclusion of social determinant health performance measures within each local authority area plan, supporting the Violence Reduction Unit's aims around a public health approach.
29. In preparation of the Serious Violence Duty being made law, WMP and the Violence Reduction Unit are planning to work together to brief Members of Parliament and Councillors around the duty and to highlight the social determinants of health that exacerbate and drive violence in hotspot areas.

### **Violence Reduction Unit Integration into Tasking and Governance**

30. WMP are committed to support the Violence Reduction Unit as a key partner. WMP invest a Chief Inspector and two Inspectors into the Violence Reduction Unit to support programme delivery and integration. The effective partnership between WMP and Violence Reduction Unit is critical to addressing serious youth violence in the short, medium and long term, not just from the perspective of what we do but how we do it. The Violence Reduction Unit are represented at daily Local and Force Threat Risk Meetings, Local Tasking Delivery Boards and are a key member of Strategic Violence board and Local Policing Governance board.
31. Attendance at Force Threat Risk Meetings each day enables opportunities to support those involved in incidents of violence and vulnerability to be identified by the Violence Reduction Unit directly without the need for referral. Possible interventions are discussed with WMP colleagues before they are initiated by Violence Reduction Unit colleagues, significantly reducing delays between the need for support being recognised and sought. This presence has also aided the development of relationships between WMP and Violence Reduction Unit staff, encouraging collaboration between both outside of formal meeting structures.

### **Adopting the Public Health Approach**

32. Planning for the future, in July 2021 West Midlands Police organised a Public Health Conference, in partnership with the Violence Reduction Unit. The aims were

- To forge a West Midlands commitment to adopting a Public Health Approach to violent crime
- To recognise the link between our most deprived areas yielding those more likely to be involved in under 25 violence
- To bring together key stakeholders to consider the root causes and drive multi agency activity, job creation, skills development and infrastructure within key localities and populations to address violence
- To share ideas and good practice
- To forge a network across the region to monitor, track and support progress

33. Each local authority was represented alongside WMP Neighbourhood Policing Unit Commanders. A Public Health approach to violence self-assessment tool was created by one of the Public Health England consultants. This was shared with all regional local authorities to enable them to benchmark and to provide a structure to inform local violence reduction plans and approaches to contextual safeguarding were shared. The Violence Reduction Unit have since brought representatives from regional local authorities back together and there is a further seminar in January 2022 to share current progress and understand readiness for introduction of the Serious Violence Duty.

34. WMP are reviewing internal practices alongside the Violence Reduction Unit's trauma informed programme and public health principles.

#### **Under 25 Violence with Injury Performance Overview**

35. 2019-2020 is being adopted as a comparator year to avoid contrasts with period of lockdown.

36. Latest data against 2019/2020 shows;

- 16% reduction in under 25 hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object (80 vs 90 cases)
- 8.4% increase in under 25 Violence with injury where knife used (361 vs 333 cases)
- 55.6% reduction in under 25 Homicide (4 vs 9 cases)
- 25% reduction in under 25 Homicide involving knives (3 vs 4 cases)

37. Comparing 2019-2020 and this year we have seen changes in the Homicide profile. In 2019/2020 56% of offenders and 33% of victims were under 25. This year 53% offenders are under 25 with 25% of victims. 14.6% of all age homicides occurred within an Impact area. There has been a 15.5% increase in all under 25 Violence with Injury and a 6% increase in under 25 Violence with Injury Knife Crime Year till Date (April – November 2021) compared to 2019. Aoristic analysis of 2021 data showed a similar pattern to 2019, increasing from 15:00hrs to 21:00hrs, with a spike at 18:00hrs and 21:00hrs. Peak days were Friday and Saturday. Top hotspots in 2019 were Birmingham City Centre, Coventry City Centre and Wolverhampton City Centre. Top hotspots in 2021 were Birmingham City Centre with a larger hotspot that also covered Aston, Alum Rock/Saltley in Birmingham East and Coventry City Centre.
38. Offences where a knife was used to cause injury saw a spike in July and August, with the same hotspots as under Violence with Injury Knife Crime offending. The top 3 neighbourhoods were Aston (Birmingham West), St Michael's (Coventry) and Sparkbrook (Birmingham East). Peak times were 18:00hrs -21:00hrs.
39. The most common victim age was 24, with the most common suspect age being 18. 92% of victims and 80% of suspects were male. Since 2019/2020 disproportionality rates within homicide (all ages) have risen for black victims (3.8x to 5.1x) and fallen for black people as offenders (6.5x to 5.7x).

### **Pandemic impact**

40. During 2020 and the early part of 2021 there was a general decrease in the volume of serious youth violence offences, driven primarily by a sharp decline in offences reported during the first lockdown; with fewer people socialising / meeting there were fewer events where offences may have previously taken place. For instance, the restricted footfall in city centres reduced the levels of offending normally experienced during the Night Time Economy, and restrictions on young people and education reduced post-school offending. At the same time there was an increase in violence offences being reported in domestic settings and in residential areas; supporting the belief that offending had transitioned from public to private. With the removal of restrictions and return to life pre-pandemic, offence levels increased.

### **Violence drivers and social media**

41. Serious Youth Violence post pandemic continues to be highly influenced by factors such as Urban Street Gangs and county lines drug dealing. Furthermore, it is assessed as highly likely that territorial disputes based on physical geography have transcended to online forums where tensions are perpetuated and stoked through the use of music videos and violence led narratives. Society in general moved into the virtual space during lockdown and rivals continued to target each other, with social media platforms likely to have replaced some of the “traditional face to face feuding”.
42. By way of example, prior to a recent murder there had been social media ‘chatter’ that was directly linked to, and potentially instigated or encouraged this violent attack. There are also links to serious assaults following social media taunts contained within rival Urban Street Gangs/Organised Crime Groups social media videos.
43. The increased use of technology and social media platforms offering encrypted messaging are factors in the facilitation of violence as well as broader criminality, with vulnerable young people being targeted by individuals, urban street gangs and Organised Crime Groups via this medium. Home Office funding has supported the creation and training of a WMP social media investigation team (four officers) which will be operational from January 2022. This team will support the monitoring and interpretation of Organised Crime Groups/Urban Street Gangs social media content with the ability to put in place more timely police and partner mitigation or responses. This will also support cases where injunctions are deemed an appropriate intervention.

## **Serious Violence Outcomes**

### **Investigative outcomes**

44. The year to date positive outcomes rate as a result of under 25 violence investigation is 6.14% (2020/2021 8.66% and 2019/2020 9.77%). This is improving month by month with November presently having a positive outcome of 9.40 %. Focused operations against Organised Crime Groups/Urban Street Gangs in Birmingham and Coventry in particular have shown success.

### **Performance Improvement**

45. As part of the Force Criminal Investigation Department service improvement review process, an audit of between 30 and 40 under 25 offences (Section 47 assaults) is conducted every month (since March 2021). The audit highlights areas of positive performance as well as areas for improvement. For under 25 violence:

A. Positive performance areas:

- i. Victim contact plans are regularly put in place and adhered to
- ii. Victims are regularly updated with offence outcome and the rationale for filing
- iii. Recorded investigation plans and the regular supervisory reviews are thorough

B. Areas for improvement:

- i. Ensuring initial contact is made with the victim within seven days
- ii. Updating the victim when a suspect is arrested, voluntarily interviewed or bailed
- iii. Consistency of the recording of investigation plans for this crime type

The plan to make these improvements within Force Criminal Investigation Department is being led by Detective Chief Superintendent Paul Drover.

### **Reducing Attrition**

46. Force Criminal Investigation Department continues to see high attrition rate of victims disengaging from serious violence investigations. All serious violence offences are prioritised on a daily basis for immediate victim engagement and timely positive action to resolve. Responding at pace, listening to the victims' wishes and offering diversionary pathways rather than criminalising the offender have impacted positively on victim satisfaction and positive outcome rates. An analytical product has been commissioned through Data Driven Insights to improve understanding around why victims do not support investigations. Indications are elements are linked to gang affiliation, trust and speed of response.

### **Alternative outcomes**

47. In addition to traditional investigation methods, the following pathways are being progressed and explored to connect with communities and enhance performance outcomes.

### **Checkpoint Pilot**

48. West Midlands Police have introduced a 'deferred prosecution' pilot for young offenders, aged 10 – 17 who commit offences of; Possession of a bladed article with no aggravating circumstances or Possession of an offensive weapon with no aggravating circumstances. The pilot is called Checkpoint and is open to 10 – 17year olds who meet the criteria. The aim is to avoid the unnecessary criminalisation of children as recommended by HMICFRS. To be eligible children would have no previous criminal history or very minor, non- violent history, they would need to admit the offence and there should be sufficient evidence to charge.
49. Interventions would be based on the current Youth Offender Services programme for knife crime offenders with a mandatory assessment and additional support as required. Successful referrals would be closed Outcome 22 and would appear on the Police National Computer as No Further Action so effectively the young person would not receive a criminal record.
50. Whilst numbers of young people eligible are not high, the pilot is considered a success with a number of young people having been diverted from entering the Criminal Justice System unnecessarily. One example of this relates to a 17-year-old first time offender who was caught with a knife after evading a knife arch. The young person was being picked on by other youths at college and was carrying the knife for self-protection. Teaching staff confirmed this was totally out of character for the male. Had the male been convicted of the offence his offer of a place at Birmingham University would have been withdrawn and it is not common for young people from his area to go into higher education.
51. Work is now underway to increase the usage of this pathway across WMP and to evaluate results of referrals.

### **Outcome OC22**

52. The introduction of Outcome 22 (OC22 - Diversionary, educational or intervention activity, resulting when a crime has been undertaken and it is not in the public interest to take any further action) has further increased opportunities to address early offender behaviour and identify suitable diversionary pathways to reduce re-offending and severity of crime escalation. Under Outcome 22 (OC22), the offender must meaningfully engage in these pathways. If they fail to do so, then the case can be re-

referred to police by the lead agency delivering the pathway to pursue a criminal justice outcome, which is a powerful tool.

53. In early November, Force Criminal Investigation Department engaged with the Force Crime Registrar and gained support for Outcome 22 to be used for offences up to and including Section 20 Wounding, on the agreement that the diversionary activity was commensurate to the significance of the offending. WMP are now working with Youth Offender Service; Remedi and the St Giles Trust, as well as other third sector service providers to devise suitable pathways.

### **Solihull model**

54. A successful pilot using two dedicated Police Community Support Officer's from Solihull Neighbourhood Policing Unit to deliver out of court disposals has now led to most Neighbourhood Policing Units adopting this model. The priorities set for this small team include under 25 violence (U18s) and offences committed with impact areas. This model has resulted in a marked increase in under 25 violence outcomes with roughly 50% of the engagements within impact areas and the initial victim feedback is very good. There has been no identified re-offending by those persons dealt with under this process accepting it is a new concept and further analysis over a longer period will be required. Force Criminal Investigation Department and Solihull Neighbourhood Policing Unit have also linked in with the local Violence Reduction Unit Education Intervention Advisor.

### **Birmingham East approach to under 25 robbery offenders**

55. The Use of Outcome 1 – Primary charge usage for robbery has reduced over time across WMP and Birmingham East. The use of Outcome 8 – Community Resolution for robbery has seen a significant increase at Birmingham East Neighbourhood Policing unit in 2021 and drives WMP performance in this area with a shift from seeking a formal Criminal Justice outcome for youth offenders (notably concerning the 10-14-year olds) towards community resolution with Youth Offending Services' support. Interventions are delivered to address the cause of offending / prevent re-offending and are widely supported by victims and their families. There have been some recent challenges around demand in joint decision-making Panels but Youth Offending Services are supporting these becoming weekly to speed the process.

## **Birmingham West Tiered Approach**

56. Operation Fresco is the overarching response to continuing incidents of serious violence between groups in the Birmingham West policing area under the PIP4 (Professionalising Investigation Programme Level 4) structure set by Superintendent Griffiths/Lead Responsible Officer Chief Inspector Edwards. It represents a joined up shared vision, purpose and commitment by all departments and partners (at all levels) to assess and provide a response to the continuing incidents of serious violence. The violence is often linked to a long-standing and historical dispute between Urban Street Gangs in Birmingham involving young people aged 14-25 years of age, a number of whom have fallen out of mainstream schools. Over the age of 16, many are not in any form of education or work.
57. To ensure a proportionate response to an individual's behaviour a mature assessment is conducted. Bespoke 4 P plans are devised for each young person and they are tiered in line with the threat that they pose to the communities of WMP. Each tier has a service level agreement which clearly describes the expectations of police and partners who are working with these young people to prevent harm and offending. There is a clear focus on information gathering and understanding the different types of exploitation to proactively divert children away from gangs and criminal groups.
58. This approach has resulted in increased referrals for young people on the periphery of exploitation and gangs and a joined-up partnership voice which is starting to understand the grass root problems through the EMPOWER U hub. The reach of this work is further extended by increased neighbourhood engagement through connect and build and local task and finish groups and Local Policing Delivery Groups. This is supported by a wider partnership framework Violence Reduction Unit, Red Thread, Social Workers, School Panels, Experts by experience, Youth Offending Services, Local Authority "Catch 22" Youth Independent Advisory Group, Probation and 3<sup>rd</sup> party community groups.
59. A review in November of current Operation Fresco nominals showed a number of Tier 2 individuals (high threat targeted for Criminal Justice/disruption opportunities) showed good progress with 5 individuals adopted and 1 individual associated with extremely serious violence (but without evidence to prosecute for these matter), pursued for wider prosecution opportunities and imprisoned for dangerous driving. Within Tier 3 of risk



gang nominals these are pursued by the Birmingham Gangs Team. Of the 26 in the cohort, 9 are in custody, 14 arrests (2 x firearms arrests/recoveries). The Tier 4, younger periphery cohort has put 15 through CASS with 28 interventions including supported housing moves. Of 9 recently archived, none have reoffended where early intervention was in place. Consultation is now occurring with force performance analysts to implement clear progress measures around each tier to improve evaluation.

## **WMP Partnership with Violence Reduction Unit**

### **Walsall - Partnership in Practice**

60. A recent example of the positive partnership between WMP and Violence Reduction Unit can be shown following a Consequence Management Meeting held after the stabbing of a young person in Walsall. This incident was highlighted in Force Threat Risk Meeting and by attending Consequence Management Meeting the Violence Reduction Unit representative was able to work with youth services to secure delivery in the area and to liaise with the safeguarding team at the college attended by the victim to mitigate the risk of future incidents. They were also able to offer a contextual safeguarding perspective which incorporated support to the victim's mother.

### **School Exclusions**

61. At a more strategic level the partnership is helping to direct the WMP offer to schools and more specifically advise around the complexity of pupil exclusions, providing invaluable insight into a sensitive and challenging area which will help shape interactions locally with education colleagues and schools panels.

### **Supporting Local Strategies**

62. The Violence Reduction Unit have worked with Walsall Neighbourhood Policing Unit to set up the partnership Strategic Violence and Harm Prevention Group (SVHPG) where the priority over the last 6 months has been Youth Violence and knife crime. The Violence Reduction Unit have directed and supported the development of a longer-term, forward facing Youth Violence strategy, adopting a holistic public health approach. The SVHPG provide leadership and governance around a number of violence themes and Violence Reduction Unit lead on various newly constructed sub groups (commissioning, school exclusions and Youth Violence Operations Group).

63. Walsall have devised 5 youth at risk cohorts, with multi agency information sharing protocols/response and referral pathways. The Violence Reduction Unit are now involved in daily triage, managing these cohorts and are working with Police and Schools Panels to develop a school's exclusion pathway. This has been critical in identifying risk and vulnerability, preventing escalation to violence.
64. It has been identified that further work needs to be undertaken to understand the root causes of serious youth violence and the Violence Reduction Unit analysts are refreshing the local strategic needs assessment, along with enhanced partnership data to help deliver objectives. Most importantly this work was community led and focused and the Violence Reduction Unit have offered to directly support parents and families in delivering bespoke services – mentoring, additional mentoring in Bluecoat Academy and a support programme for mothers.

### **Organised Crime and Exploitation**

65. The role of the Serious Organised Crime and Exploitation Hub within the Force Intelligence Department is to provide intelligence support to operational activities to tackle organised crime and exploitation. Our activity focusses on the key commodities used by organised criminals: firearms, drugs and people. People are exploited in a number of different ways including labour exploitation, sexual exploitation (e.g. through prostitution or child sexual exploitation) and criminal exploitation (e.g. exploited to commit crime, often dealing drugs, often moving to different parts of the country to do so). Serious Organised Crime and Exploitation Hub is developing to improve our ability to tackle the threats of serious and organised crime with the implementation of three local Serious Organised Crime Exploitation Hubs, in Wolverhampton, Birmingham and Solihull. These hubs will be operating from January 2022. Partnership work between those involved is already taking place in advance of the co-location of resources.
66. Working in partnership with the Violence Reduction Unit will be vital to the success of the Serious Organised Crime Exploitation Hubs. The Violence Reduction Unit are responsible for supporting daily operational activity to prevent exploitation and protect victims. For instance, the St Giles Trust Rescue and Response Service commissioned by the Violence Reduction Unit, supports young people up to the age of 25 who have been brought into custody suspected of involvement in county lines activity. The Violence Reduction Unit are supporting the training of police officers in Serious Organised Crime Exploitation roles and have also supported the recruitment process

to bring new supervisors into the department, ensuring candidates are informed and aware of the vulnerabilities and trauma that children and adults who are being exploited face.

### **County Lines**

67. County Lines Intensification Weeks (CLIW) are nationally-co-ordinated weeks of activity to bring the resources of law enforcement, partners and the third sector to target offenders and safeguard victims of county lines exploitation. The Violence Reduction Unit have been instrumental in bringing the partners from across the seven local authorities in the West Midlands together to support these weeks with joint safeguarding activity visits, creating training programmes to support County Lines Intensification Weeks (CLIW) periods with over 1000 professionals attending. They have also created criminal exploitation awareness communication campaigns to support the County Lines Intensification Weeks (CLIW) periods and to date over 100,000 users across the Violence Reduction Unit's social media platforms have accessed these materials.

68. Home Office funding (£2.3 million) enabled the creation of the County Lines Taskforce. As at the end of September 2021 the taskforce has made 363 arrests, safeguarded 36 children and closed 134 county lines.

### **Trauma Informed training**

#### **Custody**

69. Through the support of the Violence Reduction Unit, Custody is working with Barnardo's to increase awareness of the impact of trauma in police custody. Young people that are arrested often find this a difficult and emotional experience. This can also be amplified for those who suffer from neuro diverse conditions. Individuals can therefore present with behaviours that can lead to adverse incidents. Educating staff how to recognise the signs of trauma in behaviour will lead to better interactions and therefore better health and wellbeing outcomes. The training is currently being delivered to all custody staff (circa 270) between October and December 2021 following which an evaluation will be conducted.

#### **Wider Force**

70. WMP, working with Violence Reduction Unit are planning to deliver Trauma Informed training across the broader force over the coming 6 months with the following numbers being trained;

- a) Initial recruits           80% of 2847 officers
- b) Custody                   60% of 500 officers/staff
- c) Investigators           5% of 3300 officers/staff
- d) Frontline                5% of 5700 officers/staff
- e) Senior leaders         80% of 500 officers/staff
- f) WMP cadet leaders   80% of 131 staff

### **Working with Schools to Reduce Violence**

71. West Midlands Police does not currently have a force-wide standard service offer to support the reduction of violence working with schools, education and Violence Reduction Unit. Whilst there is good practice across various Neighbourhood Policing Units, there are geographical inconsistencies in service provision. The Strategic Violence board has appointed a Local Policing Superintendent to lead, develop and shape a consistent service offer from Local Policing within the schools' context to support Violence Reduction Unit/Guardian delivery plan/Gold recruitment uplift plan. The focus of this work is as follows:

- Identify current service delivery across Neighbourhood Policing Units
- Identify and share good practice across Neighbourhood Policing Units that supports Violence Reduction Unit/Guardian delivery plan to reduce violence and maximising engagement opportunities
- Develop a consistent service offer for schools' engagement to support with reducing violence amongst young people
- Develop an "academy" concept as a tool for engagement and also longer-term recruitment initiatives from under represented communities
- Improve consistency and cohesion within delivery models across Local Policing in West Midlands, sharing, supporting and developing good practice models across all Neighbourhood Policing Units.

### **Sandwell approach**

72. The Neighbourhood Policing Unit has assigned dedicated neighbourhood resources into the schools. It has developed a school's service offer in partnership with the schools themselves, education and other intervention providers. This service offer is tiered both in terms of criteria for schools becoming prioritised and also specific students within those schools in order to tailor interventions to individual needs. This process aligns well with a new 5-year violence reduction plan currently being developed in Sandwell with education and other partners.

### **Birmingham Virtual Reality programme**

73. Round Midnight have developed a Virtual Reality education tool "VIRTUAL\_DECISIONS" and "KNIVES" in which participants experience a simulated true-to-life scenario covering the themes of peer pressure, gang culture, anti-social behaviour and youth violence during which they must make a number of choices. This was commissioned through Guardian working with the Violence Reduction Unit and launched by the Police and Crime Commissioner. This is due to be shared with the Policing Minister on his next visit for consideration for wider roll out nationally.

74. Following the Virtual Reality film, a workshop explores the issues raised in more depth, looking at the motivations behind the characters' behaviour, whether peer pressure contributed to the outcome and the positive/negative responses each user receives from characters based on their decisions. "VIRTUAL\_DECISIONS" is designed to deliver a change in young people's behavior using innovative technology and creative methods. The program is to be used as a form of early intervention and prevention.

75. Birmingham Partnerships have enrolled 12 schools link officers on Round Midnight training in order to deliver the programs on behalf of Round Midnight in secondary schools in the Birmingham East and Birmingham West Impact areas.

### **Financial Implications**

#### **Grip funding conditions**

76. Project Guardian's budget for financial year 2021/2022 is based on an initial grant of £2,940,000 from the Home Office, with WMP providing 20% match funding to the sum of £588,000. The Home Office subsequently approached the Project to offer an opportunity to bid for further funds, with an upper limit of 17% of the initial grant, i.e.

£499,800. In total WMP have a budget of £3,439,800 in central funding and £4,027,800 in total. This is a reduction on years 1 and 2, and the limits of spend have increased to reduce spending on technology and focus on operational activity.

77. The grant must be spent within the financial year and has been targeted as listed in the spread sheet below. In short, the budget is spread between:
- a. Surge/Grip funding, for operational responses to youth violence. This is focused heavily on hot-spot methodologies and areas that drive significant harm. Including Impact Areas, Night Time Economy and micro-hotspots (to be launched soon).
  - b. Intelligence and training. This is focused on improving our understanding of the problems and the locations upon which we need to focus, allowing for geo-spatial tagging of resources and improving our staff capabilities and training in this area.
  - c. Investigation. Focused on improving outcomes for violence, through Restorative Justice for lower risk offences and Criminal Justice for higher.
78. The budget is managed centrally through the Project Team but is devolved locally for instance, Neighbourhood Policing Unit's having a set budget for local Grip activity, Force Criminal Investigation Department having a budget for improved investigation. (see appendix A for breakdown)

### **WMP investment**

79. WMP funds a Chief Superintendent and part funds a Superintendent and a Chief Inspector in Operation Guardian who coordinate and drive activity across the force around serious youth violence. In addition, WMP part funds the Task Force which consists of an Inspector, three Sergeants and twenty-two constable posts. This team have enhanced behavioural detection training that has improved stop search outcomes. They also lead on encouraging strong local relationships and scrutiny with Neighbourhood Policing Units, which includes community objective setting around violence issues.
80. The Taskforce is deployed to areas of emerging or predicted threat around violence. The senior leader roles are invested in capturing best practice, encouraging consistency and learning across the force area, delivering the Serious Youth Violence Delivery Plan, forging improved relationships with the

Violence Reduction Unit, delivering on Home Office reporting and supporting Assistant Chief Constable Richard Baker the Violence/Local Policing lead.

## **Legal Implications**

### **Serious Violence Duty impact**

81. There is an evidenced case that deprivation and poor social outcomes are linked to people's likelihood to becoming involved in violence. The Violence Reduction Unit Strategic needs assessment and WMP analytical products show that offenders and victims of serious youth violence are far more likely to reside in an area of deprivation and WMP Impact area.

82. The benefit to focusing on a Public Health approach to violence is clear. The measures within the current draft guidance however are predominantly positioned at policing outcomes. The duty does clearly stipulate a requirement for agencies to work together under Public Health Principles. There is a clear correlation between social determinants of health and where people live who have a higher likelihood of being offenders and victims of serious youth violence. Government commissioned reports and social health experts such as Professor Sir Michael Marmot make this case. A shared partner focus under the Serious Violence Duty in these localities will support WMP and Violence Reduction Unit objectives in building a longer term and broader system approach to violence reduction. We aim to encourage adoption of social health measures alongside violence statistics.

## **Equality Implications**

### **Protecting against inequality in the delivery of the WMP response**

83. Serious youth violence impacts geographical locations and communities disproportionately. WMP needs to respond appropriately and proportionately to the areas of greatest need and threat. In doing this we understand our actions could be perceived as inequitable. We recognise the criticality of our activity being viewed by communities as legitimate and not reinforcing existing inequalities which exist.

84. To maintain oversight of key activities which impact on how the Force is perceived by those we serve Assistant Chief Constable Matt Ward chairs a Fair and Effective Use of Police Powers board. The focus of this board is the use of force, Section 136 vehicle stops and stop and search. All are vital tools in our response to serious youth violence and are highly visible to the public.
85. Stop and Search disproportionality rates are also scrutinised at Force Silver meetings and in Neighbourhood Policing Unit scrutiny panels where there is input from local community members. Steps have also been taken to better understand the lived experience of those involved in these policing activities by engaging with specific groups such as Bouncing Statistics.
86. The use of Business Insights allows the force to gain a much better understanding of disproportionality at geographical, team and individual officer level and the ability to review body worn video enables oversight of how the use of force or search was conducted.

#### **Public sector equality duty**

##### **Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct**

87. WMP will baseline and evaluate existing processes for Diversity & Inclusion data capture to identify strengths and weaknesses of data sharing with partners. This will be facilitated by the creation of a Diversity Dashboard to help identify and understand causes of disparity. Assistant Chief Constable Richard Baker is leading on this work. The formation of a stakeholder group will begin Jan 2022, baselining will continue through to the end of March 2022. Implementation is anticipated to be the end of 2022.
88. Equality Assessment training will begin immediately which will conclude at the end of 2022. Every department / Neighbourhood Policing Unit will drive the completion of Equality Assessments to enable WMP to meet its duty to help reduce or eliminate discrimination under the Equality Act 2010.



89. WMP is open to scrutiny in all aspects of our work and we use the insight this provides to listen, learn and improve. Where there is evidence of discrimination we ensure matters are addressed at the appropriately.

90. Understanding the history of our relationship with our communities and the impact these have on individuals is key. A programme of work is being developed to increase the knowledge staff have regarding the different communities within WMP to ensure staff engage and treat individuals fairly.

**Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not**

100. WMP are seeking to better understand disproportionality within stop & search, use of force and the criminal justice system. Addressing these disparities will advance opportunities within communities where interventions such as low-level drugs possession may provide obstacles for achieving education and employment. The fair and effective use of police powers board is supporting academic research into the causes of disproportionality with two distinct pieces commencing in 2022.

101. We are seeking to use all available data sources to ensure we have the richest picture of our community demographics. Taking partnership data from the NHS, housing and education for instance will improve our understanding and enable us to ensure existing and emerging communities have a voice, for instance by ensuring scrutiny panels are representative.

**Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not**

WMP will produce an annual report to showcase achievements and demonstrate transparency in order to increase trust and confidence of our communities. Equality Act assessors and Fairness and Belonging leads will consult and engage local community groups such as Independent Advisory Groups and religious organisations, particularly from under-represented groups.

Diversity data within the complaint system will be used to understand disparities impacting protected characteristics. These will be addressed through appropriate interventions.

We will explore innovative and more effective methods to better understand the experiences of our communities, including how we can capture live feedback from stop and search and use of force to help us learn. The Fair and Effective use of police powers board is specifically looking to understand and improve the relationship between police officers and the public when conducting stop and search or use of force.

Enabling and ensuring our workforce engage with our communities in line with our values is key to improving relations between the police and the community. We will develop and test initiatives known to improve encounters between the police and the public, for instance trauma informed training for custody staff. Reflective practice debriefs have been developed for both stop and search and use of force. These enable staff to view and assess their own behaviours which studies show improves the quality of interactions and reduces the need to use of force.

### **Equality Impact Assessments**

WMP does not currently generate formal equality impact assessments relating to our response to serious youth violence. There are however a number of activities within the force which replicate aspects of an Equality Impact Assessment. For example, the force community threat assessment will look at activity which may be impacting on different communities. In addition, consequence management meetings (which are often held post serious incidents of violence) will seek to understand community sentiment in relation to both the initial incident and the subsequent policing response.

Historically within WMP Equality Impact Assessment have been developed for change initiatives which may impact the community, for instance the closing of front offices or opening of new stations. The new training that has been developed will support the roll out of Equality Assessors at a greater rate than we have previously. It is the intention of WMP to assess the ten-year violence strategy for equality impact and the delivery / control plans which are created in support of the strategy.

**Authors:** ACC Richard Baker (Local Policing & Serious Youth Violence Lead)

C/Supt Andy Parsons (Chief Supt Serious Youth Violence Lead)

Supt Gareth Morris (Superintendent Serious Youth Violence Lead)

Appendix A

Project	Original Plan			Oct YTD		
	Original Grant	New Bid	Total Grant	Spend to Date	Nov - Mar Forecast	Total
BASS Training	86,000		86,000	45,600	34,200	79,800
Guardian Taskforce	1,114,600		1,114,600	564,930	341,133	906,063
NPU Suppression / Grip	1,290,000	200,000	1,490,000	730,027	1,012,301	1,742,328
NTE	10,000	100,000	110,000	0	149,900	149,900
Operation Spectre	30,000		30,000	10,000	15,000	25,000
Comms Campaign	50,000		50,000	6,993	43,007	50,000
Investigation	90,000	199,800	289,800	27,250	262,550	289,800
Problem Solving Training	20,000		20,000	0	20,000	20,000
Analytic Activity	249,400		249,400	77,374	99,535	176,909
<b>Total Grant Funding</b>	<b>2,940,000</b>	<b>499,800</b>	<b>3,439,800</b>	<b>1,462,174</b>	<b>1,977,626</b>	<b>3,439,800</b>

<b>Match Funding</b>						
Project Team	185,800		185,800	132,631	128,783	261,414
Guardian Taskforce	402,200		402,200	182,654	314,727	497,381
<b>Total Guardian</b>	<b>3,528,000</b>	<b>499,800</b>	<b>4,027,800</b>	<b>1,777,459</b>	<b>2,421,136</b>	<b>4,198,595</b>