

## **National Policing Priorities – West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner Statement**

### **Introduction**

This statement meets the requirements of the Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified Information) (Amendment) Order 2021 as it pertains to the National Policing Priorities.

### **Murder and other homicide**

Levels of homicide remain relatively stable within the West Midlands. The latest data shows a slight decrease in total homicide since 2019. In the period to September 2022 there were 13 homicides per million of the population across the West Midlands. This compares to 17 in year up to September 2021.

Organised Crime Groups and Gang Related Violence remain tactical priorities for West Midlands Police and I will continue to work closely with them on tackling these issues whilst also working with regional partners via the Regional Organised Crime Unit.

We know in the West Midlands that younger age groups are disproportionately high victims of homicide when compared with the proportion of the population as a whole. My approach recently to serious youth violence and knife crime is outlined below.

We also know that a relatively high proportion of homicides are drug and/or alcohol related. The newly formed West Midlands Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Partnership is also outlined below, this partnership will aim to tackle/prevent alcohol and drug related crimes

### **Reduce Serious Violence**

Recent data shows that the West Midlands has the highest rate of offences involving knives and sharps and in terms of NHS admissions, the highest number of sharps injury admissions for under 25s and the second highest for all ages.

It is necessary to target the root of what leads individuals into becoming perpetrators of violent crime. One of the terms of reference for the HMICFRS inspection evaluates how effectively the police is taking a public health approach towards serious youth violence. Part of this includes young people receiving support in their early years by services such as youth centres and children's centres which have increasingly been subject to government funding cuts since 2010.

The reductions in government funding for children's centres have led to children's centres being closed and the overall number reduced. These closures have not helped in curbing violent crime. We know that leading a successful life, including doing well in education and employment and avoiding crime, requires young people have the right kind of support in their early years. Whilst evidence has shown the effectiveness of children's centres to improve health and education outcomes later down the line and reducing children's centre numbers goes against preventing crimes.

There are a number of initiatives intended to tackle and mitigate the consequences of serious violence and knife crime which are detailed below.

One of the initiatives funded by the Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) is to offer counselling sessions, consisting of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), to young people who have experienced severe trauma and are regularly breaking laws. Schemes like this help towards tackling the high levels of violence that are prevalent in the West Midlands. They help to prevent reoffending by enabling young people to get access to the support that they need to overcome traumatic experiences and make better decisions.

In consultation with West Midlands Police and Local Authorities, the VRP has been part of the continuation of the installation of Knife Bins within the West Midlands. These weapon surrender bins mean fewer potentially dangerous weapons on the streets. There are now 24 in the West Midlands, with the latest being placed in Cape Hill Windmill Centre as part of Sandwell's Safer 6 campaign. Greater impact is likely to be from bins placed in impact areas where there are higher levels of deprivation and the no questions asked approach provides individuals with the opportunity to surrender weapons in confidence that they will not be penalised by the police.

Previously called the Active Citizens Fund, the Helping Communities Fund consists of funding for grassroots organisations which contribute towards crime prevention and reduction and community safety within the West Midlands. These projects which are mainly run by youth workers and volunteers help to reduce crime, violence and anti-social behaviour whilst also providing support to vulnerable members of the community.

A further £189,000, from crime seizures under the Proceeds of Crime Act, were released at the end of last year and decisions of which projects, aimed mainly at Impact Areas within the West Midlands, were decided by community panels in December.

As part of mitigating the consequences of serious violence, particularly knife crime, kits containing equipment including bandages, gels and tourniquets are continuing to be installed at several venues and nightclubs in the West Midlands. On average, it takes an ambulance seven minutes to reach a patient, but bleeding from serious injuries, such as those suffered in a stabbing or shooting can prove fatal in as little as three minutes. These bleed control kits are important in potentially preventing individuals from bleeding to death after suffering some form of serious violence.

### **Drug Supply and County Lines**

The Combined Drugs and Alcohol Partnership (CDAP) strategic needs assessment for drug and alcohol misuse/offending within the West Midlands is now complete. Part of the assessment highlights the increase in the number of patients to hospitals due to the misuse of Nitrous Oxide for recreational purposes. The far too easily available drugs must have tighter regulations and retailer responsibility to limit its production, sale and possession. Consequences including permanent neurological disability and dangers that arise from driving whilst under the influence of Nitrous Oxide require legislation as a matter of urgency.

One of the ways that drug addiction is being tackled is through the Offender to Rehab programme which provides drug addiction treatment for shoplifters who steal to fund their drug habit. To recognise the programme's successes, it recently won the Howard League award in the Penal Reform Policing and Adults Category. Ultimately, providing treatment for drug addicts is more cost effective than tackling the crimes which are fuelled by addiction. The programme which has been running across Birmingham since July 2021 has estimated to save over £1 million for retailers and to have prevented £750,000 from being spent on illegal drugs.

We are encouraged by the work of WMP's drugs taskforce. The taskforce has been strengthened with more officers, greater access to support teams such as dogs and drones' units and better links to local policing teams and communities. The priorities of the taskforce are to identify and enforce against the drug dealers who are moving drugs from the West Midlands into shire counties and smaller towns. This relates to WMP's 'Eyes Open Campaign' which highlights the signs to look out for concerning child exploitation in county lines

### **Reduce Neighbourhood Crime**

Serious acquisitive crime remains a serious concern in the West Midlands, particularly the lack of offenders being brought to justice. Therefore, it is important WMP continue to treat this as a priority area and conduct specific operations to tackle the problem.

This includes Operation Calibre which was a recent week of national action across policing. Through this operation WMP searched 13 properties for suspects and drugs, arrested 100 people for burglary, robbery and vehicle crime offences. In addition, WMP held 264 events aimed at preventing crime.

Vehicle crime continues to be major issues across the West Midlands and we need to see reductions in the number of instances. WMP continue to operate a specialist unit that targets suspected car criminals across the West Midlands. The specialist Vehicle Crime Taskforce has made over 100 arrests and recovered scores of stolen vehicles after launching in September 2022.

The team's capabilities have recently been boosted meaning 35 officers and staff will be primarily involved in catching car criminals, shutting down chop shops and returning stolen vehicles to their rightful owner. The Taskforce has brought a number of early successes including two men charged with over 60 vehicle crime offences, and another six in relation to a large-scale chop shop.

Understanding what matters to communities in the West Midlands enables the police to provide a better service. By increasing the number of neighbourhood policing teams, a greater understanding of local issues is gained and communities feel safer, improving victim satisfaction. The recent national neighbourhood policing week highlighted the vital work that neighbourhood policing teams are doing as a visible, preventative and proactive form of community policing. More than 211 neighbourhood police officers have been recruited so far as part of the 450 pledge.

The new officers will support the Commissioner to deliver on other pledges in his Police and Crime Plan, including preventing and tackling violent crime, violence against women and girls and domestic abuse.

### **Improve Victim Satisfaction**

I continue to work with West Midlands Police in capturing the public voice and in understanding what matters to our communities and how we can improve their experience.

West Midlands Police have identified some key drivers of low satisfaction across Force Contact and Force Response. At a recent meeting of SPCB detail was discussed about steps being taken to improve victim satisfaction.

Some key drivers identified are:

- Lack of clarity on what happens next: This includes aspects such as whether a police officer will attend or how long it will take to receive a crime reference. Part of the solution to this will be the potential commissioning of a new contact card which will provide victims' with details on what happens after reporting a crime. In addition, further advice for officer and staff on a range of scenarios which have been identified as knowledge gaps;
- Signposting to other public services: Due to the levels of call demand being met by West Midlands Police some callers at times can wait longer than expected to get through to someone. If the caller is calling about a matter which the police can't deal with they will then be signposted elsewhere. The Force is being supported in understanding what non-policing demand looks like and how we can better inform the public as to whom they need to call, a good example of this is in regards to abandoned vehicles which need to be reported to Local Authorities.
- A lack of officer compassion: Again, the level of demand faced can lead to response officers juggling multiple demands at once, which will undoubtedly come across to victims as them having a lack of compassion. Around calling for more resources for West Midlands Police, I have supported the force in exploring what training options can be commissioned for officers and staff, such as 'Compassion Fatigue' training.
- A Community & Legitimacy Board has now been created which has three areas of focus: Understanding our communities, Engagement and Good Relations and Increasing Confidence.
- The HMICFRS inspection report on the police response to serious acquisitive crime noted above highlights how the way in which police respond to incidents can impact on victim's satisfaction and confidence in policing.
- The Citizen Charter acts as a guide both for employees and citizens, letting employees know what is expected of them, and informs citizens what to expect from the police. It includes a clear set of service standards which are monitored and discussed on a regular basis.

In relation to support for victims of crime in December 2022, the Police and Crime Commissioner launched a new [website](#) specifically for the West Midlands. This dedicated central hub provides advice and guidance for victims of abuse of any kind, directing them towards vital information and the support services available in their area. It will continue to be updated regularly with useful resources and further information about the No Excuse For Abuse campaigns to help people across the region to explore ways of engaging with the important work being done.

### **Tackle Fraud and Cybercrime**

The Fraud Board continues to identify opportunities to prevent fraud and support fraud victims. The OPCC has commissioned research through the board on a public health approach and learning from the subsequent report places responsibility on organisations other than the police to build up security and resilience against fraud. As part of this, the OPCC will look into establishing an effective group consisting of relevant organisations and expertise to implement the report's recommendations.

The office continues to support awareness programmes including the 'money mules' educational programme which provides vulnerable young people and their parents knowledge of the dangers of being a 'money mule'. The campaign, which is sponsored by HSBC bank, raises awareness across social media platforms. The office also supports the Loan Shark Campaign which aims to disrupt illegal money lenders via raising awareness of their dangers online and through leaflets.

**Reporting frequency**

Reports on performance against the Police and Crime Plan and the National Priorities will be reported at the Strategic Policing and Crime Board on a quarterly basis, with the latter required by the Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified Information) (Amendment) Order 2021.