



**Strategic Policing and Crime Board  
May 2023**

**Police and Crime Plan Priority: Regular Item**

**Title:** Performance Report – National Policing Priorities – West Midlands Police and Crime  
Commissioner Statement

**Presented by:** N/A

**Introduction**

1. 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**

2. The number of homicides continue to be relatively stable in the West Midlands. The number of yearly homicides since 2016 is 14.9 per million. As with national trends, data reveals that a contributing factor of homicide is substance abuse and that similar to serious violence offences and knife crime, the majority of victims are young males. Given that a relatively high proportion of homicides are drug and/or alcohol related, the newly formed West Midlands Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Partnership will help to tackle/prevent alcohol and drug related crimes.

**Reduce Serious Violence**

3. In March 2023, the HMICFRS published an inspection of how well the police tackle serious youth violence. There are a number of initiatives intended to tackle and mitigate the consequences of serious violence and knife crime which are detailed below.
4. One of the initiatives funded by the Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP) is to raise the voices of and encourage the positive personal development of young people within the West Midlands. The VRP has commissioned the charity Positive Youth Foundation (PYF) to form seven local groups consisting of 14 to 18 years olds within each Local Policing Area (LPA) to share ideas on how they would like to tackle crime and present their findings to the regional Youth Assembly. It is hoped that by involving young people who are most affected by violence that effective co-created solutions can be reached.
5. Another initiative by the VRP titled 'Step Together' was recently evaluated by Ipsos UK's Policy and Evaluation Unit who recognised the integral work of youth workers

who are strategically placed along routes to and from school to keep pupils safe. The evaluation found that since October 2021 the youth workers reported helping to resolve incidents involving violence, bullying, anti-social behaviour and even knife crime. Projects such as this are a good example of preventing and tackling youth violence.

6. As part of reducing the number of dangerous weapons on the streets of the West Midlands, Knife Bins, which allow individuals to surrender weapons that they might own or possess have continued to be installed. There are now 25 PCC installed knife bins in our region, with the latest bin being installed in Willenhall following local demand. These safe and secure containers have been very successful with huge numbers of weapons including knives, machetes and guns being retrieved and successfully destroyed.
7. We understand that part of WMP's commitment towards tackling knife crime has been to welcome new post-conviction powers known as Serious Violence Reduction Orders (SVROs). It is intended that these court orders will tackle prolific high-risk offenders who have committed offences involving a bladed article or offensive weapon by making it easier for the police to search them for weapons. It is expected that these SVROs will protect first time offenders from being drawn into further exploitation by criminal gangs, by acting as a deterrent to any further weapon carrying.
8. Part of protecting communities from knife crime includes delivering training and workshops within those areas where knife crime is prevalent. We are encouraged by the work of WMP in delivering regular workshops to staff from pubs, clubs and venues, which includes training for door staff on searching people for blades and weapons and instruction on how to use bleed kits. A recent example has been the training delivered within Wolverhampton City Centre to keep the public safe during the night time economy.
9. As part of mitigating the consequences of serious violence, the office, in partnership with Birmingham and Solihull NHS Trust, has re-opened a second 'safe space', for members of the public out in Birmingham during the night, who are at risk of harm or in need of support. The presence of paramedics provides medical support to individuals who are overly intoxicated and/or have suffered a seizure, overdose or an assault. These safe spaces, located at the Arcadian and now at Broad Street, reduce pressure on local NHS services and lessen the number of people who needlessly become victims of crime.
10. Additionally, 'bleed kits' funded by the PCC have continued to be installed. These kits contain emergency medical equipment including trauma dressing and a haemostatic gauze to address injuries caused by violent crime. A further 10 were recently installed in the town of Willenhall where they will help save lives when serious violence occurs.

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

11. We continue to be encouraged by the work of WMP's County Lines taskforce as part of the regional and national County Lines Intensification week. Recent successes have been the seizure of £400,000 of Cannabis and £20,000 of class A drugs in Sandwell and a haul of heroin, cocaine and more than 700 cannabis plants in Coventry.
12. As part of the pledges in the Police and Crime Plan, we are committed towards tackling the root causes of drug addiction and drug-fuelled crime. This includes the continuation of the 'Offender to Rehab Scheme', which aims to ensure that individuals who steal to fund their addictions are treated in a rehab facility. This programme has made our communities safer, improved lives, prevented victimisation and saved huge amounts

of money for the public and businesses, including saving retailers in Birmingham £800,000.

### **Reduce Neighbourhood Crime**

13. Whilst it is encouraging to see that West Midlands Police has met the Uplift recruitment target and currently have over 8,000 police officers in force, the reality is that officer numbers are still down on pre-2010 levels with officer and PCSO numbers still 1,000 down on where we were. This cannot therefore be accurately described as levelling up.
14. To tackle Serious Acquisitive Crime and deliver an effective service, it is vital to prioritise and rebuild community policing. We are encouraged by the changes brought about by WMP's new policing model, including increased neighbourhood presence in each LPA. By increasing local neighbourhood policing, officers will be able to better understand and prevent local issues before they become critical problems. It is hoped that by having officers spend more time in local communities, they can better prevent and tackle crime, build trust and confidence, police by consent, protect people and help the vulnerable.
15. Vehicle Crime is the most prevalent form of neighbourhood crime and continues to be on the rise in the West Midlands. WMP have continued targeting vehicle crime in hotspot areas such as Birmingham City Centre where patrols consisting of officers from their Vehicle Crime Taskforce, local neighbourhood officers and traffic units have been elevated. The Vehicle Crime Taskforce is a dedicated team consisting of 35 officers and staff to primarily catch car criminals and return stolen vehicles to victims of car theft. The taskforce has seen recent successes, as part of a Neighbourhood Policing Week, in which more than 50 suspected car criminals were arrested by WMP and 2 Birmingham chop shops were shut down. A key issue within car crime is the stealing and trading of car parts. It is promising to observe the successes of WMP's Gangs and Vehicle Crime Team who recently recovered parts from 14 stolen cars and bikes from shipping containers in Birmingham. More needs to be done in stopping all variations of vehicle crime which can be devastating not only for victims but also damaging towards public confidence in the police.
16. The Helping Communities Fund (HCF), a £180,000 funding pot made up of money seized from criminals under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 will be released to successful community organisations who want to reduce and prevent crime in their local area. This is a great example of using otherwise criminal cash to help communities in the West Midlands make their areas safer.

### **Improve Victim Satisfaction**

17. Victim Satisfaction is heavily impacted by unsatisfactory performance in Force Contact. It is, therefore, promising to see the recent significant improvements in 101 call handling times. WMP managed to answer 93 per cent of 101 calls within the Service Level Agreement (SLA) over the bank holiday in April, compared to just 37 per cent in January.
18. Our dedicated victims' team and commissioned services are integral in supporting victims of crime within the West Midlands. Our recent £150,000 victims fund has provided funding for 8 charities, chosen specifically because of the impact of the cost of living crisis:

1. Coventry Panahghar Project – to provide tailor made care packages for women and children.
  2. Coventry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre – to help with increasing running costs of their support services, as cases become increasingly complex.
  3. RSVP West Midlands – to help tackle increasing costs linked to a rise in referrals and more difficult decisions.
  4. Remedi – to create a service-user beneficiary fund, to support victims and to help existing teams to reach as many victims as possible.
  5. The Haven, Wolverhampton – to ensure the continuation of support services
  6. Kairos Women Working Together – to contribute to a support and advocacy practitioner to help with significant increasing demands.
  7. Anawim – to contribute to the women’s only drop-in service, which is currently under resourced and seeing an increase in demand.
  8. Birmingham Irish Association – to employ an Independent Domestic Violence Advocate (IDVA), to join the team who work in the traveller community to offer specialist support for victims.
19. To better investigate sexual offences and improve victim support, we have applied for a Special Grant of £9 million from the Home Office to recruit a new team, including extra police officers, forensic staff and specialists in victim care. This grant is intended to be spent over a three-year period and it is hoped, that if successful, victims of sexual offences can have their cases dealt with in a timely/caring manner and that a higher number of perpetrators will be brought to justice.
20. It is critical that victims feel that they can trust the police and that officers are carrying out their duties appropriately. It is then essential to ensure that those officers that do not are held accountable. A national assessment of police performance in tackling Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG), including police-perpetuated abuse, was published in March of this year. It indicated a lack of trust and satisfaction with the police’s service, from women and girls, as most complaints made against the police for discreditable conduct, sexual assault and sexual harassment are dropped. We recently issued a statement on the David Carrick case, whilst his abhorrent actions were conducted during his duty as a Metropolitan Police officer, it has had serious implications for all police forces. Victims of VAWG offences should feel confident in reporting an offence, including where the perpetrator is an officer. Action is being taken by WMP to improve overall performance, including sexual harassment training for all employees, the continued work of Operation Soteria and Operation Shepherdess, and the establishment of a joint stalking triage clinic.

### **Tackle Fraud and Cybercrime**

21. The government recently published its new National Fraud Strategy and upon review, it does not reassure our office that the government is doing everything that it can to prevent, tackle and reduce fraud. The police force continues to be under-resourced to be able to effectively investigate and prevent fraud offences. This means that fraud victims will continue to receive a poor service and too few fraudsters will face justice.
22. A key area of focus has been to adopt a public health approach towards fraud. We have participated in commissioned research through the Fraud Board. In February 2021, Cardiff University was commissioned by the office, the Midlands Fraud Forum and the West Midlands ROCU to conduct research on a public health approach. The findings were recently published in March and reveal the important role that primary school teachers, doctors, social workers, and even scout leaders have in tackling fraud. This need to prioritise prevention, support and raise awareness has been heightened by the cost of living crisis and stretched police resources.

23. There is ongoing work by the West Midlands ROCU who deal with high harm causing frauds such as romance, courier and payment diversion frauds. Romance fraud was a main concern, especially in February, and we shared advice on the signs and how individuals can protect themselves from being victims.
24. The targeting of young people to become money mules remains a real concern. This sees criminals coerce young people to transfer their criminal cash on their behalf, often for a small payment. The PCC has carried out his own digital campaign in conjunction with HSBC to raise awareness of the problem. We are encouraged by the ongoing work of WMP's economic crime unit, who as part of a recent fraud intensification campaign, visited more than 100 suspected money mules across the West Midlands.

### **Reporting frequency**

25. 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.