

Strategic Policing and Crime Board

September 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.

Reduce Murder and other Homicide

2. HMICFRS recently inspected how the police prevent homicide. The inspection looked at how effectively forces understand the pattern of homicides in their area and how they contribute to the prevention of homicide by applying the homicide prevention framework. Prevention tactics used by West Midlands Police (WMP), such as working with social media influencers to give homicide prevention messages to young people in great numbers, was recognised by the inspectorate. Whilst, collectively the police in England and Wales are effective in aiming to address the causes of homicides, more needs to be done. The inspection gave two recommendations to each police force concerning better analysis of death investigations and being able to quickly identify lessons from homicides and serious violence incidents. We will work closely with WMP to observe improvement against the recommendations in these areas.
3. HMICFRS has worked closely with key policing partners to collectively develop a public facing version of the Digital Crime and Performance Pack (DCPP). By introducing this version, the aim is to improve transparency and accountability of all 43 police forces in England and Wales on key priorities including homicide, serious violence and neighbourhood crime. Updated on a quarterly basis, the latest data from this DCPP indicates that in 2022, there were 45 homicides within the West Midlands or 15.4 per million population, the same as the year prior.
4. Levels of homicides remain stable, when looking at the data for the past two years (combining 2021 and 2022), a large proportion of homicides were linked to knife crime (36.8%) and domestic abuse (20.7%). The Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP), in partnership with WMP, organise a number of initiatives that are aimed at tackling serious violence including knife crime and are detailed under the 'Reduce Serious Violence' section below.
5. Reducing Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), including domestic abuse is a key priority within the Police and Crime Plan. Our office commissions a range of services to

support victims of domestic abuse. We also continue to fund early intervention domestic abuse services such as CARA (Cautioning and Relationship Abuse), which is provided to first/second time offenders and standard/medium risk cases. In use within the Public Protection Unit of WMP since 2017, CARA is a session-based service which is provided as a form of Out of Court Disposal in which offenders are forced to confront their behaviour and are provided with the motivation, knowledge and skills to change. CARA is the best possible alternative for victims who do not want to attend court or even provide a statement, which are both really difficult procedures when most victims just want the abuse to stop.

6. We were recently successful in securing funding from the government's Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Fund for two initiatives. Firstly, for the 'in custody intervention', which is based on 'reachable, teachable' methodology being offered in a small number of custody blocks, accompanied with an integrated victim support service. And secondly, for the continuation of the Early Awareness Stalking Intervention (EASI) initiative. EASI is a multi-agency initiative between HMPPS Psychology Services Group, West Midlands Police, and Black Country Women's Aid, and introduces psychological therapy as a remedy for first-time, ex-intimate stalking offenders, who come into contact with the police. EASI also provides an increased amount of awareness and resources available for the community at large to understand the nature of stalking and legal remedies available to them.
7. Prevention against VAWG is fundamental, which is why the VRP recently partnered with children's book author Jon Bull from the 'Dog, Duck and Cat Trust' to write digital stories teaching about aggression, bullying and consent for key stage one students within the West Midlands. The books contain messages, educating children about VAWG, whilst still being age appropriate.
8. Likewise, our office commissions programmes such as '#timetotalk', which tackles misogyny and gender-based violence in schools by providing sessions, led by male specialist youth work practitioners, to school boys on a range of topics including the objectification of women and girls, and being a bystander to sexual harassment. The boys are provided with a safe space to express and explore their views and to examine the factors that underpin and influence their ideologies and belief systems.
9. Reducing VAWG is a key priority within the Police and Crime Plan and our office is committed to ensuring that the West Midlands is a safe place for everyone. In May, we launched a video-led campaign called 'I'm Tired of This' which calls for an end to sexual abuse and harassment of women and girls exercising in public spaces. The campaign will be shared across the West Midlands, aiming to challenge the range of abusive behaviours that women and girls disproportionately experience.

Reduce Serious Violence

10. The public facing version of the DCPD indicates that for year ending December 2022, West Midlands is the leading police force in the number of firearms offences per 100,000 population at 34.9 and top for the number of knives and sharps offences per 100,000 population at 169.3. This public data suggests that serious violence is on the rise. In turn, the following points outline the innovative work that is being carried out to tackle this.
11. There are a number of initiatives and campaigns that are aimed at reducing serious violence within the West Midlands. The VRP oversees a wide range of programmes that aim to prevent violent offences and provide support to those who are vulnerable. Projects like the newly introduced Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) develop positive routes for individuals away from violence. CIRV is being provided in both Coventry and Wolverhampton areas. The project received government funding of £2 million to tackle violent crime by providing support for mostly young individuals who are being impacted by gangs, county lines, drug dealing and violence. Support is given in the form of any time access to a team of

professionals, as well as help with housing issues, ill health, debt and/or addiction. The programme has been designed to enable young people to access positive opportunities for the benefit of themselves, their families and society as a whole.

12. The Police and Crime Plan aims to prevent crime, and recognises that this can only be done through strong and sustained partnership activity. Prevention work is necessary not only before a violent crime is committed, but after as well. Reoffending rates of those with violent convictions is predominantly due to a lack of employment opportunities for individuals with a criminal record. One such successful programme which is part funded by the PCC's office is the 'Enterprise for Employment' programme, a project aimed at finding long term employment for individuals aged between 18 to 35 years old who have violent convictions. The scheme was recently evaluated in a report by an independent evaluator in which it was estimated that a total of £989,000 was saved from public spending across the NHS, local councils, police and the court.
13. Another example in which preventative work is the introduction of an Intensive Supervision Court pilot scheme within the West Midlands, which means that women that are serving community orders, for low level offences in Birmingham will be closely monitored by judges through regular review meetings. The women will also benefit from access to specialist drug and alcohol treatment, support with employment and housing issues, as well as intensive supervision from the Probation Service. Building on the problem-solving court model will not only save taxpayer money but promote rehabilitation and provide women who are within the criminal justice system, with an opportunity to make a positive contribution to society.
14. The government has introduced a new ban on zombie-style knives and machetes that have no practical use. As part of the government's aim on cracking down on their use in devastating street violence, the maximum penalty for manufacturing, importing and selling these weapons will be increased from 6 months to 2 years. Whilst such measures may have some deterring impact, it is far more effective to invest in the prevention, early intervention, diversion and the underlying causes of violence and knife crime.
15. Our office continues to fund the installation of weapon surrender bins in the West Midlands. These are safe and secure boxes that provide people with a safe and legal way to dispose of knives, which they shouldn't be carrying. There are now 26 across our region and in the first half of this year, these bins have meant that around 2000 dangerous weapons including knives, guns and machetes were off the streets, saving countless potential lives and preventing criminalisation. These knife bins were part of a range of tactics used in a recent 'Operation Sceptre' week by WMP. During this week, there was intensification of weapon sweeps, engagement with schools and local communities, knife arches and knife surrender bins. The week was a partnership effort with cadets, individuals from the local community and representatives of the charity sector, including West Midlands Crimestoppers.
16. Educational input on the effects of knife crime are being led by neighbourhood officers within WMP and partnership organisation 'Precious Lives' which is funded by our office. It is important to have individuals with real life experiences of knife crime visiting schools, colleges and youth centres to explain how dangerous carrying a knife can be. The educational sessions make young people aware that they are much more likely to become a victim of knife crime when carrying and also equip them with the knowledge and skills to respond to their peers who may be carrying a knife.
17. There have also been changes within WMP to address levels of gun crime. As part of the new operating model, which was introduced in April 2023, WMP introduced a new major crime team consisting of 100 officers to investigate recoveries of firearms and firearm discharges. Gun crime can leave devastating effects within communities and whilst our office aims to deter individuals away from being involved in such crime, offenders need to be caught and

punished imminently. Dangerous weapons need to be off the streets and this new team is a step forward in tackling this issue.

Drug Supply and County Lines

18. We continue to be encouraged by the work of WMP in this area. Drug factories, including properties used to grow cannabis are continuing to be shut down by the drugs and gangs' team. These properties not only illegally bypass electricity which poses a serious fire risk to surrounding properties but heighten concerns around drug dealing and anti-social behaviour within communities. An enormous amount of illegal money is made through drug trafficking, tackling this commerce of drugs is a responsibility of the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) and a recent success has been the capture of an organised crime gang responsible for the importation of at least £135 million of drugs into the UK, including nearly two tonnes of cocaine, heroin and ketamine.
19. As part of the Police and Crime Plan, a key objective is to reduce drug harm by providing a) adequate drug treatment services for all individuals that are addicted to reduce offending, and b) adequate support services for vulnerable young people who spend more time on the streets, exposed to drugs, trafficking and county lines. Currently, the main diversion programme within the West Midlands region is the Pre-arrest Diversions Scheme' (PADS). PADS is a diversionary scheme for 'simple' possession of controlled drugs and receives referrals via police issued Out of Court Disposals (OOC). Individuals receive tailored health and harm reduction information and advice with the intention of reducing re-offending.
20. The office commissions youth services across the West Midlands in various programmes that are aimed at tackling substance abuse. For example, we commission the 'DECCA' team within the Sandwell Youth Justice Service. DECCA is the Drug Education and Confidential Advice Service who work with schools, alternative providers/community groups and substance users, providing prevention and education programmes, advice and guidance and direct interventions with young people and those that work and/or live with them.
21. As part of our Helping Communities Fund (HCF), which is a £400,000 funding pot for community safety schemes, our office pays for activities that divert young people from potential anti-social behaviour and other criminal activity. A recent example has been funding for the provision of rugby training to children at Willenhall Rotary Club. Sport can help develop core values and provide an outlet for children, especially those made vulnerable by deprivation or a lack of positive influences. In addition to the schemes funded by the HCF, the VRP has commissioned StreetGames UK, a national sport and anti-poverty charity, to deliver interventions which reduce the risk and likelihood of young people being affected by violence, which is more than often linked to gangs and drug trafficking.

Reduce Neighbourhood Crime

22. The public facing version of the DCP allows the public to easily view data and trends on the number of residential burglaries, robberies of personal property, theft from the person offences and vehicle crimes. There were 65,450 records of neighbourhood crime by WMP in year ending December 2022, an increase of 18.5% from the year prior, when there were 55,219. The most significant increase was in theft from the person offences which increased by 39.6% and vehicle crime which increased by 23.4%. Residential burglary increased by 8.7% and robbery of personal property increased by 7.7%. Whilst these increases may be influenced by changes in crime recording and public reporting of crime, more needs to be done within policing. In the *2022 annual assessment of policing*, it was noted that volume crimes need to be better addressed due to the profound impact that they have on victims, on the perception of safety within communities and on overall public confidence. In the previous May report on the national priorities submitted by WMP, initiatives were mentioned to address

neighbourhood crime including a Vehicle Crime Taskforce and prevention advice against personal theft. We intend to see the effects of these, alongside those resulting from more local based policing as part of the new policing model within WMP.

23. A recent success that was observed within WMP was the 'Operation Advance' intensification days, which are 24 hours of intensive policing operations. These intensification days are a great example of partnership working from the different teams within the police, faith groups, local charities and organisations, as well as businesses that gets results in a short periods.
24. Our office was recently successful in securing an extra £1 million funding from the Home Office to tackle Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) to have an increased organisational presence in 'hotspot' areas with higher levels of ASB, including intensified patrols of police officers, neighbourhood officers, youth workers and council workers. The funding is part of a national initiative in which hotspot policing within the West Midlands will be prioritised to crack down on ASB. In the consultation for the Police and Crime Plan, ASB was recognised as an issue of great significance to communities and one that needs to be dealt with by government support, alongside increased neighbourhood policing. Currently, there are 328 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) serving in WMP. Within the recent Police Annual Assessment, it was emphasised that neighbourhood policing is not just a 'nice to do' but rather fundamental to the police's relationship with the public and to preventing crime.
25. In August 2023, the force celebrated 20 years of PCSOs, the first intake was in 2003 and their contribution has been vital to West Midlands neighbourhoods over the last 2 decades. Likewise, the new change model places neighbourhood policing at the forefront. It aims to be 'big enough to cope whilst small enough to care' with an increased presence of neighbourhood police officers who are able to better connect and understand the specific needs and concerns of the community.

Improve Victim Satisfaction

26. Our office recently launched a Fairness and Belonging Consultation to gain an understanding of how people feel they are treated by the police. The survey is aligned with the objectives of the Fairness and Belonging programme which aims to ensure that West Midlands Police is a diverse, equal, fair and inclusive organisation. The results from this survey will be indicative of how different groups of people experience the police, especially those who have been victimised or might have experienced discrimination. Our office intends to hold a Fairness and Belonging Conference in October, where the findings from this consultation will be discussed to improve public confidence.
27. As part of the PCC's formal holding to account function, the focus of the July 2023 PCC/Chief Constable meeting was focussed on force response times and how the force is managing its response to Priority 1, 2 and 3 incidents. It was discussed that whilst performance for priority 1 incidents was in line with the national level, response times for priority 2 and 3 incidents need to be improved.
28. Recently, WMP began to roll out the national partnership agreement 'Right Care, Right Person' scheme (RCRP) which ensures that each call made to the police receives a response from the most appropriate agency, which is not always the police. This is especially true for mental health and concern for welfare incidents. The Annual Assessment of Policing 2022 noted that the number of mental health related incidents attended by the police has been steadily rising over the last few years. This not only means that the police are not able to dedicate their time and resources to other matters, but is also a disservice to vulnerable individuals who need support from specialised professionals. Unless there is risk of immediate and significant harm, a crime has been committed or police powers are required, police officers should not be attending such incidents. Police officers are not trained mental health professionals and vulnerable people deserve appropriate care by the appropriate agency.

Tackle Fraud and Cybercrime

29. Tackling fraud and cybercrime remains a priority within WMP and there are certain initiatives which aim to increase awareness about certain forms of fraud which are on the rise. Recently, WMP launched a campaign called 'Stay Wise, Don't Compromise' which provides practical advice on how to spot and prevent courier fraud scams. Vulnerable people including the elderly are most at risk of being victimised and it is hoped that by raising awareness via videos and social media posts, that some people will be able to protect themselves from fraudsters.
30. Our office continues to take part in quarterly Fraud Boards in which there are representatives from a range of interested organisations including the ROCU, Environmental Health and Trading Standards, police representatives from the Economic Crime Unit (ECU) and academics. One of the main agenda items is the work that is being done on taking a public health approach towards fraud. The intention behind this approach is to improve the general 'fraud' welfare of the population, opposed to the fewer number of fraud victims whose cases enter the criminal justice process.
31. One of the projects that we continue to work alongside WMP on is the Money Mules Project. The project aims to raise awareness to mostly students on the dangers of becoming 'money mules'; these are individuals who allow someone else to use their bank account to transfer money whilst keeping a little bit for themselves. Many people are not educated about the consequences of this criminal act and the money mules project aims to tackle this. Currently, the project has been delivered to over 4,500 young people and this is extremely positive.

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.