



Police and Crime Plan Priority: *where appropriate*

Title: *Update on Operation Fairstay - Data Wash*

Presented by: **Detective Chief Superintendent Ridding**

Purpose of paper

1. This report for the information of the SPCB outlines the West Midlands Police response and headline findings in relation to the national historical data wash (HDW).

Background

2. This is the only paper in relation to the HDW for SPCB. Following the conviction of David Carrick on 16th January 2023 for 49 criminal matters, on 18th January 2023, the Home Office announced that all police forces must check their workforce against national databases. In response to this a decision was taken by the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) that all police officers, staff and volunteers in England and Wales will be checked against the Police National Database (PND) to identify any intelligence or allegations that need further investigation.
3. West Midlands Police commenced this work in February 2023 under the project name Operation Fairstay led by Head of Professional Standards Detective Chief Superintendent Ridding.
4. Key milestones were set by the National team leading this initiative which included :
 - Sharing of West Midlands Police personnel data – 10 February 2023
 - Data returned to forces – by 31 March 2023
 - Data reviewed and subject to risk management plans by end of September 2023

5. Internal force communications were launched to ensure staff details on systems were accurate and up to date.

Management and Implementation

6. The senior responsible officer (SRO) for Operation Fairstay Detective Chief Superintendent Ridding established a team of 10 researchers, led by a Superintendent and an Inspector to undertake the Historic Data Wash (HDW) which comprised of a significant number of lines of data.
7. The number of staff selected was based on experience of other forces in relation to anticipated data return and time required to examine and process all of the data. Researchers were constables/staff from across different departments of the force who had a specific intelligence skill sets required to undertake the task. They were abstracted from their current roles and allocated permanently to operation Fairstay for its duration.
8. All staff involved in Operation Fairstay were subject to further vetting checks and signed confidentiality agreements in relation to the Operation.
9. The task was completed and data return sent on 21st July 2023, ahead of the target completion date set for the end of September. All data was subject to review and audit ahead of final submission.
10. The National Team will be producing a report to feedback on the data wash results from all Forces at the end of October 2023, with a National media release planned in January 2024. A section 22 public authority exemption relating to freedom of information legislation is currently in place, for this reason specific data is not included in this report.

Data Wash Outcomes

11. The data return for West Midlands Police was a significant number of data lines. Many of these lines were duplicate entries or related to information already known to West Midlands Police either as part of initial vetting or subsequent change of circumstance forms submitted by the officer or staff member. A small number of referrals were made to PSD for further enquiries in the following categories:
 - Notifiable Association
 - Crime
 - Intelligence
 - Change of Circumstances.
12. This information has all been shared with professional standards and picked up as business as usual. Of the referrals resulting from Operation Fairstay a marker is placed against them on PSD systems in order to track matters from Operation

Fairstay for future reference and reporting. Of the matters identified above very low numbers are now conduct investigations.

Risks and risk management

13. Within the referrals detailed above, from the initial information known a small number were considered high risk. That is to say having significance and seriousness to further erode public trust and confidence in policing.
14. Many of the referrals have already been processed and closed via PSD business as usual processes. Of the remaining cases the final outcome is subject to ongoing work which is underway.
15. With regards the referrals PSD business as usual processes will manage them all through to resolution.
16. In order to provide reassurance and completeness further due diligence work was completed by West Midlands Police. The Operation Fairstay team were retained to complete thorough checks on all officer's staff not vetted in the past 5 years and other categories of officers and staff deemed to present risk set by the Head of Professional Standards department. : this included those not vetted within 5 years, those suspended and those subject to current misconduct investigation. This work with the associated referrals gives confidence when overlaid with the HDW that a robust and thorough review has been undertaken by WMP. This will in due course prove valuable when engaging with media communications and future FOI requests.
17. Referrals made as a result of Operation Fairstay into Professional standards will be dealt with as business as usual and include conduct investigations, vulnerability conversations, line manager conversations.

Integrity Unit

18. Following the conclusion of Operation Fairstay, West Midlands Police Professional Standards Unit have set up an Integrity Unit proof of concept team.
19. It has been created in response to increased referrals from our service confidence process, as well as referrals in relation to Op Fairstay, Op Hotton, and the Casey Report.
20. The referrals relate to change of circumstance submissions, notifiable associations and vetting concerns. The unit assesses, manages and reviews the identified organisational risk posed from our people. The Integrity Unit grade the risk and where appropriate hold initial and periodic risk management meetings with the individual, imposing and reviewing risk management measures to mitigate that risk in order to uphold high standards, deter misconduct and maintain public confidence.
21. There is an aspirational desire for the Corruption Unit to support the Integrity Unit in proactively monitoring compliance. The concept pilot aims to further strengthen the service catalogue offered by PSD and a business case for permanent growth into this unit will be submitted once evidence of the added value and improved risk management is collated.

Continuous Integrity screening

22. West Midlands Police have already requested further data for continuous integrity screening (CIS) from the PND. Until the full HDW is completed this will not be actioned. Locally there has already been as detailed at point 16 extra due diligence work completed to provide knowledge and reassurance about our staff.
23. The Annual Integrity Health Check is live and in action across WMP which will ensure all officers and staff met with their line manager to complete their individual check.
24. Nationally Continuous Integrated Screening (CIS), supplying PND data routinely to all Forces regarding any crimes, incidents and intelligence involving its employees remains the aspiration. This is a formal recommendation – number 16 of the HMICFRS inspection into vetting, misogyny and misconduct in November 2022. Forces should make use of PND routinely to reveal adverse information about their staff. West Midlands Police are keen to have this ability to check data monthly and await the national direction in support of this recommendation.
25. Any plans for regular CIS annually would necessitate a small team to process the data expeditiously, however it is hoped that CIS information in the future can be provided on a monthly basis which could be managed by professional standards as business as usual.
26. West Midlands Police has developed an in Force Connect dashboard (Qlick) which will flag officer and staff involvement in crime, incidents and intelligence on a daily basis. This is at the Beta testing phase and has been presented to the ethics board in mid-September 2023. This would not capture matters outside of West Midlands Police force area, however is a valuable tool for daily use and reassurance. This daily process will enable the Force to act swiftly to prevent further harm occurring and protect victims in line with the Force commitment to tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG), abuse of position for sexual purpose (APSP) and to protect the most vulnerable in society. In addition, it will provide the ability to more easily monitor patterns and trends over time, for example repeat offenders, victims or locations, which the CIS will not offer.

Financial

27. To complete Operation Fairstay :

One Superintendent, one Inspector, 10 research officers/staff, and a part time project manager were taken from departments and business as usual across West Midlands Police for a period of 3 months to complete the work.
28. Three members of the Operation Fairstay research team have been retained in order to develop the Integrity Unit Proof of Concept Team.

Legal implications

29. One matter raised as part of the HDW and future CIS process was the handling and use of 'Victim data' and the individuals rights to privacy. A working group was established which involved legal services, Police Federation, Unions, Data Information management, the Force Victims lead and wider parties. None of the cases identified

during the HDW met a threshold of concern which led to any action being required to be taken once the information was disclosed to WMP. There were therefore no legal implications. The Force Victims lead officer Superintendent Yvonne Bruton is now leading a piece of work to design future policy and process to ensure the handling and management of Victim data is undertaken in line with legislation and in the best interests of victims.

Equality implications

30. Data recording of disproportionality were captured and reported as part of the HDW and presented to the DCC and head of PSD. The data replicates national trends of disproportionality in reporting against Asian staff/officers as well as males, predominately in the Notifiable Association Category.
31. This data has been fed into the ongoing disproportionality PSD workstream which seeks to better understand this. PSD business as usual processes and existing practice acknowledges this disproportionality and ensures no adverse action or discrimination results as a consequence of referral, each case is individually managed on its unique factors and evidence. Any organisational or individual learning is considered and where necessary action taken.

DPIA

32. A DPIA was completed by Kate Jeffries Assistant Director: Information Management (DPO, Accreditor). No inequalities or any actions were required to be taken.
33. There were no equalities implications.

Next Steps

34. The board is asked to note this paper

Author(s): Detective Chief Superintendent S.Ridding
Job Title: Head of Professional Standards Department