

Strategic Policing and Crime Board

28th November 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. The Digital Crime and Performance Pack (DCPP) aims to enhance transparency and accountability for all 43 police forces in England and Wales regarding key priorities such as homicide, serious violence, and neighbourhood crime. Updated quarterly, the latest DCPP data for year ending March 23 indicates that there were 37 homicides in the West Midlands, translating to 12.7 per million population.
3. Homicide levels have remained stable over the past two years (2021 and 2022). A significant portion of homicides (36.8%) were associated with knife crime, and domestic abuse (20.7%). The Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP), in collaboration with WMP, coordinates various initiatives aimed at addressing serious violence, including knife crime, detailed in the 'Reduce Serious Violence' section below.
4. The reduction of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), including domestic abuse, is a primary focus in the Police and Crime Plan. Our office funds a range of services to support domestic abuse victims, including early intervention services like CARA (Cautioning and Relationship Abuse). Implemented in the Public Protection Unit of WMP since 2017, CARA offers session-based services as an Out of Court Disposal alternative, providing offenders with the tools to confront and change their behaviour. CARA is especially beneficial for victims reluctant to engage in court procedures, offering a viable alternative to stop abuse.
5. Our recent success in securing funding from the government's Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Fund supports two initiatives: the 'in custody intervention' based on a 'reachable, teachable' methodology and the continuation of the Early Awareness Stalking Intervention (EASI) initiative. EASI, a multi-agency initiative, introduces psychological therapy for first-time, ex-intimate stalking offenders. It also raises awareness and provides resources for the community to understand stalking and available legal remedies.

Reduce Serious Violence

6. The public version of the DCPD indicates that, as of March 2023, the West Midlands has the highest rate of firearms offences (37.3 per 100,000 population) and knife and sharps offences (177.9 per 100,000 population) among the 43 police forces in England and Wales. This data suggests a rise in serious violence. The following points outline innovative efforts to address this issue.
7. Numerous initiatives and campaigns in the West Midlands aim to reduce serious violence. The VRP oversees various programs to prevent violent offences and support vulnerable individuals. The newly introduced Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) focuses on creating positive paths for individuals away from violence, particularly in Coventry and Wolverhampton. CIRV received £2 million in government funding to address violent crime and support young individuals impacted by gangs, county lines, drug dealing, and violence.
8. The Police and Crime Plan emphasises crime prevention through sustained partnership activity. Recognising that employment opportunities are crucial to reducing reoffending rates for those with violent convictions, the 'Enterprise for Employment' programme, partly funded by the PCC's office, aims to secure long-term employment for individuals aged 18 to 35 with violent convictions.
9. An Intensive Supervision Court pilot scheme has been introduced in the West Midlands, closely monitoring women serving community orders in Birmingham for low-level offences. This programme provides access to specialised drug and alcohol treatment, support for employment and housing issues, and intensive supervision from the Probation Service, promoting rehabilitation and providing opportunities for positive contributions to society.
10. The government's ban on zombie-style knives and machetes, with increased penalties for manufacturing, importing, and selling these weapons, aims to curb their use in street violence. However, investing in prevention, early intervention, diversion, and addressing underlying causes is deemed more effective.
11. Our office funds the installation of weapon surrender bins in the West Midlands, providing a safe and legal way for people to dispose of knives. These bins, part of initiatives like 'Operation Sceptre,' have led to the removal of around 2000 dangerous weapons, including knives, guns, and machetes from the streets.
12. Neighbourhood officers within WMP, along with the partnership organisation 'Precious Lives' funded by our office, lead educational sessions on the effects of knife crime in schools, colleges, and youth centres. Real-life experiences of individuals impacted by knife crime help raise awareness among young people.
13. Changes within WMP address gun crime levels, including the introduction of a new major crime team in April 2023. This team, consisting of 100 officers, focuses on investigating firearm recoveries and discharges, aiming to remove dangerous weapons from the streets.

Drug Supply and County Lines

14. As part of the Police and Crime Plan, the objective is to reduce drug harm by providing adequate drug treatment services for individuals addicted to reduce offending. The Pre-arrest Diversion Scheme (PADS) in the West Midlands diverts individuals caught for 'simple' possession of controlled drugs away from the criminal justice process, offering tailored health and harm reduction information.
15. Youth services commissioned by our office, such as the Drug Education, Counselling and Confidential Advice (DECCA) team within the Sandwell Youth Justice Service, address substance abuse. DECCA works with schools, alternative providers, community groups, and

substance users, providing prevention and education programs, advice, guidance, and direct interventions.

16. The Helping Communities Fund (HCF), a £400,000 funding initiative for community safety schemes, supports activities diverting young people from potential anti-social behaviour and criminal activities. For example, funding was provided for rugby training at Willenhall Rotary Club, offering positive opportunities for vulnerable children.
17. A study I co-funded highlights the increased risk of abuse for women seeking drug and alcohol treatment in unsafe environments. Conducted by the Centre for Justice Innovation and Staffordshire University, the research underscores the need for specialized treatment considering the strong link between substance misuse and traumatic experiences. Despite distinct needs, current treatment systems inadequately address women's requirements, leading to a call for gender-specific support and safe spaces. I support the findings, and emphasise the importance of tailored and inclusive treatment services for women facing substance misuse challenges.

Reduce Neighbourhood Crime

18. In the year ending March 2023, WMP recorded 66,850 instances of neighbourhood crime, reflecting an 13.7% increase from the previous year. Notable increases were observed in theft from the person offences (17.5%) and vehicle crime (19.3%), emphasising the need for effective policing strategies.
19. 'Operation Advance' intensification days, involving 24 hours of intensive policing operations, have proven successful within WMP. These days exemplify effective partnership working between different police teams, faith groups, local charities, organisations, and businesses, delivering results in a short timeframe.
20. Our office secured an additional £1 million in funding from the Home Office to address Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). This funding supports increased organisational presence in 'hotspot' areas with higher levels of ASB, including intensified patrols by police officers, neighbourhood officers, youth workers, and council workers. The focus on hotspot policing aligns with the national initiative to combat ASB.
21. In August 2023, the force celebrated 20 years of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). The new change model prioritises neighbourhood policing, emphasising a 'big enough to cope while small enough to care' approach. Increased presence of neighbourhood police officers aims to better understand and address community-specific needs and concerns.

Improve Victim Satisfaction

22. Our office recently initiated a Fairness and Belonging Consultation to gauge public sentiments regarding police treatment. This survey aligns with the Fairness and Belonging programme's objectives, striving for a diverse, equal, fair, and inclusive West Midlands Police. The survey results recently steered discussions at the Fairness and Belonging Conference in October, aiming to enhance public confidence.
23. West Midlands Police has achieved a noteworthy enhancement in emergency call response times, with 90% of 999 calls now being answered within 10 seconds, marking a significant improvement from the previous year when the force ranked lowest in the country. The force has not only met the national standard of answering 90% of 999 calls within 10 seconds since April 2023 but has also seen substantial improvements in the 101 line, reducing average answering times from 10 minutes to 90 seconds between March and July 2023.

24. The national partnership agreement 'Right Care, Right Person' scheme (RCRP) is being rolled out by WMP. This scheme ensures that each call made to the police receives a response from the most appropriate agency, particularly for mental health and concern for welfare incidents. Recognising the rising number of mental health-related incidents attended by the police, the emphasis is on redirecting such cases to specialised professionals when there is no immediate and significant harm, a committed crime, or the necessity for police powers.

Tackle Fraud and Cybercrime

25. Tackling fraud and cybercrime remains a priority for WMP. Initiatives like the 'Stay Wise, Don't Compromise' campaign provide practical advice to spot and prevent courier fraud scams. Raising awareness through videos and social media aims to protect vulnerable individuals, especially the elderly, from falling victim to fraudsters.
26. Our office actively participates in quarterly Fraud Boards, bringing together representatives from various organisations, including the ROCU, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, police representatives from the Economic Crime Unit (ECU), and academics. These boards focus on taking a public health approach towards fraud to improve the overall 'fraud' welfare of the population.
27. The Money Mules Project, a collaborative effort with WMP, aims to raise awareness among students about the dangers of becoming 'money mules.' This project, delivered to over 4,500 young people, educates them about the consequences of this criminal act, contributing positively to fraud prevention.

Reporting frequency

28. 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.