

Strategic Policing and Crime Board

27th February 2024

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 latest data from November 2022 to October 2023 indicates that there were 41 homicides in the West Midlands, translating to 14.1 per million population.
3. Homicide levels have remained stable over the past two years (2022 and 2023). A significant portion of homicides (42%) were associated with knife crime, and domestic abuse (18%). The Violence Reduction Partnership (VRP), in partnership with WMP, coordinates various schemes aimed at tackling serious violence, including knife crime, detailed in the 'Reduce Serious Violence' section below.
4. The reduction of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is a prime focus in the Police and Crime Plan. Our office commissions a range of services to support domestic abuse victims, including early intervention services like Cautioning and Relationship Abuse (CARA). Implemented in the Public Protection Unit of WMP since 2017, CARA offers sessions as an Out of Court Disposal alternative, providing offenders with the tools to confront and change their behaviour without punishment. CARA is especially valuable for victims who are unwilling to engage in the court process, therefore, offering a viable alternative to stop abuse.

5. Similarly, the office has been successful in securing funding from the Domestic Abuse Perpetrators Fund for a two-year pilot which will be rolled out in custody in both Coventry and Sandwell. This is part of our work to promote the rights and welfare of victims and to change behaviours. This intervention is followed by a referral pathway into an accredited 26-week behaviour change programme called 'Choose to Change'. If an intervention like this can change an abuser's behaviour and prevent them from reoffending in the future, it has my backing.
6. Furthermore, securing the Domestic Abuse Perpetrators fund has allowed for the continuation of the Early Awareness Stalking Intervention (EASI) initiative. EASI is a multi-agency initiative, which introduces psychological therapy practices to benefit first-time stalking offenders. It holds offenders to account and allows the opportunity of addressing their behaviours. This initiative also raises awareness and provides resources for the community to understand stalking and safety measures.

Reduce Serious Violence

7. As of September 2023, in the last twelve months U25 admissions for sharps stands at 165 in the West Midlands force area, which is a -13% decrease on the 2019 baseline year which had 190 admissions.
8. The Police and Crime Plan outlines that preventing violence must be achieved through strong and continued partnership collaboration, in which communities play the foremost role. Recently, WMP have actioned 'Operation Sceptre' week, which means officers carried out multi-agency working with teams across the West Midlands to help keep the public safe and raise awareness around serious youth violence.
9. Several initiatives and campaigns aim to reduce serious violence in the West Midlands. The VRP manages various workstreams with the purpose of intervening and preventing violent offences in local communities. The recently launched Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) programme is already having a positive impact in local communities', rates of violence are going down across the Coventry LPA, which is positive progression. Lately, the VRP has deployed a new Virtual Reality workshop, which uses technology to encourage conversations about violent crime scenarios, as well as helping children and young people to build empathy, resolve conflict, make good decisions and learn how to reduce risks.
10. Our office funds the installation of weapon surrender bins in the West Midlands, which provides a safe and permissible way for individuals to dispose of dangerous knives. These bins, part of initiatives like 'Project Guardian,' have led to the removal of over 2000 perilous weapons, including zombie knives and machetes from the streets.

11. The government ban of zombie knives and machetes is a welcomed change of law and I support the need for the maximum penalty for the importation, manufacturing, possession and sale of these weapons to be increased from six months to two years. However, investing in more preventative measures and intervention schemes with the purpose of diverting individuals away from knife crime is considered to more effective at tackling and reducing knife crime in the long term.
12. Neighbourhood policing officers within WMP have been working closely with secondary schools and to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour, through the introduction of dedicated Schools Intervention and Prevention Officers (SIPS). Schools across the Walsall LPA each have a named police officer who works with teachers, parents and pupils to intervene with vulnerable children at risk of criminality.

Drug Supply and County Lines

13. From November 2022 to October 2023, WMP recorded a total of 7,713 crimes related to drug volume. Among these, 2,164 cases were linked to drug trafficking, while 1,191 were related to drug possession.
14. We continue to encourage the work of WMP in this area of policing. As outlined in the Police and Crime Plan, the reduction of drug harm is a significant objective. Part of achieving this objective is to provide adequate drug treatment services for addicts, in order to reduce offending and to provide adequate support services for vulnerable young people within communities who are exposed to drugs, trafficking and county lines. Currently, the main drug diversion programme within the West Midlands Force area is the 'Pre-arrest Diversions Scheme' (PADS). PADS divert individuals who were caught with the 'simple' possession of controlled drugs away from the CJS, offering personalised health and harm reduction information.
15. Recently, we have released an extra £166,000 to help communities across the West Midlands. The Helping Communities Fund (HCF), is an OPCC funded initiative for community safety projects which support activities aimed at diverting young people from potential anti-social behaviour and criminal activities. The HCF has enabled local projects such as, the unveiling of a wrestling club in Wolverhampton and a rugby training at Willenhall Rotary Club, as well as a vast array of other schemes across the area.
16. Our office commissions youth services, such as the Drug Education, Counselling and Confidential Advice (DECCA) team within the Sandwell Youth Justice Service, which address substance abuse. DECCA works with educational establishments, mainstream schools, alternative providers, community groups, and substance users

directly who are experiencing issues with drugs. DECCA provides education programs, advice and coaching, as well as direct prevention and interventions.

17. The OPCC recently co-funded a piece of research which evidenced that women are at risk of being targeted by abusers in 'chaotic, intimidating or unsafe' drug and alcohol treatment services. This study was conducted by the Centre for Justice Innovation and Staffordshire University. The research highlights the necessity for dedicated treatment which takes into consideration the links between substance misuse and traumatic experiences. The current treatment systems incompetently address women's requirements, leading to a demand for gender-specific support and safe spaces. I back the findings, and emphasise the importance of ensuring women facing substance misuse challenges are provided the most adequate support.

Reduce Neighbourhood Crime

18. Reducing neighbourhood crime and ensuring community policing increases its effectiveness is a crucial part of the Police and Crime Plan. From November 2022 to October 2023, WMP recorded 62,686 instances of neighbourhood crime, reflecting a +1% increase from the 2019 baseline.
19. Operation Advance is part of WMP commitment to work more closely with communities and tackling crimes directly within neighbourhoods. Op Advance involves 24 hours of intensive policing operations, such as executing warrants, making arrests and doing road safety operations. These concentrated days demonstrate effective partnership working, multiple agencies are involved in operations in order to deliver a high level of results in a short time frame. It is proven to be successful and deployments continue to be carried out across the WMP force area, with the most recent operations taking place across the Solihull, Chelmsley Wood and Resorts World areas.
20. Vehicle crime is one of the most prominent neighbourhood crimes across the West Midlands. I have asked WMP to prioritise car crime and go after the organised criminals who are profiting from the thefts. However, I am calling on car manufacturers to take more responsibility and make security fixes following an increase in thefts and insurance premiums rising for many drivers, manufacturers need to do all they can in the fight against car thefts and sort out their security failings. We need to ensure collectively that vehicles are fit for purpose, to prevent organised criminals profiting from vehicle theft.
21. Last year our office secured an additional £1 million in funding from the Home Office to address Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB). This funding is being used to pay for extra police officer time, as well as increase the numbers of PCSOs, youth workers and

council officers in 'hotspot' areas with high levels of ASB. The focus on hotspot policing aligns with the national initiative to combat ASB.

Improve Victim Satisfaction

22. In light of the new victims' strategy, WMP have been working diligently to ensure victim care is fully compliant with the Victims' Code and to deliver a service that we can be proud of.
23. West Midlands Police has achieved a noteworthy improvement in emergency call response times, with 91% of 999 calls now being answered within 10 seconds (December 2023), this has increased by over 20% since the same quarter last year. This marks a significant improvement from the previous year when the force ranked as one of the lowest in the country. The force has not only reached 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 45 seconds between December 2022 and December 2023.
24. WMP recently rolled out the national partnership agreement Right Care, Right Person scheme (RCRP). This scheme ensures that each call made to the police receives a response from the most suitable agency, which is not always the police. Currently, force contact is seeing a rise in the number of calls in relation to concerns regarding mental health, homelessness and welfare situations, which has ramifications on the availability and quality of WMP resources. RCRP recognises the rising number of mental health-related incidents attended by the police and emphasises the redirection of such cases to specialised professionals, when there is no immediate risk of harm, committed crime, or the necessity for police response.
25. Our office recently conducted a Fairness and Belonging public survey to gauge public opinions regarding their experiences with WMP. This survey lines up with our Fairness and Belonging Strategy, which was developed to endeavour towards a diverse, equal, fair, and inclusive WMP, ensuring everyone is treated equally and in accordance with the law by the police, regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, religion or disability. In October 2023, I hosted a Fairness and Belonging conference in Birmingham, to shed light on how communities in the West Midlands are treated by police. I am committed to holding WMP to account so to ensure the police service is representative of all the people and communities it serves, is absolute and unconditional.

Tackle Fraud and Cybercrime

26. Reducing acquisitive crime is one of the key strategic areas of the Police and Crime Plan, specifically, tackling fraud and cybercrime is a priority for WMP. In December

2023, WMP supported the National Cyber Security Centre's latest Cyber Aware campaign, which provided a range of tips and advice to help vulnerable individuals shop safely online and aid in the prevention of falling victim to fraudsters.

27. Frequently, our office partakes in quarterly Fraud Boards, which assembles representatives from various bodies including the Regional Organised Crime Unit, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, police representatives from the Economic Crime Unit (ECU), and academics. The focus of the board is to take a public health approach towards fraud, in order to gain a picture and improve the overall fraud landscape for the public. Our office has brought together partners from across the region to champion the first ever public health approach to fraud, we will be hosting the launch of this approach with partners from across the West Midlands fraud prevention landscape, to design an action plan on how to tackle fraud offences.
28. The combination of business crime, fraud and cost of living pressures have left many in the business sector contemplating their future. I am committed to a range of action to support businesses, including establishing the country's first public health approach to fraud steering group; setting up a wider working group with retailers, to look at the rates of violence experienced by shop workers in their stores; and engaging with businesses and retailers on a one to one basis to advise, help and support them – to prevent, tackle and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour.
29. The Money Mules Campaign, a collaborative endeavour with WMP, aims to raise awareness among young people about the risk and dangers of becoming 'money mules.' This project has been commissioned to be delivered to over 4,500 young people and educate them about the consequences of being targeted by criminals to move cash between bank accounts on their behalf. It is a positive step towards fraud prevention.

Reporting frequency

30. 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.