



Police and Crime Plan Priority: where appropriate

Title: Preventing and Reducing Crime - Burglary, robbery, vehicle crime, business crime, fraud

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Purpose of paper

1. This paper will provide an overview of crime trends and strategies being pursued by WMP to address acquisitive crime, which have an economic impact including fraud, cyber-crimes, burglary, robbery, business crime and vehicle crime.

Fraud and Cyber Crime

2. Fraud is defined as deception to gain dishonest advantage, which is often financial, over another person. Cyber offences cover any criminal act involving the use of computers and networks (e.g. hacking) as well as more traditional crimes conducted using technology. These can be explained as cyber enabled and cyber dependent crimes.
3. West Midlands Police has an Economic Crime Unit (ECU) as part of the Major Crime Unit (MCU). This is a specialist team that is responsible for financial investigations across the Force.
4. The ECU is responsible for all complex fraud, cyber dependent offences, electoral malpractice and money laundering, as well as leading on asset recovery using the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA).

5. All fraud investigations are triaged by the ECU to ensure that all reasonable lines of enquiry are identified and then it is either allocated to an officer within ECU, allocated to the local investigation teams or filed. Where there are reasonable lines of enquiry, a robust and proportionate investigation plan is added to the investigation.
6. The ECU collaborates extensively with multiple stakeholders and partner agencies, educating the public and businesses on threats and trends involving fraud & cybercrime. The aim is to prevent or reduce the likelihood of those individuals and businesses becoming victims in the first place. Examples of this include:
 - a. Over the festive period (2023), WMP once again partnered with Meals on Wheels to deliver season's greetings cards that incorporated Courier Fraud advice. This initiative sought to raise awareness across more isolated and harder to reach communities. This initiative was also shared with other UK police forces following the successful launch in 2022. Several forces have replicated this initiative.
 - b. Cyber Choices is a national programme co-ordinated by the NCA and forms part of (Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2023). Due to the need of Headteachers and Safeguarding leads to have an awareness of the programme and the risk of cyber to young people, WMP ECU have delivered several sessions including the purpose of Cyber Choices, how to engage with WMP ECU and how to make referrals to the national programme.
 - c. WMP are leading a project with the Financial Ombudsman which, although in its infancy, seeks to provide information on vulnerability and the impacts of Fraud and Cyber offences on victims. A knowledge gap has been identified with Fraud and Cyber offences and how they can / are being conducted. The result of this is Financial Ombudsman Service (FOS) not making informed decisions and victims not being refunded as a result. This is impacting victims nationally as well as within WMP; This project is therefore designed to upskill and close those gaps.
7. Data from partner agencies is regularly used, including that from City of London Police (CoLP), Office of National Statistics (ONS), and National Crime Agency (NCA). This data is then used to:
 - a. Identify trends and themes around offending type, MO and geographic typographies.
 - b. Allows WMP to set priorities for the year ahead
 - c. Referrals from schools and other agencies allow WMP to work with young people to deter / prevent offending

- d. NCA data supports in understanding offenders living on force area to whom cease and desist letters are issued.
8. Over the last 12 months, the impact of the cost-of-living crisis appears to have had the biggest impact due to people making riskier decisions.
9. Gift cards appear to be being used more commonly as an alternative to bank transfers. It is likely that this is due to the controls that banks now have in place. Work is ongoing with the retail sector to increase awareness and work to identify victims.
10. WMP continue to be 100% compliant with monthly returns submitted to the City of London Police. Nationally, outcomes relating to fraud sit at 2.9%, WMP is in line with this.
11. WMP does not currently have any cash for crash investigations; Via the Association of British Insurers (ABI), there is a funded team within the CoLP called Insurance Fraud Enforcement Department who have a national remit for investigating insurance fraud.
12. NFIB 90 is the code used for 'none of the above'. This is the most common type of fraud distributed to WMP. A manual review is then completed by the ECU within WMP to recategorise to allow for a true understanding of the threat posed within the West Midlands and therefore what activity or intervention is required.
13. Part of the new National Fraud Strategy includes remodelling and new technology for action fraud. The new strategy, alongside the development of the Fraud and Cyber Crime Reporting and Analysis Service alongside the Fraud Targeting Cell should lead to improvements to the quality of packages distributed to WMP which in turn should lead to a better service for victims by bringing more offenders to justice. At this time, the new strategy does not have any resourcing impact to WMP.

Business Crime

14. Data for comparisons with other forces for Business Crime are not currently available as part of the Digital Crime Performance Pack supplied by the Home Office.
15. For the year ending 31st December 2023, there were 53,175 crimes within WMP classified as Business Crime which is a 13% increase compared to the previous 12-month period.
16. Shop theft makes up the majority of this amount at 56%, followed by robbery at 16%.

17. WMP has recently taken part in national dip sample led by the National Retail Crime Lead to understand overall compliance with the Retail Crime Action Plan. The WMP retail crime lead will use the findings to develop any improvements where necessary.
18. Whilst the overall number of shop theft have increased between 2022 and 2023, the number of business crime recorded as violence against the person has reduced and makes up less than 1% of the total business crime reported.
19. Robbery now makes up 16% of the total business crime, compared to 17% in 2022.
20. WMP completes regular audits to ensure compliance with the national crime recording standards. A recent audit of Violence has shown a compliance of 92% and an audit of business robbery with a specific focus on shop theft showed a compliance of 94%. Both of these would have received a 'good' grading by HMICFRS as part of an inspection.
21. There are multiple ways that businesses can report crime to WMP. In an emergency, they can call 999. The average time to answer a 999 call was 3 seconds last month (January 2024) compared to 31 seconds in 2022.
22. In non-emergency situations there are a number of methods that can be used by businesses. If telephony is still the preferred option, they can call 101. The average speed to answer a 101 call was 1 minute 9 seconds in January 2024 compared to 13 minutes 44 seconds in 2022.
23. For those wishing to use digital methods, live chat and online reporting are available. The average time to answer live chat reduced to 6 minutes 27 seconds in January 2024, compared to 15 minutes 57 seconds in 2022.
24. Online Incident Reporting allows businesses to report crime at a time that is convenient to them and receive a crime reference number within less than 24 hours.
25. In 2023, 8626 reports of shop theft reported via Online Incident Reporting. It should be noted that on review, some of these may have been classified as other offences or not crimed for particular reasons.
26. In 2023, 40% of all Online Incident Reports related to Shop theft. Approximately 30% of shop theft offences were reported online.
27. Introductions of new technology such as Axon Citizen means that it is now much easier for business to send large amounts of CCTV to WMP through as link that is sent to their email address.
28. All incidents relating to shop theft will be subject of a THRIVE assessment by staff within Force Contact at the point of contact as well as the time that the incident is open.

29. Where a THRIVE assessment has been completed and a shop theft incident is graded as a P1, WMP attended 99%. Where it has been graded as a P2, 95% are attended.
30. There is a Business Crime Delivery plan that is in place, driven by SPOC's on each LPA. There is a meeting each quarter to discuss crime levels, themes, data and best practise.
31. Local workshops with retailers at a local, regional and national level focus on a different theme each time. The most recent workshop held on 16th November focused on violence against shop workers, where an action plan has been implemented to address some of the issues raised.
32. National Business Crime Centre (NBCC) Safer Business Action Weeks occur twice a year. The next is scheduled for March 2024 and LPAs are actively planning activity for the week in conjunction with BID's, BCRP's and retailers.
33. WMP works closely with the NBCC to share and learn best practise and assist dialogue with national retailers.
34. WMP is currently taking part in a national pilot (currently being run in Wolverhampton and Coventry) aimed at gathering information from retailers across the country, and turning this into intelligence packages, where through partnership meetings as part of the pilot, seek to develop action plans to target repeat offenders.
35. Offending to Recovery is a programme that began in 2018 just in Erdington and has been running as a pilot across Birmingham since 2021. The aim of the programme is to reduce retail crime associated with prolific retail offenders with substance issues and working with these individuals to divert them into treatment.
36. The programme is delivered by a small team of two police officers (one of which initially created and delivered the programme in Erdington) and two drug referral workers from Change, Grow Live (CGL) who are the Birmingham drug and alcohol service provider.
37. The pilot has been funded by the OPCC predominately but with additional funding from retailers and partner agencies.
38. There is an appetite due to the positive findings as part of the independent evaluation, for the programme to be rolled out across all local authority areas.
39. Several local authorities are already signed up, and work is now on going to implement the programme. Work continues with the remaining local authorities to engage them in the programme.

Neighbourhood Crime

40. WMP Neighbourhood Crime Strategy was launched in July 2023. It sets out the ambition to make the West Midlands a place where the public are safe and feel safe.
41. Neighbourhood Crime consists of vehicle related theft, domestic burglary, theft from the person, and personal robbery.
42. Performance on Neighbourhood Crime makes up part of the performance framework that is in place for the force.
43. Over the last 12 months, all neighbourhood crime volumes have reduced with the exception of robbery, which currently sits at a 2.45% increase. However, all outcomes for these crime types have increased.

Crime Type	23/24 YTD Crime Volumes	Percentage change (compared to 22/23)	Positive Outcomes 23/24 YTD	Percentage change (compared to 22/23)
Robbery	7,144	+2.45%	13.42%	+4.89%
Burglary Dwelling	10,565	-9.82%	9.41%	+2.59%
Theft of Motor Vehicle	12,195	-2.35%	2.98%	+1.63%
Theft from Motor Vehicle	11,775	-20.40%	2.44%	+1.72%
Theft from the Person	3,035	-18.59%	4.61%	+4.05%

44. The position of WMP compared to its most similar group (MSG) is regularly reviewed as part of the performance framework. Our most similar group is made up of West Yorkshire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester and ourselves.
45. We are able to assess our position against our MSG via a system called iQanta. It should be noted that iQanta is a national system and due to collating data from across the country, it is always slightly out of date. Therefore, the data reported

below is for the period January 2023 to December 2023. The data reported in the table above for just WMP is current at the time of writing this report.

46. As part of the national pledge to attend all residential burglaries, compliance is monitored as part of performance day, as well as LPA performance meetings and local threat review meetings. Attendance in January 2024 was 86.3%. Where it is identified that no arrival is showing on an incident log for residential burglary, the log is reviewed to ensure the reason for non-attendance is rationalised.
47. The MSG average for burglary outcomes is 8.2%, WMP was at 8.2% as of the end of December 2023.
48. Robbery volumes are the highest within the MSG, however as of December 2023, we have an outcomes rate of 13% compared to the MSG average of 11.5%.
49. In contrast, we record significantly fewer TFTP than other forces within our MSG, achieving an outcome rate of 4.3% against an MSG average of 2.5%.
50. Operation Ruby is the forces response to the increased levels of robbery and to understand the drivers that mean that we record the highest volumes within the MSG.
51. WMP is currently highest in its MSG for vehicle crime, and up to year end December 2023, recorded an outcome rate of 2.7% against an MSG average of 3.5%. We have however seen a significant reduction of vehicle crime offences being reported (+20%) over the last 12 months, and a much improved outcome position. Continued challenges with the supply of vehicle parts are driving this demand.
52. There is a vehicle crime subject matter expert who is a Detective Chief Inspector, who reports to the force Neighbourhood Crime Lead who is a Detective Superintendent. The SME attends national forums where as well as identifying best practise, are briefed on the wider issues relating to vehicle crime offending such as supply chain issues mentioned above.
53. The national forums allows an opportunity to try and influence legislation to outlaw equipment that is used to steal motor vehicles.
54. Locally, WMP works closely with Jaguar Land Rover to influence and design crime prevention advice given the thefts of locally built and owned vehicles.
55. Vehicle cannibalism still exists; however, the creation of a dedicated vehicle crime team, focusing on identifying linked series and chop shops that have been highlighted from community intelligence has seen significant charges for conspiracy to steal.
56. Operation Vanguard is the name given to the force project to improve the quality of investigations. As part of this, the proportionality threshold that has been used previously has been removed and a new version is being developed. The

proportionality threshold is designed to support investigators in deciding whether a matter should be filed or investigated.

57. The removal of the existing threshold has meant that there are now more open crimes across being investigated to identify opportunities to bring offenders to justice.
58. The improvements to the positive outcomes are an indicator that reasonable lines of inquiry are being explored when investigating these crimes.
59. A recent learning package has been launched force wide to support in maximising the knowledge of attending officers on digital opportunities at crime scenes that may assist in identifying offenders.
60. Forensic opportunities are explored for all offences, with advice available from Forensic Services where required. Where forensic opportunities exist, timely attendance of Forensic Scene Examiners and early submission of forensic evidence all support the force in conducting prompt and timely investigations.
61. Dedicated neighbourhood crime teams are in place on every LPA. The teams review every reported offence, provide feedback around primary and secondary investigation. The Detective Sergeant for the team ensures that reviews are completed, and investigation strategies are set.
62. Crime Managers hold delivery plans, known as 4P plans across neighbourhood crime. These plans capture activity for Pursue, prepare, protect, prevent (the 4 P's). Examples of some aspects of this are:
 - a. The cocooning technique is used by local neighbourhood teams following reports of neighbourhood crime at a repeat location (or creating a repeat victim). Crime prevention advice is offered to both victims, and those at surrounding properties where appropriate, with the aim being to prevent further offences occurring. The crime prevention advice is developed working alongside the local neighbourhood teams and design out crime officers.
 - b. A further prevent initiative has been the use of a previous offender who supported the development of crime prevention advice by identifying properties that he would target.
 - c. Where vulnerability is identified as a driver, referrals to appropriate supporting agencies will be made. Partnership working in cases of complex needs will provide a bespoke approach to meet individual needs.
 - d. Local Engagement and Consultation Officers on each LPA, work closely with Corporate Communications to develop a localised approach to communications. One of these approaches is the use of WMNOW to send messaging to signed up members of the community about crime trends or emerging concerns. Further approaches include the innovative

use of social media to target ad campaigns based on post code. This technology means that the community will be sent crime prevention advice that is relevant to them.

- e. Design Out Crime Officers work across LPA's, supporting in any areas of concern and leveraging partnership effort to reduce physical drivers of SAC.
- f. Weekly LPA crime meetings continue to focus on the disruption of offenders, by exploring opportunities to manage those on bail, offender management visits of known and managed nominals, execution of warrants, or requests for covert resources.
- g. Local tasking meetings held by a superintendent develop seasonality plans which include neighbourhood crime.

63. The majority of neighbourhood crimes are now investigated by LPA's. Prior to the changes to the operating model in April 2023, these investigations would have been held by a geographically based, but centrally owned investigation team.

Managing Offenders and Suspects

- 64. Outstanding suspects are tracked daily through the daily Force Threat Review Meeting that is chaired by an Assistant Chief Constable, bi-weekly through the Intelligence tasking process for any support that force resources can provide monthly through the performance day chaired by the DCC.
- 65. There has been a significant increase in the number of arrests being made, rising from 3341 in December 2022 to 4543 in December 2023. This is an increase of 36%.
- 66. Since May 2023, the numbers of outstanding offenders has been reducing month on month. In May there were 9,338 outstanding, currently there are 7,998 a reduction of a reduction of around 15%.
- 67. Operation Target was launched across WMP in May 2023. This operation is focused on Serious Organised Crime spanning drug dealing, neighbourhood crime, cybercrime and fraud. The main aim of Op Target is to pursue and disrupt offenders, however there will also be a focus on preventing people from becoming victims in the first place.

Next Steps

The board is asked to consider then contents of this paper.

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