

West Midlands Police and Crime Panel

Monday 15 January 2024 at 14:00 hours

Dudley Council Chamber, The Council House, Priory Road, Dudley DY1 1HF

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More information about the Panel, including meeting papers and reports, can be found on the Panel website www.westmidlandspcp.org.uk

Contact Officer: Sarah Fradgley email: wmpcp@birmingham.gov.uk Tel: 0121 303 1727

AGENDA

Supporting Document	Item	Topic	Approximate time
	1	NOTICE OF RECORDING This meeting will be webcast for live or subsequent broadcast and members of the press/public may record the meeting. The whole of the meeting will be filmed except where there are confidential or exempt items.	14:00
	2	APOLOGIES	
	3	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (IF ANY) Members are reminded they must declare all relevant pecuniary and other registerable interests arising from any business to be discussed at this meeting. If a disclosable pecuniary interest is declared a Member must not participate in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless they have been granted a dispensation. If other registerable interests are declared a Member may speak on the matter only if members of the public are allowed to speak at the meeting but otherwise must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless they have been granted a dispensation. If it is a 'sensitive interest', Members do not have to disclose the nature of the interest, just that they have an interest. Information on declaring interests at meetings is available on the Local Government Association's Model Councillor Code of Conduct .	
Attached	4	MINUTES To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2023 and 18 December 2023.	14:05

Supporting Document	Item	Topic	Approximate time
Attached	5	POLICE AND CRIME PANEL ACTION TRACKER To consider the progress of actions arising from previous meetings.	14:07
	6	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME To receive questions from members of the public notified to the Panel in advance of the meeting. Any member of the public who lives, works, or studies in the West Midlands (other than police officers and police staff) can ask a question at the meeting about the Panel's role and responsibilities. Questions must be submitted in writing 4 days before the meeting to wmpcp@birmingham.gov.uk	14:10
Attached	7	POLICE AND CRIME PLAN COMMITMENT - TACKLING DRUGS Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner. The report provides an overview of the commitments made in the Police and Crime Plan to tackle drugs, and actions to reduce the harm caused by drugs and addiction to drugs. The report also responds to the Panel request for data around drug-related homicides and drug-related acquisitive crime. A copy of the PowerPoint presentation slides are appended to the report.	14:40
Attached	8	UPDATE ON HMICFRS 2023/25 PEEL INSPECTION OF WEST MIDLANDS POLICE REPORT To discuss with the Police and Crime Commissioner the findings in the HMICFRS 2023-25 PEEL Inspection Report of West Midlands Police . <i>The Panel will examine the progress addressing the four key areas of concern identified by HMICFRS at its meeting on 5 February 2024.</i>	15:25
Attached	9	POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER UPDATE AND KEY DECISIONS Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner on recent activities. A list of recently published key decisions is appended to the report.	16:05
Attached	10	POLICE AND CRIME PANEL WORK PROGRAMME Report of the Lead Panel Officer.	16:35
	11	URGENT BUSINESS To consider any items of business by reason of special circumstances (to be specified) that in the opinion of the Chair are matters of urgency.	16:45

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WEST MIDLANDS POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD ON 13 NOVEMBER 2023 AT 14:00 HOURS – WALSALL COUNCIL OFFICES

PRESENT: -

Members

Cllr Jasbir Jaspal – Chair (City of Wolverhampton)
Cllr Shabina Bano (Birmingham City Council)
Cllr Heather Delaney (Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council)
Cllr Alan Feeney (Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council)
Cllr Sam Forsyth (Birmingham City Council)
Derek French (Independent Panel Member)
Cllr Gareth Moore (Birmingham City Council)
Kristina Murphy (Independent Panel Member – Vice Chair)
Cllr Garry Perry (Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council)

ALSO PRESENT: -

Simon Foster – Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC)
Jonathan Jardine – Chief Executive, Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
Nikki Penniston – Head of Delivery, Violence and Reduction Partnership
Simon Down – Head of Policy, OPCC
Sarah Fradgley – Overview & Scrutiny Manager, Birmingham City Council (BCC)
Ade Fashade – Scrutiny Officer, Birmingham City Council (BCC)

756 NOTICE OF RECORDING

The Chair announced the meeting would be livestreamed and recorded for subsequent broadcast via the Birmingham City Council YouTube meeting portal and that members of the press and public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

757 APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were received from, Councillors Abdul Khan (Coventry City Council), Tersaim Singh (Wolverhampton), Syeda Khatun (Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council) and Ed Lawrence (Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council).

758 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr. Moore declared a non-pecuniary interest as trustee of Birmingham LGBT and Citizens Advice

759 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Panel Chair announced that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act has now received Royal Assent.

760 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Minutes of the last meeting held on 11 September 2023 were approved by the Panel.

761 POLICE AND CRIME ACTION TRACKER

It was explained that feedback on the West Midlands Police Employee survey was due to be included in the PCC's Fairness and Belonging item presented at this meeting, but the officer presenting had encountered transport issues. The Panel requested that the survey feedback report be circulated to members.

762 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions were received from the public prior to this meeting.

763 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL BUDGET SUB-GROUP.

The Panel received a report on the establishment of a West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Budget Sub-Group, to consider and agree its Terms of Reference and to appoint a minimum of 3 members for the remainder of 2023/24. Consideration should be given to include independent and councillor members.

RESOLVED

- i The Committee noted and agreed the terms of reference for the Police and Crime Panel Budget Sub-group**
- ii Panel agreed that Councillor Sam Forsyth (Birmingham City Council, Councillor Heather Delaney (Solihull MBC) and Kristina Murphy independent panel member be part of the sub-group.**

764 REVIEW OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S (PCC) ANNUAL REPORT 2022/2023.

Members considered the report of the Lead Panel Officer setting out the Police and Crime Panel and Police and Crime Commissioner's statutory responsibilities with the review of the Commissioner Annual Report.

The PCC introduced his Annual Report. Key points highlighted were:

- Top priorities for the PCC include re-establishing visible policing; combating violence such as Violence Against Women & Girls (VAWG) and Domestic Violence; tackling violent crime including youth violence and knife crime.
- Key principles that underpin plans are Prevention; Partnerships; Prioritising Victims; Rights/Welfare and Rehabilitation.
- The PCC pointed out that in his view, a democratically elected Police and Crime Commissioner was the best way to tackling crime and ensuring community safety.
- The PCC thanked his team for their hard work and efforts in keeping West Midlands safe and secure. He is also grateful to the WMPCP for their support.

The OPCC CEO went through key highlights from the annual report:

- A new Chief Constable was recruited during 22/23 from a strong field of candidates.

- Efforts were ongoing to ensure the organisation maintains a strong police officer workforce. The Institute of Fiscal Studies had referred to the underfunding of West Midlands Police. The current budget in place was largely tied up to the fixed number of officers. There are existing vulnerabilities in the financial position of West Midlands Police. Over a third of police officers have less than 3 years' service which represents a significant challenge.
- There have been major changes in Home Office crime recording rules leading to change in variations of how crimes are recorded. There had been an increase in rape and sexual violence offences, and this has had an impact on outcome rates.
- There has been a slow decline in incidences of serious violence in comparison with 2019. It was acknowledged that serious violence remained high but current efforts was slowly yielding results.
- Motor vehicle theft was high but still down in comparison to 2019.
- There has been significant improved performance in 999/101 call handling, now above service level agreements in place.
- There were still challenges around public trust and confidence in the police. Wide-ranging initiatives are ongoing to increase confidence and trust through partnership working and building positive relationships with communities and stakeholders.
- The Commissioner's proposal to government for support for criminal justice within the Trailblazer deal unfortunately did not progress as had been hoped.
- Activities to tackle drug intervention had been impacted by limited funding.
- Great effort was being put into counter-terrorism work as it is a key component of the organisation and is increasingly complex and multi-faceted.

In response to panel members questions, these were the main responses from the PCC and OPCC officers:

- Community policing was still a top priority. Additional resources had been allocated to the Chief Constable to strengthen neighbourhood policing and respond efficiently to offender management. However, plans in place to ensure this will take some time to bed in.
- The West Midlands Road Safety Strategy Group chaired by the PCC had published a strategy review in September recommitting to net zero by halving the number of people killed on the road by 2030 and down to nil by 2040. Road safety enforcement measures had significantly increased. Members pointed out that more on this issue should have been reflected in the annual report.
- On the need for more meaningful data on the implementation and impact of the drugs strategy, there is a diversion and liaison scheme in place to help reduce drug offending. A delivery plan is in place and the OPCC is happy to come back to the panel soon to provide progress update on this.
- Engagement with young people remains a key priority for the PCC as this helped build trust and confidence. Schools Intervention Officers engaged with young people on policing issues. Youth Commissioners had been elected and the PCC meets regularly with them to listen to concerns and ideas.
- Acquisitive crime was rising and intelligence-led reporting such as improving third party reporting was improving. There had been meetings with large retail businesses to tackle shoplifting. Also, the Birmingham Hotspots Patrol initiative was ensuring visible presence across the city.
- The PCC noted the request from the panel about his Forward of the annual report to be more about what has been delivered in the last 12 months rather than the focus on politics, and that the report should contain more dashboard and data showing

where things are at present and what progress and difference was being made, together with more infographics to improve clarity for the reader.

RESOLVED: -

- i. The Police and Crime Commissioner's Draft Annual Report 2022-2023 was reviewed by the Panel and the following recommendations be included in the Panel report:**
 - a. Tackling Drugs – include details of the range of drug intervention activities taking place across the West Midlands and information demonstrating the impact of this work.**
 - b. Road Safety – include details of activities undertaken towards meeting road safety objectives and information demonstrating the impact of this work.**
 - c. Performance Data – suggest additional data on how Police and Crime Plan objectives are being met and the way information is presented to reduce the amount of text and provide greater clarity to the public on progress and the trajectory of performance and trends.**
 - d. The Commissioner reconsider references made in the forward to the report to political issues so that it has greater focus on the delivery of your Police and Crime Plan; and**
- ii. that a copy of the Panel report and the Police and Crime Commissioner's response be published on the Panel's website.**

765 FAIRNESS AND BELONGING: THE WORK OF THE POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER

The report was introduced by the PCC. Key aim of the programme was driving forward equality, diversity and inclusion, anti-racism, justice, and fairness principles that align with policing by consent, accountability and eliminating all forms of discrimination.

The OPCC Head of Policy highlighted some key points from the report:

- Focus of report is primarily on racial equality and reducing disproportionality in policing.
- Community engagement activities ongoing to gain better understanding of impact of policing on diverse communities.
- In response to the Casey Review, a survey on impact of policing BME communities was carried out. 320 responses were received and a report on this will be published in due course.
- The Stop and Search Oversight and Scrutiny panels consists of community stakeholders who hold the police to account. This is part of ongoing dialogue to continue to improve engagement and build trust.

In response to questions from Panel members, the main responses from the PCC and OPCC officers were:

- There were plans to increase engagement particularly with young people especially on issues of disproportionality in Stop and Search. Bimonthly Stop and Search Oversight and Scrutiny were also reviewing body-worn camera videos to analyse and provide feedback to Police.

- There was a 97% user rate among officers of body-worn cameras. Those stopped and searched are also encouraged to provide immediate feedback on their views of how the exercise was for them via a QR code.
- On privacy concerns around feedback process for those stopped and searched, this was noted, and issues of confidentiality and handling of personal information would be looked in relation to the QR code feedback tool.
- Data was available in areas of stop and search and use of force.
- On the cost of running Oversight and Scrutiny panels, there were 10 across West Midlands and consist entirely of community volunteers. No officer is working full-time on them, and currently the benefits outweigh the costs.

RESOLVED: -

That the Fairness and Belonging Strategy update report was noted by the Panel.

766 WEST MIDLANDS VIOLENCE REDUCTION PARTNERSHIP

The Chair reminded the Panel that a report on Violence Reduction in Partnership was received in January. At that meeting, it was requested that a further report about arrangements around community engagement with the new local violence reduction board structure.

The Head of Delivery of the Violence Reduction Partnership went through the report and provided some highlights for consideration:

- There are 7 Local Violence Reduction Boards (LVRB) working together to tackle violence in the region. All are accountable to local policing crime boards and safety partnerships.
- Each local board produced a Strategic Needs Assessments (SNA). Key issues/themes highlighted from these will be drawn out to help produce a regional response strategic plan. Work is ongoing in drafting the plan.
- Engagement with young people was at the heart of the partnerships and local boards. A Youth Assembly consisting of 30 members is engaged in developing youth-led improvements to reducing violence.
- A range of co-production pilots were being convened to try out new approaches in engaging on violence reduction.

In response to panel questions, main points raised were:

- A prevention programme was being delivered in schools across the region as part of efforts to address county lines and criminal gang activity.
- In response to how the work on reducing violence was making a difference overall, the officer said that there had been a reduction of serious violence, knife and gun crimes in the region. It was accepted that monitoring of violent crime reduction and evidence on how this was making a difference should have been highlighted in the report.

RESOLVED:-

That the report on community engagement of local violence reduction partnerships was noted by the Panel.

767 POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER KEY DECISIONS

The PCC drew the Panel's attention to key decisions report (September-November 2023)

RESOLVED: -

That the list of recent key decisions taken by the Commissioner was noted.

768 POLICE AND CRIME PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel considered work programme items for its January and February meetings.

RESOLVED: -

That

- i. that information set out in Work Programme Appendix 1 be noted; and**
- ii. that subject to further input from the Chair and Deputy Chair, the following changes be agreed:**
 - a. January 2023: REMOVE Draft proposed precept and PCC budget, as this would now be considered by the Panel's budget subgroup.**
 - b. January 2023: ADD Update on police and crime panel role within future police governance.**
 - c. Menu of topics: ADD drug intervention strategies and their impact, and the link with acquisitive crime levels.**
 - d. Menu of topics: ADD tackling serious violence.**

769 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 16:24 hours.

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CHAIR

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE WEST MIDLANDS POLICE AND CRIME PANEL HELD ON 18 DECEMBER 2023 AT 10:00 HOURS – SOLIHULL COUNCIL CHAMBER

PRESENT: -

Adele Brown - Independent Panel Member
Cllr Heather Delaney - Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Alan Feeney - Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Sam Forsyth - Birmingham City Council
Derek French - Independent Panel Member
Cllr Jasbir Jaspal – City of Wolverhampton (Chair)
Cllr Ed Lawrence - Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Cllr Gareth Moore - Birmingham City Council

ALSO PRESENT: -

Simon Foster – Police & Crime Commissioner
Deputy Chief Constable Scott Green - West Midlands Police
Chief Superintendent Thomas Joyce - West Midlands Police
Alethea Fuller - Deputy Chief Executive, Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner
Jane Heppel – Chief Finance Officer, Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner
Jonathan Jardine – Chief Executive, Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner
Sarah Fradgley– Overview & Scrutiny Manager, Birmingham City Council

770 NOTICE OF RECORDING

The Chair announced the meeting would be livestreamed and recorded for subsequent broadcast and that members of the press and public may record and take photographs except where there were confidential or exempt items.

771 APOLOGIES

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Councillors Shabina Bano (Birmingham), Abdul Khan (Coventry), Garry Perry (Walsall), Tersaim Singh (Wolverhampton), Syeda Khatun (Sandwell) and Kristina Murphy (Independent Member).

Apologies for non- attendance was also received from Craig Guildford Chief Constable.

772 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None declared.

773 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chair announced that this extraordinary panel meeting had been called following the decision of His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Service (HMICFRS) to place West Midlands Police into Engage status and its notification of four areas of concern.

774 WEST MIDLANDS POLICE – ENGAGE STATUS

The Chair informed the meeting that she had agreed to the circulation of the late report as it was important the Panel had all the information to allow it to discuss this matter.

Sarah Fradgley, Overview and Scrutiny Manager, Birmingham City Council, drew the Panel's attention to paragraph 4 of the report, which referenced the publicly available information, and paragraph 5, which outlined the Panel's unique role set out in the Policing Protocol and guidance.

It was noted that Recommendation 2 provided the Panel with an opportunity to decide how it might wish to take this matter forward.

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) took the Panel through his presentation which included an introduction to His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMICFRS), a summary of funding and resources, key dates and concerns in relation to the HMICFRS' decision to place West Midlands Police (the Force) into Engage status, and the PCC's and Chief Constable's responses.

The PCC, Deputy Chief Constable Green and Alethea Fuller, the Deputy Chief Executive, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, outlined the actions being taken to address the four areas of concern and responded to questions from Panel Members. The following key points were highlighted:

- **Investigations:** This area of concern related to the investigations undertaken by the Force that affect the community every day and was not a reference to investigations of major or serious crime.
- This area of concern was one of the core drivers for the re-structure of the Force, moving from a directorate model to a geographical model. Each of the seven local policing areas had a Chief Superintendent accountable for their local resourcing, including response, neighbourhoods and investigations. Operation Vanguard sought to improve investigative practice and improve senior oversight arrangements.
- The HMICFRS had referenced published ONS positive outcome rate data which at the time of the inspection was 3.6%. The Force now had a positive outcome rate of 11% (one of the highest for any metropolitan police force in the country). Reference was made to the suggestion by the Chief Constable that WMP should have been placed into Engage Status at that earlier point of time.
- The number of open cases had fallen, and the Deputy Chief Constable considered it now to be at an appropriate level.
- It was acknowledged there was a backlog in digital forensics. The view of the Deputy Chief Constable was that that backlog was much shorter than other force areas of the same size and was at a reasonable based on the resources the Force had.
- **MARAC (Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences):** The Force advised that it was not the sole agent in MARAC but accepted its responsibility. The Force was refreshing its referral process to reduce the level of referrals and return to within national guidelines.
- Resourcing issues had been addressed with stakeholder partners, with most MARACS now holding weekly meetings to reduce the backlog. That backlog would be resolved in the next month or so.
- The Deputy Chief Executive of the OPCC outlined the role of the OPCC in funding MARAC co-ordination and support processes. A review of MARAC and a victims and survivor survey in May 2022 highlighted the rise in cases and increasing case complexity. It also identified the need for an IT system to support the MARAC

process. The OPCC had approached stakeholders for extra support and input into an IT system but had not received a favourable response.

- Members queried what more partners could do and whether the Panel could do anything to help and were informed that senior buy-in was needed across the seven local authorities. It was noted there were some excellent subject matter experts, but senior-level decision-makers were needed around the table and any leverage or influence Panel members could exercise in their individual authorities would be constructive.
- **Sex Offender Management:** The Panel was informed that this area of concern, along with Online Child Abuse, had not been identified as part of the PEEL inspection but had been identified in an earlier inspection around public protection.
- Assurance was sought that standard and medium risk offenders were being managed properly within the community. The Panel was advised that there had been some delays in visits and risk assessments of standard and medium risk sex offenders and for that reason the Chief Constable and Deputy Chief Constable had already made the decision to re-structure the teams.
- The Force's view was that this area of concern had already been addressed prior to the HMICFRS Engage status notice and the Deputy Chief Constable stated he was confident that when the Chief Constable presented to the HMICFRS in January 2024 there would be no backlog in the management of sex offenders across the West Midlands.
- **Managing the Risk of Online Child Abuse:** This related to intelligence packages the Force received from a national agency or generates itself where there are concerns around online activity identified at an address. Prior to the Force's restructure there had been some delay in the processing of those packages where further investigation and intelligence development was required.
- The Deputy Chief Constable was confident the Force has resolved this area of concern, with all high-risk cases being processed within 48 hours or sooner and all others processed within the normal guidelines.

During the discussion further points were raised, the main points included:

- The Panel noted that neither the Force nor the PCC were in receipt of the final HMICFRS inspection report. A draft had been shared with them on a strictly confidential basis but could not be discussed in public.
- It was acknowledged that effective scrutiny was difficult without having sight of the final report and it was agreed that another meeting of the Panel would be convened once the report had been published. The PCC suggested the report might be published shortly.
- A comment was made that the briefings today had provided some reassurance that actions were progressing. It was noted that the Force accepted the HMICFRS recommendations and were confident that most of the matters had been resolved.
- Frustrations were expressed that the PCC had not informed the Panel of the HMICFRS' decision to place West Midlands Police into Engage status as soon as he was made aware and before it was announced in the media. The PCC referred to the key dates in his presentation and confirmed that he had been notified of the decision via a Teams call on 22nd November, with formal notification on 23rd November, the day before the decision was published. The PCC had circulated his statement to all stakeholders on 24th November. The PCC explained that it had not been anticipated that the HMIC were going to make that decision, otherwise the Panel would have been briefed.

- It was further suggested that the PCC should have informed the Panel at the point he was previously made aware of areas of concern that led to earlier changes, including the change to the operational model.
- A discussion followed regarding mechanisms for communication between the PCC and the Panel and one suggestion was that the PCC Update standing item should be reinstated on Panel agendas. It was agreed that further discussions would be held with a view to improving the processes in place for sharing information.
- The PCC was asked how confident he was the four areas of concern could be addressed without additional resources. The PCC responded he was optimistic there would be significant and material improvements in the performance of West Midlands Police despite resourcing issues. Much of the data was now 8-11 months old and pre-dated the new operating model and the work the Chief Constable had been undertaking since he was appointed just over a year ago. The PCC felt it was also important to understand the HMICFRS decision within the context of wider positive activity of West Midlands Police. He believed the underlying causes related to the austerity imposed by Government over 13 years. The PCC stressed the financial situation the Force was in, and that the lack of capacity and capability of the Force had been referenced in the 2021/2022 HMICFRS PEEL Inspection report.
- The PCC stated that he was committed to scrutinising the Force and holding the Chief Constable to account on the improvement plan and was treating the causes of concern as a top priority, notwithstanding his concerns of the HMICFRS decision making process.
- The PCC also responded to questions about the potential transfer of policing powers to the west midland mayor, stressing his commitment to oppose the process and fulfil his pledge for a directly elected police and crime commissioner.
- With regard to the Commissioner's 31 March 2024 target date for removal from Engage, it was noted this would be a judgement by HMICFRS. The Chief Constable would continue to report to the Police Performance Oversight Group.

RESOLVED:-

- i. **That the report be noted.**
- ii. **That a further meeting of the Panel would be convened when the HMICFRS PEEL Inspection 2023/25 report was published.**
- iii. **That the Police and Crime Panel and the Police and Crime Commissioner have further discussions on improving the processes for sharing information.**

775 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

The meeting ended at 12:01 hours.

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CHAIR

West Midlands Police and Crime Panel – Action Tracker – January 2024

1. Outstanding Actions

Minute/ Action No.	Meeting Date	Action	Update/ Notes
693 ii	Jan 2023	The Police and Crime Commissioner report back actions to address the findings from the recent WMP Employee Survey relating to staff morale, engagement, and culture.	Report was not available on 13 November 2023. The Panel requested that the survey feedback report be circulated to members.
751 iii	Sept 2023	That the Police and Crime Commissioner be requested to expand his Fairness and Belonging Plan report to highlight the actions taken to address WMP Staff Survey findings relating Police Community Support Officers.	Report was not available on 13 November 2023. The Panel requested that the survey feedback report be circulated to members.
774ii.	Dec 2023	That a further meeting of the Panel would be convened when the HMICFRS PEEL Inspection 2023/25 report was published	HMICFRS report published on 22 December 2023. Item included on 15 January 2025 agenda. Update on actions to address the 4 areas of concern to be considered by Panel on 5 February
774iii	Dec 2023	That the Police and Crime Panel and the Police and Crime Commissioner have further discussions on improving the processes for sharing information.	Panel to determine the best approach to progress this recommendation.

2. Completed Actions

<i>Minute/ Action No.</i>	<i>Meeting Date</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Update/ Notes</i>
629	Jan 2022	<i>Cllr Brennan, West Midlands Victims' Commissioner be invited to report back on improving victim satisfaction survey response rates and her examination of local Victims' Right to Review provisions.</i>	<i>Programmed for 6 Feb 2023</i>
630	Jan 2022	<i>The PCC compares the budgets of the most similar forces and reports this information to the panel when setting the budget.</i>	<i>This data will inform the panel budget debate January/ February 2023</i>
676ii	Oct 2022	<i>The Commissioner provide a full breakdown of where Safer Streets phases 1, 2, and 3 funding has been allocated across the region.</i>	<i>10 March 2023 - Report sent to members</i>
694ii	Jan 2023	<i>The PCC to report to 6 February 2023 the impact of his partnership working and processes to address his police and crime plan commitments on road safety and speeding.</i>	
695ii	Jan 2023	<i>Specific information requested for 6 Feb Budget / Precept report:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The implications of options for balancing the 23/34 budget and achieving savings of £28.1 million on the delivery of the police and crime plan priorities.</i> - <i>More information on the priority-based budgeting exercise to understand how it was being conducted and the implications on any areas of the budget that may be cut.</i> - <i>More information on the cost and benefits of the current Estate Strategy spending.</i> - <i>A full explanation and breakdown as to why costs had risen so sharply.</i> - <i>The implications for reserves of budget decisions.</i> 	<i>Programmed for 6 Feb 2023</i>
672ii	Oct 2022	<i>Public Confidence in Policing Scrutiny Inquiry – Programming six-monthly progress reports tracking progress of recommendations.</i>	<i>Programmed for 20 March 2023, and six-monthly thereafter</i>
672iii	Oct 2022	<i>Four key themes arising from the Public Confidence in Policing Scrutiny Inquiry recommendations – to enable panel to examine progress in greater detail, further reports be programmed on:</i> <i>Understanding public confidence locally</i> <i>Force accessibility</i> <i>Victims of crime</i> <i>Progress and outputs from the Fairness and Belonging Plan.</i>	<i>Items scheduled on Panel work programme</i>
673ii	Oct 2022	<i>A copy of the PCC's Estates Strategy November 2021 report be circulated to Members for information.</i>	<i>Report sent to members</i>
674	Oct 2022	<i>Volunteers sought to join the Panel Budget Sub-Group (minimum of 3 Panel Members)</i>	<i>Sub-group membership finalised (Hussain, Feeny, Jaspal, Murphy)</i>
676 iii	Oct 2022	<i>The Commissioner to arrange Violence Reduction Partnership briefing so members can understand the impact it has made.</i>	<i>Presented 9 Jan 2023</i>
687 iii a	Nov 2022	<i>The Police and Crime Commissioner provide the panel with a breakdown of how the total headcount of police officers and staff are currently distributed across West Midlands Police Force.</i>	<i>Information provided to Panel Members</i>

<i>Minute/ Action No.</i>	<i>Meeting Date</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Update/ Notes</i>
687 iii b	Nov 2022	<i>The Police and Crime Commissioner provide a summary of the package of support provided to student police officers.</i>	<i>Information provided to Panel Members</i>
687 iii d	Nov 2022	<i>The Police and Crime Commissioner provide the Panel with data on resignation rates across the Force.</i>	<i>Information provided to Panel Members</i>
687 iii c	Nov 2022	<i>The Police and Crime Commissioner report back on the findings from the recent police officer and staff survey to enable the Panel to understand the current picture of officer and staff morale.</i>	<i>Information provided to Panel Members. Further item added to work programme</i>
	Jan 2023	<i>OPCC to circulate Home Office report comparing police force grant allocations.</i>	<i>Information sent to Panel members</i>
710i	Feb 2023	<i>Bus and train crime yearly comparison data - Panel asked for more recent covering 2022 and 2023.</i>	<i>Information supplied to Panel member</i>
710ii	Feb 2023	<i>Offences passed to the Central Ticket Office (April 20-Feb 22) Panel asked for a breakdown of the number of offences occurring on motorways and the smaller road network.</i>	<i>10 March 2023 - Report sent to members</i>
698ii	Jan 2023	<i>The Violence Reduction Partnership to share the academic evaluation programme that reviewed some VRP projects and the percentage of West Midlands schools engaging with the Partnership</i>	<i>Data on schools engaged sent to members 5 April</i>
711ii	Feb 2023	<i>Data on victims helped and impact – Panel asked for data on the number of victims helped through PCC commissioned services (independent providers and Victims Support), the type of support provided, and outcomes attained so that the Panel can understand impact that has been achieved.</i> <i>The Panel requested the gender breakdown of domestic abuse victims.</i>	<i>Information sent to members March 2023</i>
710iii	Feb 2023	<i>Collaboration between WMP Licensing and Planning Dept and Neighbourhood police – PCC undertook to make immediate inquiries into a report that police responses to licensing applications did not reflect the views of local neighbourhood officers.</i>	<i>Reported to July 2023</i>
754iii	Sept 2023	<i>The Police and Crime Panel Chair write to the Secretaries of State for Transport and the Treasury to express the Panel support of the Police and Crime Commissioner campaign to retain income generated from speeding camera fixed penalty fines to be retained locally.</i>	<i>Sent October 2023</i>
620	Nov 2021	<i>The OPCC to feedback on communications and publicity plans in relation to the Fairness and Belonging Plan and WMP recruitment.</i>	<i>Reported to November 2023</i>
698iii	Jan 2023	<i>The OPCC to report back on the community engagement by local CSPs, and Violence Reduction Boards structure.</i>	<i>Reported to November 2023</i>
751ii	Sept 2023	<i>That Police and Crime Commissioner Annual Report 2022-23 include progress towards fulfilling his Police and Crime Plan objective to maintain and support 464 Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs).</i>	<i>Annual Report presented in November 2023</i>
764	Nov 2023	<i>Panel review report of PCC Annual Report and the Police and Crime Commissioner’s response be published on the Panel’s website.</i>	<i>PCC Response circulated to members and published on www.westmidlandspcp.org.uk</i>



Report to the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel – Drugs

Date: Monday January 15th 2024

Report of West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner

Report authors: Esther Whittock and Jody Clark

1 Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview to the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel of the commitments made in the Police and Crime Plan to tackle drugs, and provide an outline of what has been achieved so far by the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner to reduce the harm caused by drugs and addiction to drugs.
2. The panel asked for the report to cover specific areas of interest:
 - Police and Crime Plan commitments and progress against these commitments
 - Data around drug-related homicides and drug-related acquisitive crime
 - National Drugs Strategy
 - West Midlands Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Partnership (WMCDAP)
 - The latest position on Naloxone in the West Midlands
 - Op Mabble

This report has been segmented into sections with each of these specific areas of interest as headings.

2 The commitments in the Police and Crime Plan to tackling drugs

3. This section of the report will go through key commitments that are in the Police and Crime Plan to tackle drugs, and how the Police and Crime Commissioner is progressing against these commitments. Most of the data in this section is from the November Strategic Policing and Crime Board (Appendix A). Harm reduction and treatment is a key approach to tackling drugs and a key commitment in the Police and Crime Plan.

Increase the use of Out of Court Disposals for low level drug offences, such as those given via the DIVERT programme

4. In 2022/23 40% of drug possession resulted in an Out of Court Disposal. This shows an increase from previous years: 36% in 2021/22 and 32% in 2019/20.

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5. In 2020 the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner commissioned Cranstoun to deliver a Pre-Arrest Diversion Scheme (PADS) across the whole force area. This programme forms part of a wider diversion, prevention and intervention strategy, managed by West Midlands Police (WMP), which is aimed at reducing offending and reoffending. WMP strategy is to work with partners and divert emerging offenders from court into the most appropriate intervention to reduce reoffending.
6. Cranstoun have developed an education programme that aims to divert drug users from longer term drug use. The DIVERT Programme is available to anyone (young people and adults) found in possession of any illicit substance including (but not limited to) heroin, cocaine, cannabis, amphetamines, new psychoactive substances, nitrous oxide (possessed illegally for inhalation). The content of the programme includes drug specific harm reduction advice; naloxone advice and dispensing; education on the economic and lifestyle impact of drug use; tailored individual advice and support; onward referrals to specialist treatment.
7. DIVERT is for 'simple' possession of controlled drugs offences only, 'possession with Intent to Supply' offences are excluded from this scheme. Someone can be referred to DIVERT numerous times. This scheme is available for both adults and juveniles. It is a voluntary referral scheme & does not lead to a criminal record.
8. Cranstoun have achieved a 72% retention from initial intervention to groupwork (West Midlands and West Mercia, 2021-22). Each use of DIVERT saves at least 4.25 hours of police time per case. Since 2020, DIVERT has received over 10,000 referrals so that equates to saving at least 42,500 hours of police time. Figure 1 shows the referrals into divert across the seven local authority areas in 2022/23, with the highest numbers of referrals being in Birmingham.

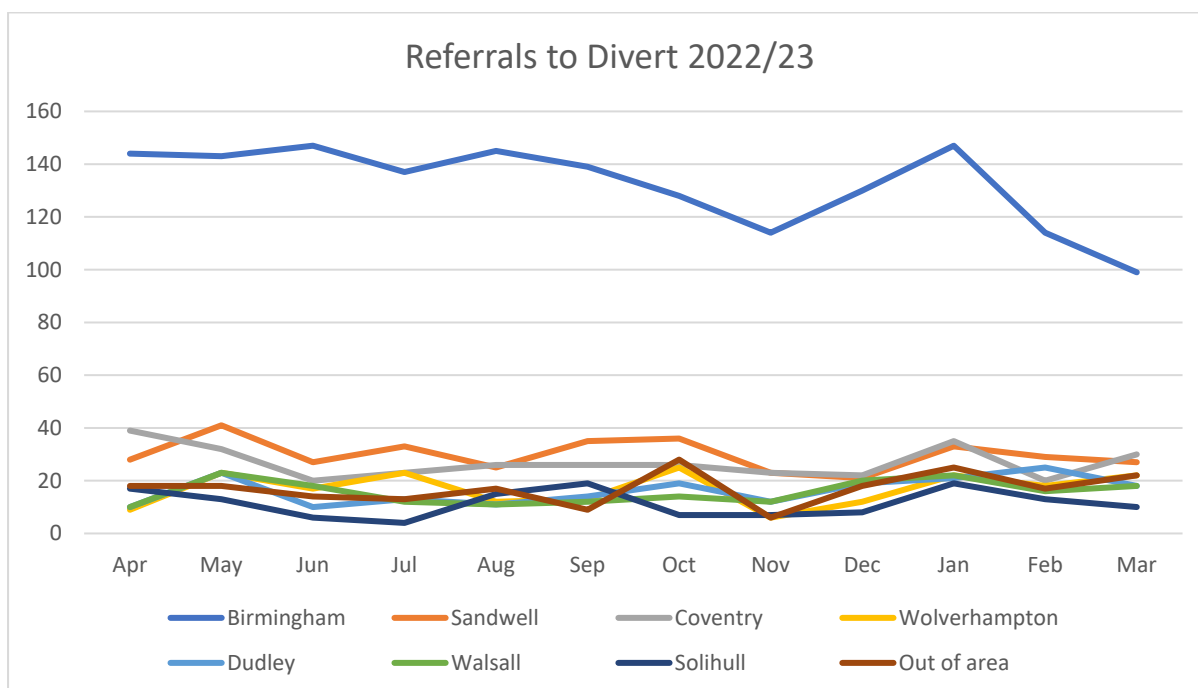


Figure 1. Referrals to DIVERT 2022/23

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Monitor disproportionality in the use of diversion

9. Disproportionality is monitored as part of the Disproportionality Committee, and during quarterly monitoring meetings Cranstoun categorise the data to show ethnicity, sex and place of residence of offenders directed into DIVERT. DIVERT reduces disproportionality: for example, before DIVERT 40.5% of Afro-Caribbean offenders were charged for possession (vs. 35% average), dropping to 11.4% after DIVERT (vs. 11.3% average).

Increase the number of people in custody being referred into drug treatment where a need is identified

10. In 2022/23 1,418 people in custody were referred into drug treatment (where a need is identified). In comparison 728 were referred in 2021/22 and 1,087 in 2020. Therefore, in 2022/2023 there was an increase in the number of people in custody being referred into drug treatment where a need is identified.
11. The Offending to Recovery (O2R) programme has been operating in Birmingham since 2018 with a Birmingham-wide pilot launched in July 2021. The programme is now mainstreamed. The O2R programme is a partnership venture initiated by West Midlands Police, working with the business sector, to tackle drug related retail crime. The programme is targeted at individuals with high levels of criminal activity, particularly retail crime, motivated by a Class A addiction, poor wellbeing, and often co-morbidities, particularly mental health conditions.
12. The O2R model identifies clients via crime stats, partner agencies and retailer intelligence, then there is a multi-agency needs assessment to decide the best pathway option. This results in a treatment plan and ongoing support and aftercare, for example dry house / general recovery community with support, voluntary work/education, and then meaningful employment/ education/ housing.
13. WMP provided detailed data to enable 'tracking' of the first 60 clients who were assessed and had some involvement with the programme since commencement of the pilot (June 2021 – June 2022). Of these, at the time the report was written in July 2022, 33 continued to be actively worked with and 27 were inactive/ withdrawn. Of the 33 active clients, 6 were diverted to other services and 27 entered a rehabilitation facility. When the pilot report was written in July 2022, 3 clients were still in rehabilitation, 20 discharged early, and 4 completed the full 12-week residential rehab programme. The 12 month pilot in 2021-2022 resulted in 27 clients being admitted to residential rehab, which led to £155,637 less spent on fuelling addiction, £466,928 retail loss prevented, and in total 1108 days in rehab. The cost of rehab was £69,500.
14. For the 2022/23 period the project was in a crucial maintenance period between exiting from funding provided through the pilot, to taking advantage of funding which has been provided by Birmingham City Council through their SSMTR (Supplemental Substance Misuse Treatment and Recovery) Grant. Over this financial year, there were changes in staffing numbers. Whilst at the start of the financial year three officers were abstracted from the project, the project was boosted by a further four

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members of staff before the end of the financial year with funding from the OPCC and Birmingham City Council. Next financial year local authorities will be using some of the SSMTR Grant for O2R. The project has continued to support vulnerable people caught in the cycle of offending and has supported 37 people over the course of the financial year 2022/23. The majority entered residential rehab or were referred into other treatment.

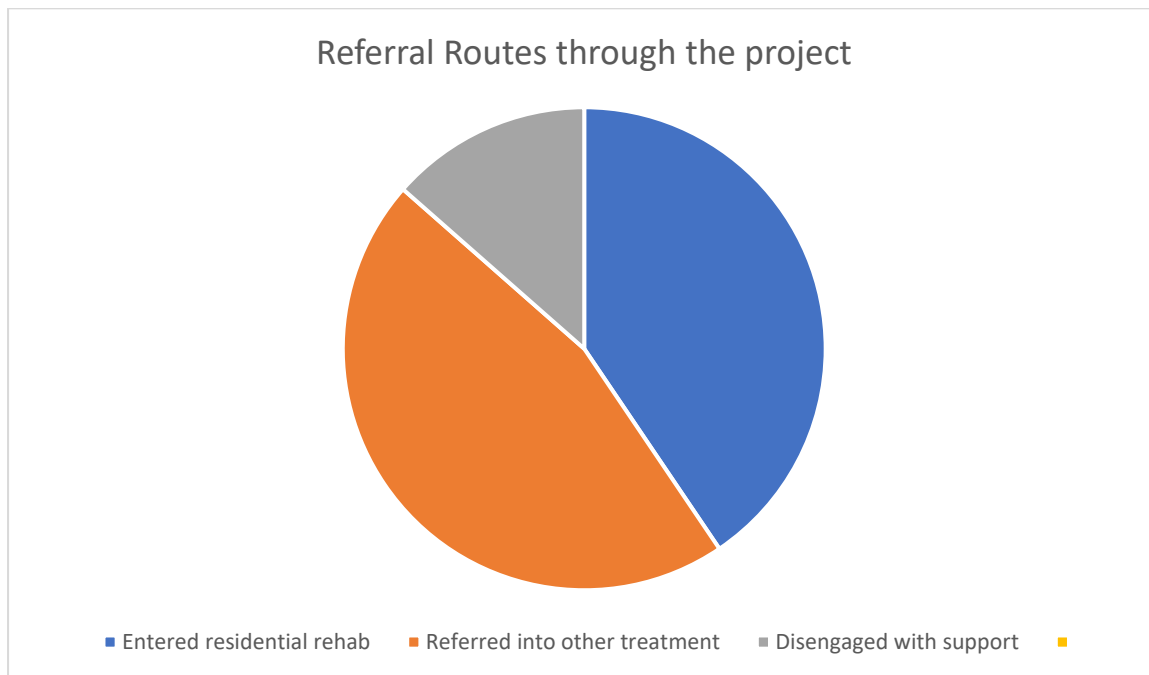


Figure 2. shows how those vulnerable 37 people were supported by the programme over the year.

15. The Cranstoun Arrest Referral Service (CARS) was launched in January 2020 and the current contract with the provider Cranstoun runs until March 2025. The contract is monitored through quarterly monitoring meetings attended by Cranstoun staff, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner (OPCC) substance leads and relevant WMP staff. The project has shown a great level of success in its performance through these monitoring meetings. It is the highest value contract that the OPCC has, with a yearly spend of £1 million. The project also provides significant strategic advantages for the Police and Crime Commissioner's ambitions concerning broader integration across the criminal justice system.
16. Cranstoun have drug workers within the six main custody blocks across the West Midlands Police area (Perry Barr, Oldbury, Coventry, Wolverhampton, Bloxwich and Stechford). The main aims of the service are to engage offenders in custody (post-arrest) and provide an opportunity to break the cycle of drugs and/or alcohol and offending. Cranstoun complete Required Assessments (RAs) following a positive Drug Test on Arrest (DToA) of someone who has committed a trigger offence (mostly acquisitive crime). Cranstoun also complete Voluntary Assessments (VAs); Cranstoun staff will sweep the cells speaking to offenders who come through the block and who have not had a positive DToA. They will engage offenders and aim to discuss any substance use issues they may have.

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17. If it emerges that the individual has drug/alcohol-related issues, outcomes can include:

- Basic harm reduction advice
- Assessments that are required as a result of a positive DToA
- Voluntary assessments for people not identified through DToA
- Case management whilst referrals into community treatment are processed

Greater use of Community Sentence Treatment Requirements

18. Cranstoun arrest referral workers also work with the courts and probation in supporting the Community Sentence Treatment Requirements (CSTRs) process. As well as opportunistically completing Alcohol Treatment Requirement (ATR) and Drug Rehabilitation Requirement (DRR) suitability assessments with people engaged in custody, CARS workers also complete these when requested to do so by the courts. The court work includes a significant administrative component, requiring following up work with clients, probation and court staff.

Below in Figure 3 is data from last year as well as the most up to date data for CARS in Figure 4.

Definition	Year to date 2	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year to date
Total contacts, assessments and interventions delivered.	13874	4306	4373	3757	4163	16599
Total contacts on where no further intervention was provided.	10605	3182	3264	2643	2988	12077
Total assessments including court assessments.	3269	1124	1109	1114	1174	4521
Total Required Assessments following positive test.	1393	661	690	714	774	2839
Total Voluntary Custody Assessments.	1276	315	279	255	246	1095
Total Court Assessments – [DRR/ ATR/ Conditional/ Pre-Sentence)	600	148	140	145	154	587
Total DRRs granted	213	74	42	59	51	226
Total ATRs granted	166	47	37	34	17	135
Total Referrals to Specialist Treatment	1723	555	467	465	341	1828

Figure 3. Quarter 1-4 of 2022-23 CARS data including number of contacts, assessments and interventions delivered.

Definition	Year to date 3	Q1	Q2	Year to date
Total contacts, assessments and interventions delivered.	16599	4222	3903	8125
Total contacts on where no further intervention was provided.	12077	3022	2757	5779

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Definition	Year to date 3	Q1	Q2	Year to date
Total assessments including court assessments.	4521	1010	913	1923
Total Required Assessments following positive test.	2839	605	559	1164
Total Voluntary Custody Assessments.	1095	251	213	464
Total Court Assessments – [DRR/ ATR/ Conditional/ Pre-Sentence)	587	154	141	295
Total DRRs granted	226	70	38	108
Total ATRs granted	135	41	30	71
Total Referrals to Specialist Treatment	1828	501	353	854

Figure 4. Quarter 1-2 of 2023-2024 CARS data including number of contacts, assessments and interventions delivered.

19. The data in Figure 3 and Figure 4 shows the work the Cranstoun staff, commissioned by the Police and Crime commissioner, complete to increase the number of people in custody being referred into drug treatment where a need is identified as well as trying to increase the use of Community Sentence Treatment Requirements. The data is not yet available for whether there has been an increase in the number of Community Sentence Treatment Requirements made. Therefore, this is still being evaluated and the OPCC will continue to work with probation on this.

Support wider use of the lifesaving Naloxone to help reverse opioid overdoses

20. Section six covers this area in more detail but a summary of the Police and Crime Commissioner’s work to support the re-introduction of Naloxone within West Midlands Police include:

- At the end of October, the Police and Crime Commissioner chaired the Naloxone Ambitions Summit, including partners and treatment providers across the West Midlands
- The OPCC has met with the local authority commissioners to discuss and map out where Naloxone is being used in each area
- The OPCC has met with trainers and treatment providers from across the local authority areas and drafted a Naloxone Training Provision Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

Drug safety testing in the night-time economy

21. Conversations continue to be held with The Loop (providers of drug safety testing services) and a range of local partners to explore the potential of providing drug checking services in the Birmingham night time economy. The main delay in progressing this initiative has been the need to better understand the Home Office’s current requirements around issuing a license to ensure the scheme operates within the current legislative framework.

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Drug early warning programmes and monitor the number of drug related deaths in West Midlands, acting accordingly where there are significant increases

22. Work on a drug early warning system has progressed this year. Working alongside reps from WMP, West Midlands Toxicology Laboratory and Birmingham City Council's Public Health Team, a draft protocol has been developed that seeks to ensure the safe transport and testing of substances suspected of causing harm so that public health harm reduction messages can be cascaded to at-risk populations. The protocol will now be raised with WMP for sign-off.
23. The West Midlands Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Partnership will be conducting a Local Drug Information System (LDIS) audit in the new year to find out progress local authorities have made in establishing and trialling their LDIS. This is particularly important given the increase in deaths in the summer due to synthetic opioids, and each local authority having a LDIS would mean they could share and assess drug information, and would also be able to issue drug alerts when necessary and warnings sent to the right people. Therefore, West Midlands local authorities would be able to ensure reports of new, contaminated or particularly powerful drugs can be shared and collated from a range of sources so they can be verified.
24. The number of drug related deaths is monitored regularly at the Strategic Policing and Crime Board (Appendix A).

Aiming to engage people who are not well served by current provision

25. The Police and Crime Commissioner, in partnership with the JABBS foundation, co-commissioned research to expand the evidence base on the needs of women who use drugs and alcohol and the ways that those needs are currently being met through a qualitative research project focused on the West Midlands. The research was conducted by the Centre for Justice Innovation and Staffordshire University. The researchers spoke to women currently in treatment as well as the practitioners who support them and people working in specialist women's services in the region. The research found that many of the drug and alcohol community treatment services that contributed to the research were not able to fully meet women's needs. The research found that services need to meet basic standards around providing care in safe, appropriate spaces in a way which is accessible to women, and which offers all women the option of gender-specific group work and a same-gender key worker. Services also need to develop their capacity to respond to women's specific gendered needs, developing staff expertise in trauma-responsive care and domestic abuse. Beyond improving their own delivery, services need to develop their links with the other agencies in order to help women access the full range of support which they need to achieve sustainable recovery. The Police and Crime Commissioner will continue to shine a light on the importance of meeting the needs of women needing access to treatment in the West Midlands, and will endorse the recommendations from the research so that they be considered by local authorities when commissioning their drug and alcohol treatment services.
26. The West Midlands Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Partnership (WMCDAP), which is chaired by the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, has set up a lived experience sub-group. The aim of the sub-group is to build relationships with local lived experience leads and local authority groups, and receive local intelligence and

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lived experienced voice from these leads and groups which can then be fed back in the WMCDAP. The group considers where the WMCDAP Delivery Plan would benefit from lived experience input and proposes this to the WMCDAP. This sub-group aims to engage with lived experience voice to learn from those who/those who know someone who have gone through/are going through experiences of drug addiction and treatment to understand where their needs are not being met so provision might be improved.

Increase/improve disruption activity by West Midlands Police as part of pro-active drug supply investigations

27. In 2022/23 there were 251 disruptions by West Midlands Police and 438 disruptions by West Midlands Regional Organised Crime Unit (WMROCU). There were 1,952 County Lines disruptions.
28. In 2021/22 there were 439 disruptions by WMP and 580 by WMROCU, and 1,533 County Lines disruptions. In 2020/21 there were 495 WMP disruptions and 381 WMROCU disruptions, and 108 County Lines disruptions.
29. Recorded drug offending has significantly increased over the last 12 months compared to the national baseline. Overall increases have been 32% with 7838 trafficking or possession of drugs offences recorded. Possession offences account for 2/3 of the volume with an increase of 30% with trafficking offences increasing by 36%.
30. The Country Lines Taskforce operating model continues to embed, operating across all West Midlands Local Policing Areas (LPAs), regionally and nationally, supported by a clear 4P plan (Pursue, Prepare, Protect and Prevent). The specialist investigative function now includes a dedicated capability to investigate exploitation of children and vulnerable adults linked to County Lines. The digital forensic capability has been enhanced, whilst maintaining both digital media and drug expert witness support.
31. County Lines Financial Investigators are now generating income through seizure, confiscation and forfeiture of criminal assets. Home Office line closure targets have increased during 23/24 to 240. During Quarter 2, a continuation of strong drug line closures and positive criminal outcomes was maintained with a total of 67 closed down. As of November, the Taskforce has now secured nearly 70% of Home Office targets for 23/24. Cash seizures alone in Quarter 2 are in excess of £250,000; with multiple confiscation orders being progressed regarding other criminal assets including houses, bank accounts and vehicles.
32. Notable investigations include Operation Andesine, concerning a prominent Birmingham gang who utilised social media channels to distribute Class A drugs. The Shocker Line was enforced against in July, which was a Class A drug line supplying a significant number of service users linked to local serious acquisitive crime. Action against the Ezra Line led to the recovery of 3 viable (and loaded) firearms in Birmingham following close work with the covert investigations team.

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Monitor the number of drug trafficking offences recorded by West Midlands Police and reports which are flagged as County Lines related.

33. The number of drug trafficking offences recorded and reports which are flagged as County Lines related are both monitored regularly at the Strategic Policing and Crime Board. In 2022/23 2,174 drug trafficking offences were recorded by West Midlands Police. In 2021/22 2,374 were recorded and in 2019/20 1,580 were recorded.
34. January to December 2022 122 reports via the National Referral Mechanism were flagged as County Lines related. As a benchmark for comparison there were 89 in January to December 2020.
35. Youth services commissioned by the OPCC, 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.
36. 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.

3 Data around drug-related homicides and drug-related acquisitive crime

37. Panel members have asked for data around homicides and acquisitive crime that are drug-related, and how the Police and Crime Commissioner is addressing this. Early interventions are key to the PCC's drugs strategy and such interventions stop crime further down the line.
38. The Government document 'From harm to hope. A 10-year drugs plan to cut crime and save lives', published in December 2021 states, "There are more than 300,000 heroin and crack addicts in England who, between them, are responsible for nearly half of all burglaries, robberies and other acquisitive crime. Drugs ... drive half of all homicides."

Drug-related Homicides

39. The Home Office Homicide Index outlines the proportion of homicide victims and suspects that were under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the homicide in England and Wales. The data is combined data for year ending March 2020 to year ending March 2022. In terms of suspects, 29% were under the influence of alcohol, illicit drug or both. In terms of victims, 33% were under the influence of alcohol, illicit drug or both.

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40. As seen in Figure 5 below, the Homicide Index also shows the proportion of currently recorded homicides by various drug fields, England and Wales combined data for year ending March 2020 to year ending March 2022.

Drug fields	Male victims or suspects	Female victims or suspects	All victims or suspects
Victim known drug user (%)	39	15	32
Victim known drug dealer (%)	20	3	15
Suspect known drug user (%)	47	38	46
Suspect known drug dealer (%)	31	9	29
Motive to obtain drugs (%)	4	4	4
Motive to steal drug proceeds (%)	5	3	5

Figure 5. Proportion of currently recorded homicides by various drug fields (England and Wales, year ending March 2020 to year ending March 2022).

41. The Homicide Index also shows the number of offences currently recorded as homicide that have involved drug users or dealers, or have been related to drugs in any way, England and Wales year ending March 2012 to year ending March 2022. Here, an offence is 'drug-related' if any of the following variables are positive: victim illegal drug user; victim illegal drug dealer; suspect illegal drug user; suspect illegal drug dealer; victim has taken a drug; suspect has taken a drug; suspect had motive to obtain drugs; suspect had motive to steal drug proceeds; drug related. Figure 6 below shows that since April 2019 the percentage of homicides which were drug-related nationally has been 50% or above.

Year	Number of homicides	Proportion of homicides that involved drug users or dealers, or have been related to drugs in any way (%)
April 2011 to March 2012	228	43
April 2012 to March 2013	230	42
April 2013 to March 2014	220	42
April 2014 to March 2015	214	42
April 2015 to March 2016	230	43
April 2016 to March 2017	254	37
April 2017 to March 2018	315	45
April 2018 to March 2019	315	49
April 2019 to March 2020	336	50
April 2020 to March 2021	302	53
April 2021 to March 2022	360	52

Figure 6. Proportion of homicides that were recorded as drug-related (England and Wales, year ending March 2012 to year ending March 2022.)

42. Figure 7 shows the number of drug-related homicides recorded by West Midlands Police over a two year period.

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Fiscal Year	Total of recorded drug-related homicides
2021-2022	1
2022-2023	4

Figure 7. Number of drug-related homicides recorded by West Midlands Police 2021-22 and 2022-23

Drug-related Acquisitive Crime

43. Research published by the Home Office in 2013, 'Understanding organised crime: estimating the scale and the social and economic costs Research Report 73' showed that the estimated costs of drug-related crime in England and Wales range from £5.3 billion to £6.6 billion; the proportion of acquisitive crime (excluding fraud) that is drug-related ranges from 44 per cent to 48 per cent; burglary (including burglaries both in a dwelling and in other buildings) accounts for the largest share of the costs of drug-related crime; the cost of enforcing drug offences in England and Wales is estimated to be £1 billion, with £0.4 billion due to the costs of policing drug offences and £0.6 billion due to the further Criminal Justice System costs.

44. In December 2017, a report was conducted to identify the scale and impact of substance misuse in the West Midlands and was presented to the Strategic Police and Crime Board. The report highlighted that half of all burglary, theft, shoplifting and robbery were committed by people who use heroin, crack cocaine or powder cocaine regularly. At the time the report was written and presented, this represented one in five crimes reported to West Midlands Police and tens of thousands of victims.

45. It is important to note that there have been years of funding cuts to preventative drug treatment and recovery services. Consequently, there has been a reduction in people accessing services affecting recovery outcomes; the numbers of acquisitive crime are impacted and could explain why there has been an increase in drug-related

Fiscal Year	Burglary (residential)	Robbery (personal)	Theft (includes shoplifting)	Vehicle Offences	Total	Total % Change
2021-2022	348	383	772	137	1640	-
2022-2023	385	405	878	187	1855	13%

acquisitive crime in the most recent data (figure 8). Additionally, increased cost of heroin (discussed in paragraph 62) could also be a factor in increased acquisitive crime to fund addiction. Figure 8 shows the number of drug-related acquisitive offences recorded by West Midlands Police over a two year period. It is broken down into different acquisitive offences.

Figure 8. Number of drug-related acquisitive crimes recorded by West Midlands Police 2021-22 and 2022-23.

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46. Two services mentioned in section two of this report, which are commissioned by the Police and Crime Commissioner, address and aim to reduce drug-related acquisitive crime. CARS aims to do this by completing Required Assessments for those who have had a positive drug test (due to having a mandatory drug test as a result of being arrested for a trigger offence, mostly acquisitive crime). This helps people get the treatment they need. O2R helps to address drug-related acquisitive crime by providing a pathway for offenders of acquisitive crime addicted to drugs to get treatment.

4 National Drugs Strategy

47. The drug strategy was launched in December 2021 and focussed on three priorities:

- Breaking drug supply chains
- Rebuilding a world class treatment system
- Achieving a generational shift in the demand for drug

48. A National Outcomes Framework was published to monitor progress against these priorities. Six strategic outcomes were identified that would steer national and local efforts to address the impact drugs have on communities and wider society:

- Reduce drug use
- Reduce drug-related crime
- Reduce drug-related deaths and harm
- Reduce drug supply
- Increase engagement with treatment
- Improve recovery outcomes.

49. In order to ensure that the drug strategy was effectively coordinated at a local level, each area was required to establish a Combatting Drugs Partnership (CDP) and nominate a Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) to convene the partnership and act as the link with central government. In August 2022, it was decided that the CDP would cover the force area, encompassing the 7 local authority areas, with the PCC acting as the SRO.

50. Once established, the CDP was requested to undertake a number of key deliverables by the end of December 2022. This included the development of a drugs needs assessment, covering the drug strategy's three priorities and enable local understanding of success, challenges and gaps. The CDP was also required to publish a local delivery plan to respond to the issues identified in the need's assessment that would contribute to achieving the drug strategy 's objectives.

5 West Midlands Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Partnership (CDAP)

51. Upon being established in August 2022, CDAP immediately undertook the required needs assessment. This covered the situation across WMP in relation to the aforementioned six strategic outcomes. Data was gathered and analysed at a local authority and force level. Key findings included:

Drug Use

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52. Prevalence data for 2016/17 showed that there were an estimated 21,945 people who use opiates and/or crack cocaine aged 15 to 64 in the West Midlands. Expressed as a rate per 1,000 15-64 year olds, West Midlands had a rate of 12.06. This was higher than the 8.85 for England overall. Looking at prevalence rates across local authority areas, Birmingham, Walsall, and Wolverhampton had rates which were significantly higher than the mean.

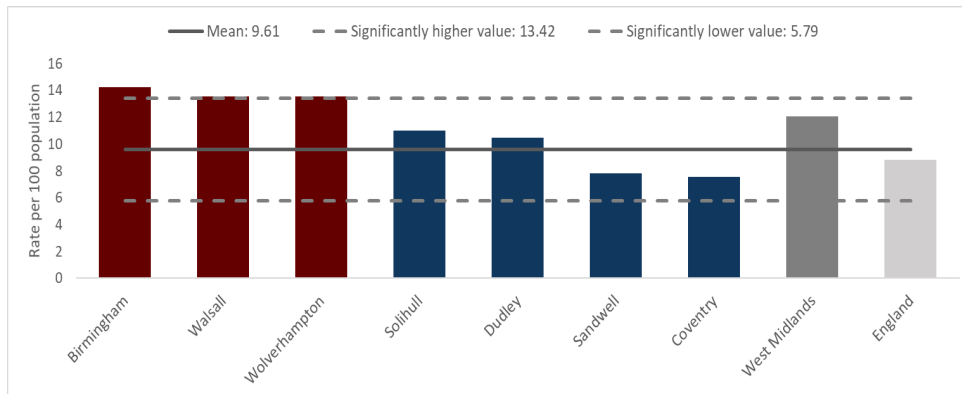


Figure 9. Prevalence data for 2016/17

Reduce drug-related crime

53. Drug offences within the West Midlands have historically been lower than most similar forces. Drug offences have, however, significantly increased recently when compared with the national baseline – 2021/22 saw an increase of 52% from 5,000 to 7,590 offences.

Rate of drug offences per 1,000 population by police force and financial quarter

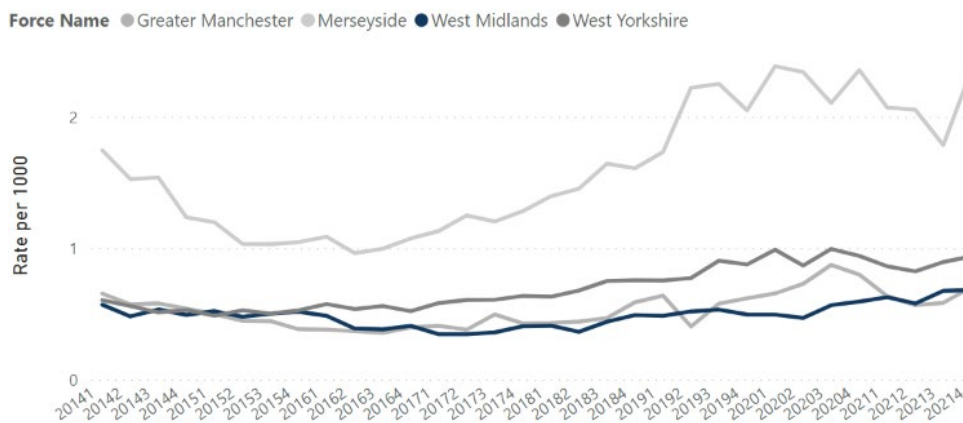


Figure 10. Rate of drug offences per 1,000 population by police force and financial quarter

Drug-related deaths and harm

54. Rates of drug-misuse deaths varied across WMP. In line with having increased rates of heroin and crack use, Birmingham, Walsall and Wolverhampton experience the highest rates of drug-misuse deaths, with Birmingham being significantly higher than the national average.

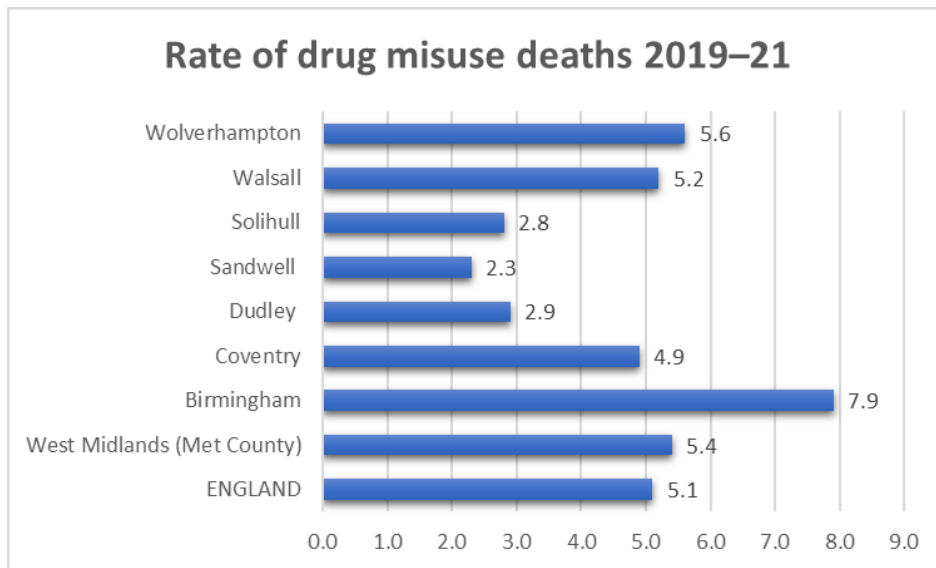


Figure 11. Rate of drug misuse deaths (per 100,000 population) 2019-21

Drug supply

55. West Midlands is one of the top exporters of drugs within the UK due to the impact of serious organised crime groups operating the county lines dealing methodology. There were 580 positive drug disruptions carried out in 2021/22 by ROCUWM. Of these, 427 County lines disruptions were recorded and 661 arrests made with 188 charges. 379 County Lines were closed during 2021/22.

Increase engagement with treatment

56. In line with the national picture, due to funding cuts, drug services had experienced a significant decline in the number of people accessing services between 2010 and 2019. Additional funding introduced in 2020 has enabled services to stabilise case-loads and begin to see evidence of numbers increasing.

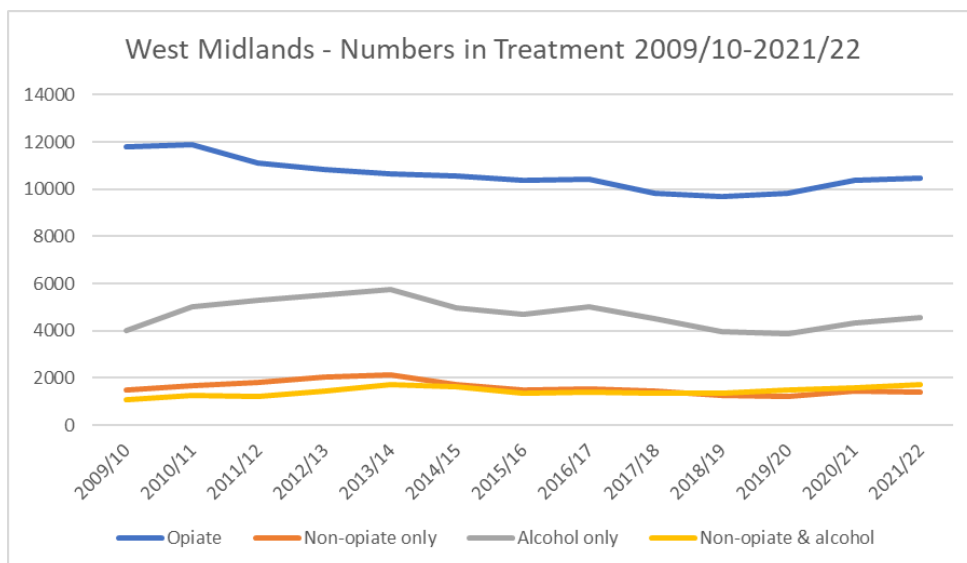


Figure 12. Numbers in Treatment in the West Midlands 2009/10- 2021/22

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Improve recovery outcomes

57. Again, linked to 10 years of funding cuts, recovery outcomes were identified as having fallen over the last 10 years, with increasing numbers of service users dropping out of services rather than leaving in a planned way. This is especially true of opiate users.

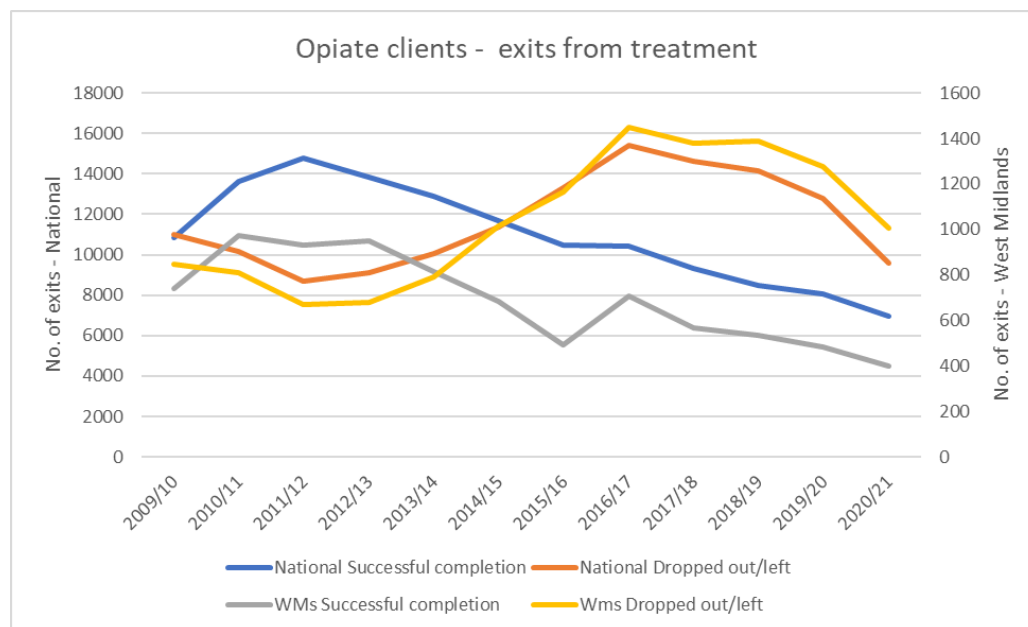


Figure 13. Opiate clients exits from treatment 2009/10 – 2020/21

58. The needs assessment became the basis for the development of the CDAP delivery plan. The plan identified a number of sub-groups, deep dives and task and finish groups that were needed to be established in order to progress some of the gaps identified in the needs assessment over the next three years. This included:

59. Deep dives:

- the level and quality of prevention / early intervention work that is happening across the region
- assess the approach to IOM cohort across the 7 boroughs.
- understand how prescribed objects (drugs/weapons/phones) can make it through to the prison entry point

60. Sub-groups:

- Drug and alcohol related deaths
- alcohol licensing and the role public health can play in the processes
- developing lived experience input into regional forum

Current situation

61. Since the publication of the needs assessment there has been a significant development in the drugs market that should be noted. The Taliban have banned the growth of opium poppies, the precursor needed to manufacture heroin. This has seen a 90% reduction in the poppy harvest and is already pushing up the price of heroin whilst international drug gangs manage their existing inventories.

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62. The impact on harms the ban will have is covered in the Op Mabble section below, but the restriction in the availability of heroin may also have a local impact on crime rates as the drug market compensates by raising prices. Increased cost of heroin may result in people who use it needing to commit more crimes in order to fund the drug. If this happens, this will likely result in a rise in acquisitive crimes, such as shop lifting, burglary or robberies.
63. The CDAP continues to look for ways to better co-ordinate and join up the commissioning of drug treatment and recovery services. There is already work going on in this area, for example local authorities are getting their substance misuse providers to engage with O2R. The CDAP will continue to seek opportunities for co-commissioning. For example, when the OPCC reviews and analyses CARS next year, as part of the re-commissioning process there will be discussions with local authorities to look for chances for co-commissioning.

6 Naloxone latest position

64. Police officer carriage of naloxone was paused by the Chief Constable in the summer whilst a review could be undertaken. The review was undertaken to respond to a number of concerns raised by the Chief Constable at the National Police Chiefs' Council. These included:
- the risk to officers of being investigated by the IOPC in the event of a fatality
 - the risk of mission creep, with police taking on responsibilities of health services
 - concerns around expired doses of naloxone being in circulation.
65. The NPCC has provided all police forces with updated guidance to address the range of concerns. This included a statement from the IOPC to outline how they would not be looking to investigate officers who attempted to save a life (excluding deaths in custody, of which all are investigated). There is also understanding that MOUs between forces currently carrying naloxone and ambulance services, aimed at preventing mission creep from occurring, have been shared nationally along with a range of supporting document.
66. The force's drug lead, Supt Jane Bailey, with support from the OPCC has been undertaking the review since the summer. The review has included a scoping of the proportionate number of officers to carry naloxone and the development of a memorandum of understanding with commissioners and treatment providers. The MOU covers quality standards, roles and responsibilities and the core components of training to ensure there is robust governance in place to ensure any introduced scheme is safe and effective. We await the final outcome of the review.

7 Op Mabble

67. As widely reported in the press, the Taliban banned the growing of opium poppies in Afghanistan, with this year's harvest thought to have been reduced by 90%. With 95% of European heroin supply coming from Afghanistan, this level of reduction is likely to see a major impact to the UK heroin market. At the time the ban was introduced, the main risks were identified as:
- Reduction in the purity of heroin
 - Heroin becomes hard to obtain/unavailable
 - Heroin supply becomes adulterated with, or replaced by, synthetic opioids and/or other substances

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Each of these would lead to the risk of death and harm increasing for people who use heroin, with the introduction of synthetic opioids being the worst-case scenario based on the experiences of such drugs in North America causing record rates of drug-related deaths.

68. Unfortunately, a significant increase in drug-related deaths and overdoses occurred within the force area in the summer of 2023. These were mainly concentrated within Birmingham but were also identified in other LPAs too. 45 suspected deaths were identified during June to August, with 17 being confirmed as having synthetic opioids present within toxicology tests. 13 deaths found no nitazenes and the remaining deaths await test results.
69. In mid-July, following two deaths occurring in the same house of multiple occupancy, partners, led by WMP, were able to convene a multi-agency response to respond to the deaths. Initially convened through a Gold meeting, eventually a Strategic Coordination Group was established, with support from the Local Resilience Forum (LRF).
70. Unfortunately, a decision was taken by the LRF that OPCC presence at the strategic meetings was inappropriate and we were unable to attend any of the meetings – limiting input from drug policy leads. A lessons learnt process was undertaken following Op MABBLE being stood down at the end of August – however, once again the OPCC was not permitted to participate in this process, despite having raised a request to do so.

8 Appendix

Appendix A – Data presented at November Strategic Police and Crime Board – Reducing the harm caused by illicit drugs.

Key Performance Indicator	Current	Historical Performance/ Benchmark
Monitor the number of drug trafficking offences recorded by West Midlands Police, directing resource appropriately to tackle supply	2,174 [2022/23]	2,374 [2021/ 22] 1,580 [2019/20]
Monitor the number of reports via the National Referral Mechanism which are flagged as County Lines related	122 [Jan – Dec 22]	89 [Jan – Dec 20]
Increase/improve disruption activity by West Midlands Police as part of proactive drug supply investigations	251 WMP and 438 ROCUWM drug disruptions; 1,952 County Lines disruptions [2022/23]	439 WMP and 580 ROCUWM drug disruptions; 1,533 WMP County Lines disruptions [2021/22] 495 WMP and 381 ROCUWM drug disruptions; 108 WMP County Lines disruptions [2020/21]
Monitor the number of drug related (misuse) deaths in West Midlands, acting accordingly where there are significant increases	442 deaths; 5.4 rate {GMP: 627; 7.8 / Merseyside: 401; 10.1 / West Yorkshire: 510; 7.8} [2019-2021] [Latest as of Oct 23]	455 deaths; 5.5 rate {GMP: 554; 6.9 / Merseyside: 378; 9.6 / West Yorkshire: 500; 7.6} [2018-2020] 335 deaths; 4.1 rate {GMP: 480; 6.0 / Merseyside: 280; 7.1 / West Yorkshire: 381; 5.7} [2015-2017]
Increase the number of suspect/offenders in custody being referred into drug treatment where a need is identified	1,418 [2022/23]	728 [2021/22] 1,087 [2020]
Monitor proportionality in the use of diversion	Monitored as part of the Disproportionality Committee	-
Increase the use of Out of Court Disposals for low level drug offences, such as those given via the DIVERT programme	40% of drug possession offences [2022/23]	36% of drug possession offences [2021/22] 32% of drug possession offences [2019/20]

Appendix B – power point slides for presentation on the 15th January.

Attached as a separate document.



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Strategic Police and Crime Panel

Drugs Report

January 2024

1

Police and Crime Plan Commitments



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- Increasing out-of-court-disposals
- Increase the number of people in custody referred into treatment services
- Greater use of CSTRs
- Drug Safety Testing
- Drug Early Warning Programmes
- Aiming to engage people who are not well served by current provision
- Improve disruption activity by West Midlands Police as part of pro-active drug supply investigations
- Monitor the number of drug trafficking offences recorded by West Midlands Police and reports which are flagged as County Lines related

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Data around drug-related homicides and acquisitive crime



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- 'From Harm to Hope'
- Drug-related homicides
- Drug-related acquisitive crime
 - CARS
 - O2R

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3

National Drug Strategy



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- From Harm to Hope published Dec 21
- Focused on
 - Breaking supply chains
 - Rebuilding the treatment system
 - Achieving a generational shift in the demand for drug
- All areas required to establish a Combating Drugs Partnership
- CDP needed to publish needs assessments and delivery plans by Dec 22

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West Midlands CDAP – needs assessment



- Needs assessment undertaken between Sept-Nov 2022
- Prevalence of drug use varies across the force
- Drug offences within the West Midlands have historically been lower than most similar forces
- Birmingham, Walsall and Wolverhampton experience drug deaths above the national average
- West Midlands is one of the top exporters of drugs within the UK
- There was a significant decline in the number of people accessing services between 2010 and 2019
- recovery outcomes also fell over the previous 10 years, with increasing numbers of service users dropping out of services rather than leaving in a planned way

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West Midlands CDAP – Delivery plan



- Delivery plan developed Dec 2022. Sought to address gaps identified in needs assessment. Includes a range of initiatives, including
- Deep dives:
 - the level and quality of prevention / early intervention work that is happening across the region
 - assess the approach to IOM cohort across the 7 boroughs.
 - understand how prescribed objects (drugs/weapons/phones) can make it through to the prison entry point
- Sub-groups:
 - Drug and alcohol related deaths
 - alcohol licensing and the role public health can play in the processes
 - developing lived experience input into regional forum

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Naloxone



- Police officer carriage of naloxone was paused in the summer
- Review being undertaken to respond to concerns raised by Chief Constable at the National Police Chiefs' Council. These include:
 - the risk to officers of being investigated by the IOPC in the event of a fatality
 - the risk of mission creep, with police taking on responsibilities of health services
 - concerns around expired doses of naloxone being in circulation.
- The review includes
 - scoping the proportionate number of officers who could carry naloxone
 - development of a memorandum of understanding with commissioners and treatment providers.
- We await the final outcome of the review

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Op Mabble



- Multi-agency response to increase drug deaths in summer 23
- Deaths linked to the Taliban ban on growing of opium poppies in Afghanistan and use of synthetic opioids to increase potency of street drugs
- 45 suspected deaths were identified during June to August, with 17 being confirmed as having synthetic opioids present within toxicology tests
- decision was taken by the LRF that OPCC presence at the strategic meetings was inappropriate and we were unable to attend any of the meetings

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Report to the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel - HMICFRS 2023-25 PEEL Inspection of West Midlands Police

Date: 15 January 2024

1 Purpose

- 1.1 On 18 December 2023, the extraordinary Police and Crime Panel meeting agreed to convene a further meeting when the full HMICFRS PEEL 2023-2025 Inspection report of West Midlands Police was published to discuss the findings with the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- 1.2 The Inspection report was subsequently published on 22 December 2023 and is appended to this report.
- 1.3 The Panel is asked to consider how it might use the findings of the inspection report and update from the Police and Crime Commissioner to fulfil its role in scrutinising and supporting the Police and Crime Commissioner.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 **That the Police and Crime Panel notes the findings in the HMICFRS PEEL Inspection Report and information provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner.**

3 Background

- 3.1 On 18 December 2023 an extraordinary meeting of the Police and Crime Panel was called to discuss with the PCC the HMICFRS Engaged Status decision for West Midlands Police. The Police and Crime Commissioner, the OPCC and representatives of West Midlands Police attended and responded to questions from Panel Members.
- 3.2 At that meeting the Panel agreed to convene a further meeting when the full HMICFRS PEEL Inspection 2023-25 report was published to discuss the findings with the PCC.
- 3.3 On 22 December 2023 HMICFRS published its full PEEL 2023-25 Inspection of West Midlands Police. The report identifies 'Innovative Practice', 'Promising Practice', 'Areas for Improvement' and 'Causes for Concern' The full report is appended to this report and is also available on the HMICFRS website.
- 3.4 It is proposed the Panel will examine progress against the four 'Causes of Concern' at its meeting on 5 February 2024 following the PCC and Chief Constable attendance at the Policing Performance Oversight Group in January.

4 Examining the HMICFRS decision with the Police and Crime Commissioner

4.1 The Panel's scrutiny of the Police and Crime Commissioner in relation to the HMICFRS should be undertaken in the context of the Policing Protocol Order, and guidance issued by the LGA on Police and Crime Panels

4.2 The [Policing Protocol Order 2023](#) sets out the relationships between the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Panel and the Chief Constable. It states:

The public accountability for the delivery and performance of the police service is placed into the hands of the PCC on behalf of their electorate. The PCC draws on their mandate to set and shape the strategic objectives of their force area in consultation with the Chief Constable. They are accountable to the electorate; the Chief Constable is accountable to their PCC. The Panel within each force area is empowered to maintain a regular check and balance on the performance of the PCC in that context....

The Panel does not scrutinise the Chief Constable – it scrutinises the PCC's exercise of their statutory functions. While the Panel is there to challenge the PCC, it must also exercise its functions with a view to supporting the effective exercise of the PCC's functions.

4.3 The LGA Guidance for Police and Crime Panels recognises the importance of panel's liaising with a wide range of stakeholders across policing and crime to inform its work. These stakeholders, including the HMICFRS must not be the subject of scrutiny by the Panel. They are a source of evidence to inform the Panel's understanding and assist its scrutiny of the Police and Crime Commissioner regarding the discharge of their functions.

5 Finance Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report. The provision of the Police and Crime Panel, including the administration of panel meetings, is funded through a Home Office Grant Agreement.

6 Legal Implications

6.1 The powers and responsibilities of panels are set out in Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 which give panels the authority to scrutinise all decisions or actions in connection with the discharge of the Commissioner's functions.

7 Equalities Implications

7.1 The Panel has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

1. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;

2. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 3. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics and groups outlined in the Equality Act are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex, and sexual orientation.
- 7.3 The Panel will ensure it addresses these duties by considering them during work programme development, the scoping of work, evidence gathering and making recommendations. This should include considering how policy issues impact on different groups within the community, particularly those that share a relevant protected characteristic; whether the impact on particular groups is fair and proportionate; whether there is equality of access to services and fair representation of all groups within the West Midlands; and whether any positive opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and/or good relations between people are being realised.
- 7.4 The Panel should ensure that any recommendations which contribute towards reducing inequality, are based on evidence.

8 List of Appendices

Appendix 1 [HMICFRS 2023-25 PEEL Inspection Report of West Midlands Police](#)

9 Background Papers

- 9.1 [Policing Protocol Order 2023](#)
- 9.2 [HMICFRS PEEL 2021/22 Inspection of West Midlands Police report](#)
- 9.3 [LGA Guidance for Police and Crime Panels 2019](#)

10 Contact Officers

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PEEL 2023–25

Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy

An inspection of West Midlands Police

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Overall summary

Our judgments

Our inspection assessed how good West Midlands Police is in nine areas of policing. We make graded judgments in eight of these nine as follows:

Outstanding	Good	Adequate	Requires improvement	Inadequate
		Preventing crime	Responding to the public	Investigating crime
		Police powers and public treatment	Developing a positive workplace	Protecting vulnerable people
			Leadership and force management	Managing offenders

West Midlands Police was awarded no outstanding or good grades.

We also inspected how effective a service West Midlands Police gives to victims of crime. We don't make a graded judgment in this overall area.

We set out our detailed findings about things the force is doing well and where the force should improve in the rest of this report.

We also assess the force's performance in a range of other areas and we report on these separately. We make graded judgments for some of these areas.

Data in this report

For more information, please [view this report on our website](#) and select the 'About the data' section.

PEEL 2023–2025

In 2014, we introduced our police efficiency, effectiveness and legitimacy (PEEL) inspections, which assess the performance of all 43 police forces in England and Wales. Since then, we have been continuously adapting our approach.

We have moved to a more [intelligence](#)-led, continual assessment approach, rather than the annual [PEEL inspections](#) we used in previous years. Forces are assessed against the characteristics of good performance, set out in the [PEEL Assessment Framework 2023–2025](#), and we more clearly link our judgments to [causes of concern](#) and [areas for improvement](#).

It isn't possible to make direct comparisons between the grades awarded in this PEEL inspection and those from the previous cycle of PEEL inspections. This is because we have increased our focus on making sure forces are achieving appropriate outcomes for the public, and in some cases we have changed the aspects of policing we inspect.

Terminology in this report

Our reports contain references to, among other things, 'national' definitions, priorities, policies, systems, responsibilities and processes.

In some instances, 'national' means applying to England or Wales, or England and Wales. In others, it means applying to England, Wales and Scotland, or the whole of the United Kingdom.

HM Inspector's summary

I have concerns about the performance of West Midlands Police in keeping people safe, reducing crime and providing victims with an effective service. I have serious concerns about how well the force investigates crime, protects vulnerable people and manages offenders and suspects. We have highlighted these problems in previous inspection reports, but the force's performance has declined. In view of these findings, I have been in contact with the chief constable as the improvements required are substantial.

The force had a change in leadership in the year leading up to our inspection, with the appointment of a new chief constable, deputy chief constable and other senior leaders. They have implemented a robust performance framework to help make improvements. Most significantly, the leadership team has reviewed the force's operating model and made rapid changes to it. The new model brings investigations, response and neighbourhood policing together under local commands.

At the time of our inspection, the force had only just put these changes in place. There have been clear improvements in the ability of the control room to answer emergency and non-emergency calls. But there hasn't yet been time for most of the changes to fully develop.

I recognise the rapid action taken by the senior team and accept that it will take time to have the effect the leadership team wants. However, because these changes are being made so quickly, the force hasn't considered the full breadth and depth of available data. This means that it doesn't know whether these changes are the most efficient and effective ways of achieving sustainable improvements.

Improvements are needed to the force's operations, but acute environmental factors also influence its ability to meet its demand. [Between 31 March 2010 and 31 March 2023](#), the total officers in the force (measured in full-time equivalents) reduced from 8,626 to 7,954. This means that the force has 672 fewer officers, despite the investments made by the [Police Uplift Programme](#).

The West Midlands also has high levels of deprivation. [The rate of permanent exclusions from schools in the region](#) is higher than the average for England. This means children are more vulnerable and more likely to be exposed to criminal exploitation. In the year ending 30 June 2023, West Midlands Police recorded 14.4 homicides per million population, the fifth highest of all forces in England and Wales. Forty-two people lost their lives to homicide in the West Midlands, the second highest number after the Metropolitan Police area.

On 5 September 2023, Birmingham City Council issued a [section 114 notice](#) which means that it can't meet its expenditure commitments from its income. It is one of the largest local authority areas in the country and the consequences for its partners, including West Midlands Police, aren't yet clear. In 2022, [the Institute for Fiscal Studies](#) found that the amounts that police forces receive from central grants hadn't taken account of wider needs.

West Midlands Police's funding reduced by 13 percent per capita between the year ending 31 March 2014 and year ending 31 March 2020. This means that it has been affected disproportionately compared to some other forces, and has little opportunity to obtain additional funds from increasing the [police precept](#). West Midlands Police needs to have enough resources to prevent crime and protect the public effectively.



Wendy Williams

HM Inspector of Constabulary

Leadership

Using the [College of Policing leadership standards](#) as a framework, in this section we set out the most important findings relating to the force's leadership at all levels.

The force's new senior leaders have clear plans and priorities. They are confident in making decisions and implementing rapid changes to improve the service the force provides. And they assess performance against outcomes and priorities.

Leaders have several significant challenges to contend with. These include high demand that is frequently severe; funding arrangements that disadvantage the force; and under-performance in some areas.

The force benefits from a positive, legitimate culture, where treating people fairly, and with respect, is understood. [Chief officers](#) appreciate the importance of being visible to their staff, and of the well-being and development needs of the workforce. Support is available to officers and [police staff](#) who are entering leadership for the first time. But the force needs to develop its other first-line leaders so they can supervise and lead more effectively.

Frequent turnover in senior management roles inhibits the force's ability to make long-term improvements. Over recent months, turnover has reduced, bringing greater stability and accountability. New structures have been created that help leaders to collaborate across boundaries, both within the force and with partner organisations.

The force needs to make sure its governance structure and processes are effective. Areas of high demand are identified and considered. And leaders rely heavily on data when making decisions about performance. But they also need to understand how well operational practices are used, and how these might need to adapt. And they need to be more responsive to risks.

The force aims to use investments and projects to make sure it has enough people in the right roles. Its decisions about resources align with its strategic priorities, but they need to be supported by data and analysis, and should be reviewed once they have been implemented.

More detail on West Midlands Police's leadership is included in the main body of the report.

Reducing crime assessment

The reducing crime assessment sets out what West Midlands Police is doing to reduce crime and how effective this action is. This assessment doesn't include police recorded crime figures. This is because they can be affected by variations and changes in recording policy and practice, making it difficult to draw comparisons over time.

The force has a range of important partnership initiatives to support reducing and preventing long-term crime and [antisocial behaviour](#). These focus on early prevention and intervention, to divert young people from offending. The force is committed to effective neighbourhood policing, but neighbourhood teams need more time to work with partners to solve problems and reduce crime.

The force must urgently improve how it investigates crime. It needs to achieve better outcomes for victims. Positively, the force is developing national practice for investigating rape and other serious sexual offences, which means more offenders should be brought to justice.

The force must improve how it investigates offenders who access indecent images of children, and how it manages registered sex offenders. And it needs to develop more efficient processes for referring vulnerable people to other agencies to make sure they are safeguarded at the earliest opportunity. However, the force uses [bail](#) well to protect vulnerable victims and reduce further crime.

The force has increased its use of stop and search. Most of the recorded grounds for stop and search suggest that officers are using this power proportionately and in line with legislation. The fair and effective use of stop and search will help the force reduce crime.

West Midlands Police shows a good understanding of current demand, but it needs to anticipate likely future demand better, so it can make plans and adjust resources.

More detail on what West Midlands Police is doing to reduce crime is included in the main body of the report.

Providing a service to victims of crime

Victim service assessment

This section describes our assessment of the service West Midlands Police provides to victims. This is from the point of reporting a crime and throughout the investigation. As part of this assessment, we reviewed 100 case files.

When the police close a case of a reported crime, they assign it an 'outcome type'. This describes the reason for closing it.

We selected 100 cases to review, including at least 20 that the force had closed with the following outcome:

- when the crime had been investigated, no suspect had been identified and the investigation was closed.

Although our victim service assessment is ungraded, it influences graded judgments in the other areas we have inspected.

The force needs to improve the time it takes to answer emergency and non-emergency calls

The force needs to improve the time it takes to answer emergency calls. It also needs to reduce the number of non-emergency calls where the caller hangs up before a handler answers it. In their calls, call handlers use a structured process that assesses [threat, harm, risk and vulnerability](#). Call handlers also identify repeat victims, meaning that the force is aware of the victim's circumstances when deciding what response it should give. We found that call handlers don't always give victims advice on crime prevention or on how to preserve evidence.

In many cases, the force doesn't respond promptly to calls for service

The force doesn't always respond to calls for service appropriately and within set timescales. It doesn't always inform victims of delays, meaning that victims' expectations aren't always met. This may cause victims to lose confidence and to not want to continue with the process.

The force doesn't always carry out effective investigations

The force doesn't always carry out investigations in a timely way. It also doesn't always complete relevant and proportionate lines of enquiry. A thorough investigation increases the likelihood of perpetrators being identified and arrested, providing a positive result for the victim.

The force doesn't always supervise investigations well or regularly update victims. Victims are more likely to have confidence in a police investigation when they receive regular updates.

In most cases when a victim withdrew support for an investigation, the force considered progressing the case without their support. This can be an important way of [safeguarding](#) the victim and preventing further offences from being committed. In some cases, the force didn't always record whether it considered using orders designed to protect victims, such as a [Domestic Violence Protection Notice](#) or [Domestic Violence Protection Order](#).

The [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime](#) requires forces to carry out a needs assessment at an early stage to determine whether victims need additional support. The force usually carries out this assessment and records the request for additional support.

The force doesn't always assign the right outcome type to an investigation

The force isn't consistently providing the level of service needed to make sure that it achieves appropriate outcomes for victims of crime. It doesn't close crimes with the appropriate outcome type and doesn't record a clear rationale for using a certain outcome. This process is not effectively supervised.

The force doesn't always consider victims' wishes or record them properly

The force doesn't always seek victims' views when deciding which outcome type to assign to a closed investigation. The force isn't always able to provide an auditable record of the victim's wishes. And it didn't always inform victims of the outcome it assigned to the investigation.

Police powers and treating the public fairly and respectfully

Adequate

West Midlands Police is adequate at using police powers and treating people fairly and respectfully.

Area for improvement

The force needs to make sure it complies with the requirement from the [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) to record all use of force, and make sure its data is accurate and robust enough to understand any reasons for disproportionate use of force

In the year ending 31 March 2022, the force recorded 18,661 use of force incidents. This is a 26.0 percent increase compared to the previous year, when 14,809 incidents were recorded. We would expect the number of times use of force is recorded to be greater than the number of arrests, so we estimate that West Midlands under-recorded use of force by around 46,000 incidents in the year ending 31 March 2022. This indicates that the force may not be recording all incidents where force is used. The force's decision not to record compliant handcuffing, as is required by the National Police Chiefs' Council guidelines, will contribute to this.

In the year ending 31 March 2022, 16.5 percent of all recorded incidents where officers used force were against people from a Black or Black British background. Based on the 2021 census, the local Black population is 8.1 percent. The proportion of use of force incidents against those from an Asian or Asian British background was 13.1 percent, versus a local population of 22.9 percent.

We also noted that the West Midlands Police doesn't monitor use of force incidents by gender.

A panel assesses body-worn video footage from the officers who use force most frequently, to identify learning or good practice. But without a full picture of how force is used, West Midlands Police is missing opportunities to improve its use, and to reassure the public that it is used fairly.

In May 2023, HMICFRS and the Care Quality Commission inspected West Midlands Police's custody facilities. In that inspection, we found that the governance and oversight of the use of force in custody isn't good enough. West Midlands Police can't show that when force or restraint is used in custody it is necessary, justified and proportionate. As a result, we issued a cause of concern. You can read the [report on an inspection visit to custody suites in West Midlands Police](#) on our website.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to police powers and treating people fairly and respectfully.

The force trains its officers to help them communicate more effectively

The force trains officers to use [tactical communication](#) skills. Their use of communication is assessed during personal safety training, which covers emotions, mental health and disability. Officers are trained to use proven principles when responding to incidents involving people who have behavioural disorders. These include backing off, using cover and early negotiation. This means they are more likely to de-escalate situations.

The force uses the Hydra training system, which draws on evidence from real situations. Officers observe and discuss scenarios in a group setting, so they can learn from these interactions. This helps them understand how bias influences decision-making. As part of the national [Police Race Action Plan](#), the force gives officers and staff training called 'Learning from our Black History'. This helps them to understand factors that have affected the relationship between Black communities and the police.

The force uses body-worn video frequently, which helps it assess how well officers interact with people

Body-worn video devices capture audio and video footage when officers interact with the public. Officers must use body-worn video when using [stop and search powers](#). The force's policy is up to date and reflects national requirements. The force recognises the benefits of body-worn video and makes sure that its officers are using it when they should. The force told us that between 1 April and 31 August 2023 it recorded 9,540 stop and searches, and officers used body-worn video in 97.1 percent of cases. Of the 5,861 occasions when the use of force was recorded in this period, body-worn video was used in 85.6 percent of cases.

During our [reality testing](#), officers told us that their supervisors review footage so they can see how well they interact with the public. And internal and external panels review body-worn video footage. This helps to make sure that interactions are lawful, fair and respectful. We also saw how the force has developed the capability to live-stream body-worn video footage, which we describe in the section on '[Responding to the public](#)'.

However, some supervisors told us they weren't trained in how to review records and weren't certain about the process they should follow. When we reviewed a small selection of body-worn video footage, we saw that officers sometimes failed to tell people who they searched what they were looking for and didn't always tell them that they can ask for a copy of the search record. The force uses QR codes that help people who have been searched to give feedback about their experience. But procedural failings might not be identified unless people who are stopped and searched know they are entitled to a record of the search, and body-worn video footage is dip-sampled effectively. The force needs to make sure that supervisors consistently monitor these interactions.

The force could act more positively on feedback from external scrutiny panels

External scrutiny panels operate throughout the force. They have independent chairs and diverse membership. They review stop and search records and body-worn video, and give their opinions on how well procedures are followed and whether officers' actions are appropriate. Panel members accompany officers on operations and participate in 'ride-alongs' where they can observe stop and searches taking place. We saw that panel members are confident to challenge the force.

Minutes of scrutiny panels' meetings are published by the [police and crime commissioner](#)'s office. But when we reviewed this, we found that in some cases no recent records had been published. We identified good examples of officers receiving advice after panels had scrutinised cases. But the force needs to demonstrate how it identifies learning and good practice and shares it more widely, to improve training and procedures and influence behaviour.

Overall, the force uses stop and search powers fairly and respectfully, but it needs to develop its understanding of disproportionality

When examining disproportionality data for stop and search rates between people from ethnic minority backgrounds and White people, a value of less than 0.8 shows that a person from an ethnic minority background is less likely than someone who is White to be stopped and searched. A value higher than 1.25 shows that someone from an ethnic minority background is more likely to be stopped and searched.

In the year ending 31 March 2022, West Midlands Police recorded 26,372 stop and searches. This represents 9.0 stops per 1,000 population. This was a 1.8 percent increase from the previous year's figure of 25,895. In the same period, the figure for England and Wales fell by 25.9 percent.

In the West Midlands, based on population data from the 2021 census, Asian or Asian British people were 2.0 times as likely to be stopped and searched compared to White people. Black or Black British people were 2.9 times as likely, and people from multiple ethnic minority backgrounds were 3.0 times as likely. The likelihood of a person who is Black or Black British being stopped across England and Wales is 4.8 times that of a White person. This shows that West Midlands Police has slightly lower levels of disproportionality in its use of stop and search powers than England and Wales as a whole.

During our inspection, we reviewed a sample of stop and search records from 1 January to 31 December 2022. Based on this sample, we estimate that 86.6 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 6.8 percent) of all stop and searches by the force during this period had reasonable grounds recorded. In our previous review of records from 2020, we found 92.8 percent (with a confidence interval of +/- 3.3 percent) of stop and searches had reasonable grounds recorded. Of the records we reviewed for stop and searches on people from ethnic minority backgrounds, 35 of the 41 reviewed had reasonable grounds recorded.

The 'linked [find rate](#)' is the proportion of times when a stop and search results in finding the particular item(s) that formed the officers' suspicion and grounds for the interaction in the first instance. Linked find rates should be proportionate to the force's levels of stop and search use. In the year ending 31 March 2022, West Midlands Police found the item that was the subject of the search in 22.9 percent of stop and searches. This is similar to the 22.2 percent find rate for all forces in England and Wales during the same period.

The force assesses its use of stop and search at different management meetings. It monitors the number of stop and searches performed on people of different ethnicities. But it doesn't monitor linked find rates by ethnicity, and it doesn't collect any data on age or gender. It could use more data and information from diverse sources, including body-worn video and feedback from scrutiny panels, to help it to understand why disproportionality happens and to improve its practices.

Preventing and deterring crime and antisocial behaviour, and reducing vulnerability

Adequate

West Midlands Police is adequate at prevention and deterrence.

Innovative practice

The force has developed a knife prediction tool to reduce the likelihood of knife-related injuries

West Midlands Police's data analytics lab has developed a 'knife prediction tool'. This helps the force to predict locations where injuries caused using knives are most likely to happen up to four weeks in advance, using three years' data. The force puts measures in place in the identified areas to minimise the risk of confrontation and harm. It reviews the effectiveness of these measures a month later. The force uses data to make sure patrols take place in the areas and at the times when risks are highest. A monthly board scrutinises the results. The force states this tool has helped to reduce recorded cases of serious youth violence where a knife was used by 4.4 percent, and overall serious youth violence by 11.4 percent between 1 April and 31 August 2023 and the same period in 2022.

West Midlands Police collaborates with its partners to tackle the risks to public safety caused by street racing

The force's response to street racing is named Operation Hercules. It is a well-established response that uses problem-solving techniques to reduce the likelihood of people being repeatedly involved in illegal car cruises and street racing. The force, together with West Midlands Fire Service and local authorities, works to educate people. The force uses technology to identify people who attend gatherings where cars are driven dangerously. It warns them about the action it intends to take. In some cases, civil orders are used. The force uses legislation like [section 59 of the Police Reform Act 2002](#) to warn drivers and seize vehicles, and it works with the Motor Insurers' Bureau to rescind offenders' insurance. Virtual reality technology is used to educate young people on the risks associated with street racing. West Midlands Fire Service has developed a diversionary course to educate drivers, passengers and others who attend illegal events. The force states 900 people have participated in it.

The force seeks help from influencers so it can understand Black people's experience of policing

The force recognises that the relationship between the police and young Black people is often strained. To improve the relationship, the force ran a campaign called #letstalkaboutpolicing. It worked with social media influencers to learn about how Black people from 'Gen Z' (those born in the late 1990s and early 2000s) feel about policing and their perceptions of careers in policing. This was supported by the national [Police Uplift Programme](#) and is part of the force's response to the [Police Race Action Plan](#). The campaign was in three phases. Phase one used videos to attract its target audience. Phase two explored themes including trust, fairness and confidence in policing. And phase three used interviews to assess people's responses to the campaign and its impact.

The campaign resulted in several recommendations for improvement. These included more training to help staff understand the challenges the Black community faces, greater representation in the workforce and more use of social media to support engagement. We saw that the force had responded to this feedback by training officers in how they can improve relationships with communities and in using tools like the force's [WMnow](#) social media platform to help them do this.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to make sure that neighbourhood officers aren't diverted away from their main duties due to demand on response teams

Neighbourhood policing officers are responsible for problem-solving and getting local communities involved in crime prevention. During our inspection, many neighbourhood officers told us they couldn't spend enough time carrying out visible patrols, engaging with the public or doing preventative and problem-solving work. This was because they were diverted to other duties, like response policing. Neighbourhood officers being diverted from their main duties is known as abstraction. Currently, there is no abstraction policy for neighbourhood officers.

Senior leaders recognise the importance of neighbourhood policing and have implemented a new operating model that aims to give neighbourhood officers more time to perform their core role. This is important because these officers frequently work with partners on joint initiatives to reduce crime and [antisocial behaviour](#). We will review the operating model's effectiveness as part of our continuous assessment of the force's performance.

The force's systems and management processes need to support it in embedding effective problem-solving

In [our previous PEEL inspection report](#), we said that the force needs to assess the outcomes of problem-solving initiatives, so it can identify what works and reduce harm and demand more effectively. We saw examples where the force has begun to do this, following changes to its operating model.

The force is advancing its problem-solving approach using lessons learned from Coventry, where it is evaluating the work of the local problem-solving team in tackling gang-related violence. This pilot scheme aims to embed the use of the [scanning, analysis, response and assessment \(SARA\) problem-solving model](#) and to share good practice. It also reflects the principles of [Clear, Hold, Build](#), which is a proven partnership approach that reduces [serious and organised crime](#) and improves public safety. We were pleased to see the efforts the leadership team in Coventry have made to learn about the effective methods other police forces use to solve problems.

But while we found some good examples of problem-solving taking place, these tended to reflect specific initiatives and aren't yet widespread. The force knows it needs to embed problem-solving effectively and use it more widely so it can reduce harm and demand. To do this, it needs an effective system for storing problem-solving plans that officers and staff know how to use. This will help them understand what works and how sustainable results can be achieved by problem-solving. Clear and consistent management processes are needed to support the use and supervision of problem-solving plans. And officers and staff need to be trained to problem-solve successfully.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to prevention and deterrence.

The force prioritises the prevention and deterrence of crime

Within West Midlands Police's force area, there are a comprehensive range of initiatives to reduce crime, including violence. The Violence Reduction Partnership, funded by the Home Office, addresses underlying factors that can lead to people becoming victims or perpetrators of violence. Project Guardian is a well-established force-wide approach that focuses on prevention and enforcement activities. And the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence programme, which the force participates in, seeks to dissuade people from becoming involved in gangs and [county lines](#) drug-dealing. The cities of Coventry and Wolverhampton have received funding for this programme.

The force has trained analysts who identify the patterns and causes of crime. Its tasking and co-ordination process is effective in allocating resources to tackle crime. These are important measures because, as we saw, the force contends with serious youth violence, gang tensions, robbery and firearms offences, along with neighbourhood crime. It works hard to reduce the knife crime that affects some of its most deprived neighbourhoods. But this problem is acute. West Midlands Police recorded 5,192 knife and sharp instrument offences in the year ending 31 March 2023. The rate of knife and sharp instrument offences was the highest across all forces at 178 per 100,000 population.

The force is getting better at identifying and responding to emerging trends in neighbourhood crime

Neighbourhood crime includes domestic burglary, vehicle-related crime, theft from the person and robbery. In the year ending 30 June 2023, West Midlands Police recorded 67,747 neighbourhood crimes. We noted that for the year ending 30 June 2023 recorded domestic burglary fell by 27.6 percent from 21,542 to 15,590 and robbery fell by 2.8 percent from 8,945 to 8,691, compared with the year ending 30 June 2019. But theft from the person increased by 39.7 percent, with the force recording 4,525 crimes in the year ending 30 June 2023 compared with 3,239 offences in the year ending 30 June 2019. And vehicle crime increased by 7.8 percent, with the force recording 38,941 crimes in the year ending 30 June 2023 compared with 36,130 crimes in the year ending 30 June 2019.

The force recognised these problems and acted by assigning specialist resources to tackle them. Its response includes Operation Advance and Operation Target, which concentrate on criminals involved in organised acquisitive crime. And it directed its preventative messages to areas where the risks of crime are highest. Senior leaders scrutinise the effectiveness of these activities at monthly performance meetings. The force told us that levels of vehicle crime and theft from the person had reduced in the year ending 31 August 2023, compared with the year ending 31 August 2022. This suggests that it is becoming more effective at identifying and responding to changes in neighbourhood crime.

The force actively seeks views and support from communities

The force aims to interact well with all communities, to build relationships, trust and confidence. Its diversity and inclusion strategy is called 'Fairness and Belonging'. This describes how the force uses messaging targeted at specific communities, so they have the opportunity to influence policing. This is important because the force recognises that communities are complex and evolving. We saw this in practice: policing teams identify where new communities are emerging and assess how well they engage with them. For example, they have worked to establish links with the Somali and Chinese communities in Birmingham to help build trust in policing. This helps the force to understand more about the issues that affect diverse communities, so it can respond appropriately.

Neighbourhood teams also communicate with people through surgeries held in public areas, social media and attending community events. They attend Partners and Communities Together meetings, which give residents the opportunity to meet with their policing team and partner agencies about local concerns, and to influence their actions. Neighbourhood teams work with children's homes to work with young people and break down barriers. And they hold community café events where people can meet them and talk about their experiences. The force's communications team supports neighbourhood teams by sharing their understanding of communities, so they can devise engagement methods that people are more likely to respond positively to.

The force works with partners to reduce and prevent long-term crime and antisocial behaviour

We found examples of the force working with partner agencies and communities to prevent crime and antisocial behaviour. For example, the Violence Reduction Partnership has developed a toolkit for faith communities, which recognises their potential for helping to reduce serious youth violence. The toolkit describes faith-inspired support for young people. WMnow is an email alert system which updates subscribers about local priorities and initiatives. We subscribed to this system and saw how areas are targeted with helpful crime prevention advice. And local officers visit schools to talk about the harmful effects of antisocial behaviour. This puts the emphasis on diversion rather than prosecution, meaning young people are less likely to be drawn into the criminal justice system.

Where enforcement is needed, we saw how the force targets areas where demand is highest. An example of this is Operation Advance, in which the force works with British Transport Police, Trading Standards and other agencies to tackle crime and disorder problems. Members of the [independent advisory group](#), who are drawn from local communities, accompany officers so they can observe the action they take. The force uses surveys afterwards to capture local people's views about policing, and it publicises the results of each operation to maximise their deterrent effect.

In July 2023, we published our report on police performance [Police performance: Getting a grip](#). We highlighted how West Midlands Police's data analytics lab performs forward-facing analysis to predict areas where violence is most likely to happen, so the force and partner organisations can plan activity to address it.

According to the [Office for National Statistics' Crime Survey for England and Wales](#), in the year ending 31 March 2023, an estimated 36.8 percent of adults aged 16 and over in the West Midlands experienced or witnessed antisocial behaviour in their local area. This is higher than the estimate for England and Wales of 34.0 percent. This difference is not statistically significant.

Responding to the public

Requires
improvement

West Midlands Police requires improvement at responding to the public.

Innovative practice

The force has developed the capability to live-stream body-worn video footage so supervisors can support and guide officers and staff

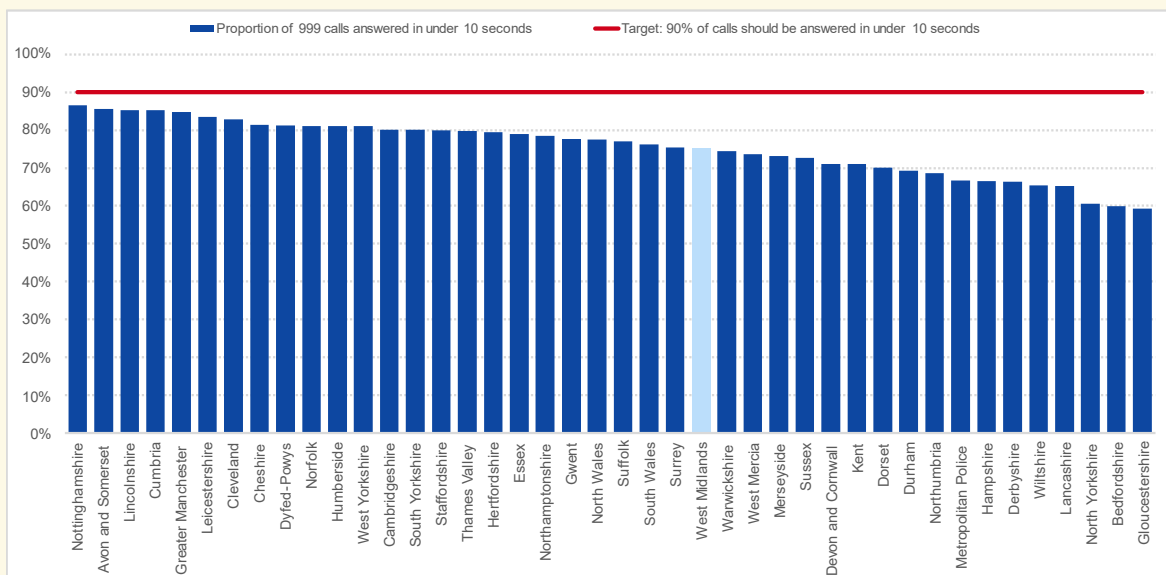
This was introduced to help operational officers and staff to respond to incidents more effectively and safely. Before introducing it, the force consulted widely to identify the most effective way to implement it. This included asking the [ethics committee](#) for advice. It also ran a trial in two areas, which it then evaluated. Live-streaming helps supervisors to interact with officers and staff, so they can give guidance and support. They assess in real time the action officers take, including how they consider risks to safety and secure evidence at incidents. Supervisors also view footage to see how well stop and search, and force, are used. They give feedback to officers to help them improve. [Digital forensics](#) unit staff give advice to teams who encounter digital devices when executing warrants. This helps them to preserve evidence effectively.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to make sure it answers emergency calls quickly enough

In the year ending 30 June 2023, West Midlands Police answered 75.2 percent of 999 calls from the public within 10 seconds. We saw that senior leaders take an active interest in the control room, and that call-handling performance is scrutinised at daily management meetings. The force has concentrated on answering calls more quickly. It uses performance data to help make decisions, identify problems and improve the time it takes to respond to emergency calls. The force states that changes to its operating model made in April 2023 have helped it to improve. It told us that in July 2023, 88.4 percent of 999 calls were being answered within 10 seconds and that its performance has continued to improve over the course of the calendar year.

Figure 1: Proportion of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds by forces in England and Wales in the year ending 30 June 2023



Source: [999 performance data](#) from BT

These changes are reassuring because the force experiences the highest rate of 999 calls of any force in England and Wales. In the year ending 30 June 2023, the rate was 265 per 1,000 population. It is important that the force sustains these recent improvements so it can maintain public confidence.

The force needs to reduce the number of non-emergency calls the caller abandons because they aren't answered

For the year ending 31 August 2023, the force told us that 34.3 percent of calls to its non-emergency [101](#) number were abandoned by callers before the call was answered. While there have been recent improvements, this abandonment rate is still higher than the 10.0 percent target for forces without a switchboard. The force doesn't know whether callers hang up due to the long waiting times or because they choose to use an online option.

The force needs to meet its published targets for attending calls for service

In 26 of the 63 cases we examined, the response to the incident wasn't within the required attendance time (whether downgraded or not). This delayed response can lead to the force missing opportunities to safeguard victims or collect evidence. The force should have the right levels of oversight in place at all levels to improve the way it responds to incidents.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force responds to the public.

Call handlers don't always give appropriate advice on preserving evidence and preventing crime

The force needs to make sure that call handlers give appropriate advice on preserving evidence and preventing crime to help and reassure callers. In our victim service assessment, call handlers failed to give appropriate advice on preservation of evidence in 9 of 16 cases we reviewed, and on crime prevention in 10 of 23 cases. This means that the force may be missing opportunities to secure evidence at crime scenes, or to gather evidence of antisocial behaviour that might support its investigations.

Call handlers carry out a structured initial triage and [risk assessment](#)

The force's control room staff use a risk-assessment process called [THRIVE](#). The force does a good job of scrutinising how frequently and effectively this process is used. In our victim service assessment, we found that call handlers used this structured approach to assess risk and consider the needs of the caller in all 70 of the applicable cases. The structured triage record was an accurate and meaningful reflection of the circumstances in 64 out of 70 relevant cases.

We found that call handlers' initial grading of reported incidents was appropriate in 90 of 92 cases. This reflects the findings of our previous PEEL inspection when we found that control room staff were using THRIVE well.

The force routinely identifies repeat victims

We found that call handlers checked whether the call involved a repeat victim in 66 of 69 relevant cases. The information gathered when a repeat victim was identified was used effectively in 23 of 24 cases we examined.

Investigating crime

Inadequate

West Midlands Police is inadequate at investigating crime.

Promising practice

West Midlands Police is helping to develop national practice to improve how the police respond to and investigate rape and other serious sexual offences

West Midlands Police is one of five 'pathfinder' forces participating in [Operation Soteria](#) to develop a new national operating for model for investigating rape. In September 2023, we assessed the force's progress on this and found that it had responded positively by implementing a thorough plan. This is resulting in better outcomes for victims.

There is a clear management structure in place within the force, led by a chief officer. An external scrutiny panel guides the force's approach and comprehensive management information is used to track performance. A RASSO (rape and other serious sexual offences) digital hub offers practical advice and guidance to frontline staff so they can respond to incidents effectively. The force told us that the positive outcome rate for rape during August 2023 had risen to 5.1 percent, compared with 1.8 percent during August 2022.

As part of its plan, the force assigned more expert officers to investigate complex and non-recent crimes of rape. In West Bromwich, we saw that experienced RASSO sergeants take responsibility for contacting victims. They take time to understand victims' needs, prioritise safeguarding and make referrals for specialist victim support.

The force recognises the well-being needs of investigators who handle traumatic offences. It has introduced a fair workload policy and changed shift patterns to accommodate investigators' training needs. It makes sure all investigators and supervisors can attend a well-being programme. This helps it to retain skilled investigators.

Around two thirds of RASSO investigators' posts are occupied by student officers who are working towards their national investigators' qualification. These officers receive training, are supervised well and are allocated fewer complex investigations. We acknowledge that the force faces a considerable challenge in making sure that all its RASSO investigators are trained and accredited under the new operating model for investigative practice.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to improve how it records victims' decisions and their reasons for withdrawing support for investigations, and make sure it documents whether evidence-led prosecutions have been considered in all such cases

In some investigations, the victim may decide not to support a prosecution. In these cases, police and prosecutors should consider whether it is possible to bring a prosecution without that support, depending on the evidence available. This is called an evidence-led prosecution. It is important that these cases are investigated and supervised effectively. When we looked at a sample of cases as part of our victim service assessment, we found that the reasons for a victim withdrawing their support sometimes weren't recorded. There wasn't always any evidence that the police considered progressing the case or tried to progress it without the victim's support. The force should make sure that all opportunities are explored to bring offenders to justice, even without the victim's support.

The force needs to make sure that it complies with the requirements of the Code of Practice for Victims of Crime

The force doesn't consistently help victims to access their rights as laid out in the [Code of Practice for Victims of Crime \('the Victims' Code'\)](#). The Victims' Code sets out the minimum level of service that victims of crime should receive from the criminal justice system. We found that victim needs assessments weren't routinely completed, meaning the force didn't always recognise when a victim was entitled to an enhanced service. And victim contracts, which determine how frequently victims should be updated about the progress of their investigation, weren't always adhered to. These omissions meant that the force didn't give a good enough level of service to victims in 37 of the 95 cases we examined.

Cause of concern

The force needs to make sure it carries out effective investigations which lead to satisfactory results for victims

We found that the force hasn't made enough progress in improving the standard of its investigations since our last PEEL inspection. As a result, not enough offenders are being brought to justice. We acknowledge the force does a good job of investigating many of the most serious crimes. But in our crime file review, we judged that only 54 of 100 investigations were effective. This is concerning.

During our inspection, officers and staff told us that they were frequently allocated crimes for which they didn't have sufficient skills or experience. This meant they couldn't achieve the right outcomes for victims. These investigations included some of the most serious crimes.

In our victim service assessment, we found that 40 out of 72 cases had investigation plans. Investigation plans, outlined in the College of Policing's [authorised professional practice](#), support investigators to make sure they make the most of all available opportunities to gather evidence.

We only found evidence of effective supervision in 36 of 82 cases we reviewed. We were told that supervisors didn't have the skills or capacity to supervise and review investigations properly, due to a lack of guidance and up-to-date training. Supervisors told us they were carrying large caseloads of crimes as there weren't enough skilled investigators available.

Accordingly, the force isn't always achieving acceptable outcomes for victims of crime. The number of crimes that are solved following investigations is low. The force needs to understand the issue and work to achieve better outcomes for victims.

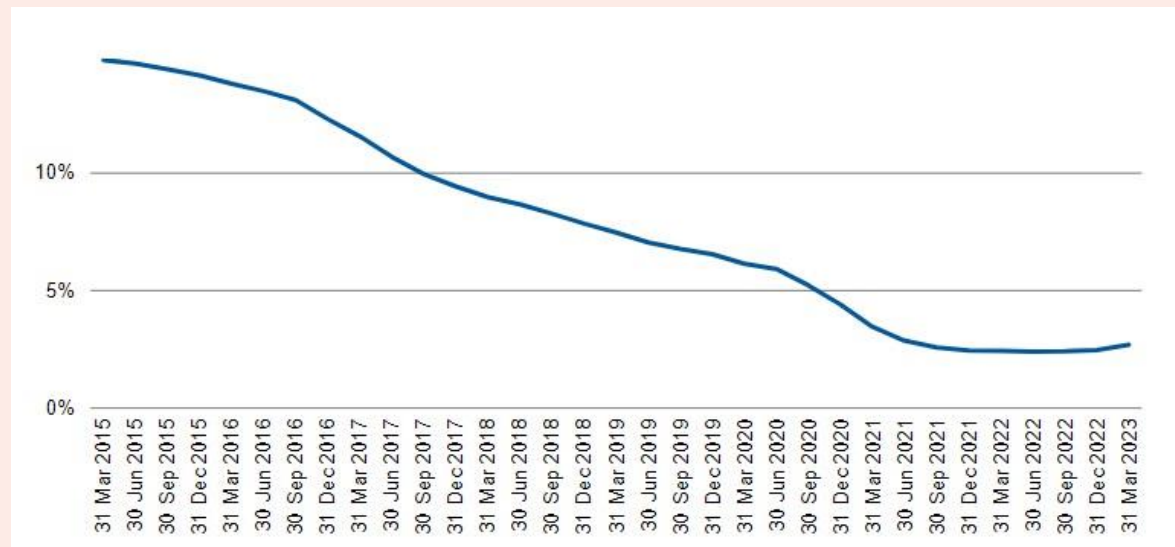
Figure 2: Percentage of victim-based crime recorded by West Midlands Police and all forces in England and Wales by selected outcome types in the year ending 31 March 2023

Outcome types	West Midlands Police outcome rate	England and Wales outcome rate
1 – Charged/summonsed	2.7%	5.2%
2 & 3 – Caution – youths & adults	0.3%	0.7%
8 – Community resolutions	0.5%	1.5%
9 – Prosecution not in the public interest (CPS decision)	0.0%	0.0%
10 & 21 – Prosecution not in the public interest (police decision)	0.0%	0.9%
14 – Evidential difficulties (suspect not identified but the victim declines or is unable to support)	9.0%	5.9%
15 – Evidential difficulties (suspect identified; victim supports police action)	11.3%	13.1%
16 – Evidential difficulties (suspect identified; victim does not support or withdraws support)	27.6%	22.7%
17 – Prosecution time limit expired	0.0%	0.3%
18 – Investigation complete – no suspect identified	42.8%	42.7%
20 – Action undertaken by another body/agency	1.5%	1.4%
22 – Diversionary, educational or intervention activity	0.0%	0.4%

Note: England and Wales data excludes City of London Police

Source: [Crime in England and Wales: Police force area data tables](#) from the Office for National Statistics

Figure 3: Proportion of victim-based crimes assigned outcome 1 (charged/summonsed) by West Midlands Police between the year ending 31 March 2015 and the year ending 31 March 2023

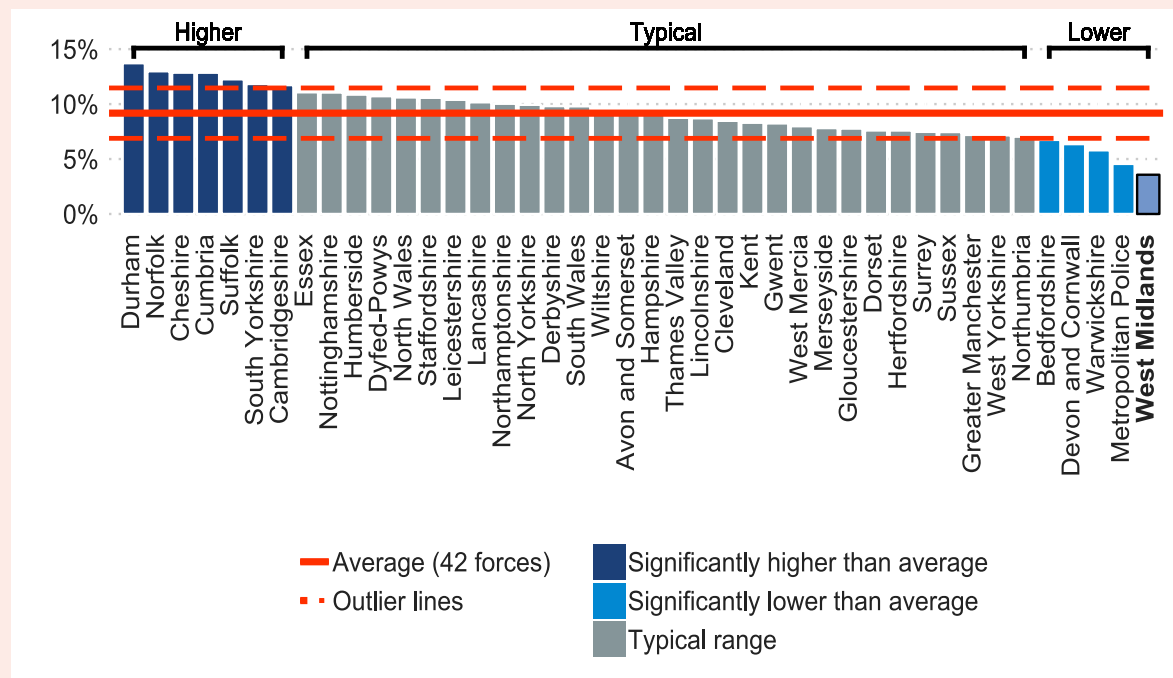


Source: [Crime in England and Wales: Police force area data tables](#) from the Office for National Statistics

In the year ending 31 March 2023, West Midlands Police recorded 312,084 victim-based crimes. Of these recorded offences, only 3.6 percent were assigned an ‘offences brought to justice’ outcome. This is significantly lower than expected compared to other forces in England and Wales.

Between the year ending 31 March 2022 and 31 March 2023, the proportion of victim-based crimes assigned outcome 14, ‘evidential difficulties (suspect not identified but the victim declines or is unable to support)’, increased from 8.1 percent to 9.0 percent. This value is higher than expected compared to other forces in England and Wales.

Figure 4: Proportion of victim-based crimes assigned an ‘offences brought to justice’ outcome across all forces in England and Wales in the year ending 31 March 2023



Source: [Police recorded crime and outcomes open data tables](#) from the Home Office

When cases were finalised, the correct outcome wasn’t always applied. Victims’ views weren’t always taken into account, and some investigations were closed inappropriately without victims being informed. Investigators should involve victims when decisions are made, update them about the decision and, where applicable, explain it to them.

We found the force didn’t routinely audit and scrutinise the outcomes assigned to cases. This means leaders can’t be confident that they understand what drives some outcomes, whether the outcomes are appropriate and what improvements might be needed to give victims better justice.

Recommendation

Within six months, West Midlands Police should:

- make sure staff and officers have sufficient skills and capabilities to carry out high-quality investigations;
- make sure it carries out proportionate, thorough and timely investigations into reported crimes, which are supervised effectively;
- make sure investigation plans are created where applicable and that all investigative opportunities are taken;
- make sure it consistently achieves appropriate outcomes for victims; and
- make sure it is using outcomes appropriately, in a way that complies with force and national policies, leading to satisfactory results for victims.

Main findings

In this section we set out our additional findings that relate to how well the force investigates crime.

The force has put in place appropriate governance arrangements to make sure it has effective oversight of investigations

The force's new operating model was introduced in April 2023. We found that senior leaders have acted to improve performance, including outcomes. A new management structure, led by the deputy chief constable, oversees investigations. The operating model redistributes some investigations to different teams, including neighbourhood teams. Local investigation teams investigate more serious neighbourhood crimes like robbery and burglary, while the major crime unit handles more complex investigations.

The force told us that this will give specialist investigators more capacity to handle serious cases. It also anticipates this will help officers to develop their skills at investigating crime. It has implemented an improvement plan called Operation Vanguard to raise the standard of investigations.

Protecting vulnerable people

Inadequate

West Midlands Police is inadequate at protecting vulnerable people.

Innovative practice

The force's Connect records management system helps information about vulnerable children to be prepared efficiently so it can be shared with other agencies at multi-agency safeguarding hub meetings

The force's records management system is called Connect. It automatically creates high-quality information reports that support multi-agency decision-making at multi-agency safeguarding hub meetings. These summaries provide an auditable record of what information was shared, and when. This saves time for staff who work in the central referral unit, which has alleviated backlogs. The force states that 4,500 records were prepared this way over a six-month period.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to make sure it uses consistent safeguarding referral processes that are recorded on its IT systems so vulnerable children and adults are protected

The force is involved in extensive multi-agency arrangements and staff understand their roles and have the skills to perform them. As well as multi-agency risk assessment conferences, [multi-agency safeguarding hubs](#) are in place throughout the force. It has two central referral units, which make sure that information flows between the force and its partners. They also make sure reports involving children are reviewed rapidly and allocated to the right teams. We found that demand in the central referral unit based at West Bromwich Police Station was managed well and there weren't large backlogs of referrals awaiting review.

However, while the force does refer vulnerable victims for safeguarding support using [multi-agency referral forms](#) or domestic abuse risk assessment reports, the quality of initial referrals made by officers varies.

Multi-agency referral forms are submitted directly to other agencies by email to notify them of concerns about children's welfare. This process isn't efficient and the reports aren't linked to the force's records management systems or subject to oversight. This means the force doesn't have its own record of children's vulnerability or of the action it has taken.

The force monitors whether domestic abuse risk assessment reports have been completed by officers and checked by supervisors, and whether the victim has elected to answer questions. Its data indicates these reports get completed appropriately in most cases. But even though officers said they had been trained to complete domestic abuse risk assessment reports, the force needs to assess their quality more robustly. We reviewed a selection of cases – in some, risk assessments had been completed well, but in others they hadn't been completed properly or were absent.

The net effect is that the standard of referrals to partner agencies won't always be good enough, so vulnerable people might not get the support they need.

The force should make sure that it uses preventative orders in all appropriate cases to safeguard vulnerable people, and that it has effective processes to enforce orders and prioritise breaches

West Midlands Police records a high rate of domestic abuse crime. In the year ending 31 March 2023, the force identified 81,579 domestic abuse related crimes. This equates to 28.0 domestic abuse related crimes per 1,000 population, which is the highest rate across forces in England and Wales. This compares with the England and Wales rate of 15.8 per 1,000 population in the same period. But in our victim service assessment we found that ancillary orders, such as [Domestic Violence Protection Notices \(DVPNs\)](#), [Domestic Violence Protection Orders \(DVPOs\)](#) and [Stalking Protection Orders](#) were considered in only 9 of 16 cases where they were appropriate. These orders need to be obtained and enforced to protect victims.

In the year ending 31 March 2023, the force issued 466 DVPNs, which is an increase of 102 compared to the year ending 31 March 2022. It has also increased the number of [DVPOs](#) it obtains through the courts. The force's civil interventions team oversees the DVPO process, giving officers advice on whether DVPOs should be applied for and preparing court files. Our data indicates that 90.3 percent of all DVPO applications made by the force were granted by the courts in the year ending 31 March 2023.

These improvements are welcome, because the force doesn't always tackle domestic abuse effectively. In the year ending 31 December 2022, the force used [outcome 16](#) (evidential difficulties, suspect identified, victim does not support further action) when finalising 73.1 percent of all domestic abuse offences compared with an overall England and Wales figure of 47.5 percent. Sometimes victims may decide not to support an investigation, which means the force must consider safeguarding measures like protective orders. But even when orders are obtained, we found that officers don't always make sure they are complied with. The force's vulnerability improvement plan reinforces that its response to breaches must improve. It needs to have a consistent process for policing orders and identifying breaches so victims are protected.

Cause of concern

The force needs to make sure that its multi-agency risk assessment conferences work effectively to keep vulnerable people safe

A [multi-agency risk assessment conference](#) (MARAC) is a locally held meeting where information is shared by representatives from agencies who support people at high risk of [domestic abuse](#). Eight MARACs meet regularly across the force's seven local policing areas. These are supported by co-ordinators. The MARACs have arrangements for sharing information, along with an operating protocol and a performance and quality framework. An operational group reviews their performance and reports to a strategic domestic abuse board that is linked to various partnership meetings. However, we found that these management processes and structures aren't effective.

Excessive and inappropriate demand means people might not be safeguarded promptly. We learned that, in September 2023, there was a six to eight-week backlog of high-risk cases for discussion at MARAC. There are delays between referrals being received, triage and decision-making. And because details of cases are only released to partner agencies five days before each MARAC meeting, some agencies may be unaware of a case for several weeks. The force is aware of this risk, but urgent measures are needed to manage this demand.

We did see examples of how this demand could be addressed. For example, in Coventry, a multi-agency triage process filters out cases that don't meet the MARAC criteria while still ensuring agencies share information and contribute to decisions. We were told that of the 253 cases referred to Coventry MARAC, 204 were triaged, while 49 didn't need to enter the MARAC process.

In the year ending 31 March 2023, 9,153 cases were discussed at MARACs in the West Midlands Police area. This figure exceeds the 4,400 cases that would be expected in this area (based on the expected level of 40 cases per 10,000 women calculated by the domestic abuse charity [SafeLives](#)).

The force should work with its partners to reassess the terms of reference and processes for MARACs to manage demand more efficiently. And it should make sure that MARAC chairs have sufficient seniority, knowledge and experience to run meetings effectively.

Recommendations

Immediately, West Midlands Police should:

- review the backlog of cases waiting to be discussed at multi-agency risk assessment conferences and make sure that high-risk victims and families receive the safeguarding support they need; and
- prepare a plan for how it will reduce the backlog of multi-agency risk assessment conference cases.

Within six months, West Midlands Police should:

- introduce a multi-agency risk assessment conference structure that can manage current and future demand efficiently; and
- make sure that multi-agency risk assessment conferences have the right strategic and operational governance arrangements to reduce the likelihood of harm to high-risk victims and their families.

Main findings

In this section we set out our additional findings that relate to how well the force protects vulnerable people.

The force needs to make sure that its management structure helps it to effectively identify and respond to risks that affect its ability to protect vulnerable people

The force's vulnerability strategy is led by an assistant chief constable. Each of the [College of Policing](#)'s 13 strands of vulnerability has a lead officer assigned to it who is responsible for making improvements. Progress is reviewed at strategic meetings. We assessed the force's plan to tackle violence, abuse and intimidation against women and girls. This reflects the vulnerability strands and describes how the force and its partners work together to protect women and girls. The force is a pilot site for Operation Soteria, which we describe positively earlier in this report.

West Midlands Police's [force management statement](#) includes an assessment of vulnerability demand and explains how the force will address risks to vulnerable people. The force has acted on this assessment by changing its operating model to build capacity in its [public protection unit](#).

The force told us that this will help officers and staff to investigate serious offences more thoroughly, in order to achieve better outcomes for victims. But the force too often reacts to problems as they emerge, rather than using data and insight to anticipate and mitigate systemic risks. The problem of demand faced by MARACs is an example of this. At the time of our inspection, the force was reviewing its management structure to make it more effective.

The force obtains victims' views, but it needs to make sure it responds to their feedback consistently to improve its services

The force told us that it wants to improve the confidence of victims and the wider public in how it investigates crime. It will listen to victims and change the way it works in response to their feedback. The force's victims thematic board has developed a delivery plan aimed at improving the service victims receive. And each department has a service improvement meeting that discusses how well victims are supported. For example, a chief inspector in the public protection unit presents information to the senior leadership team at monthly meetings.

The desire to improve is evident in the services the force offers. It has introduced a domestic abuse support desk. Victims can discuss their personal circumstances with trained staff using video calls. The force told us that early results indicate that victims are more supportive of prosecutions since the support desk's introduction and they value the service they receive. When asked about using the service again, the force told us that 76.0 percent of respondents stated they would prefer video calling to telephone calls (14.0 percent of respondents) or a home visit (10.0 percent of respondents). The introduction of the support desk means the force can meet vulnerable victims' needs better. But the force needs to make sure that appropriate enquiries are made, for example, about children who may be present in a home and who witness domestic abuse.

The force has provided guidance for officers via their handheld devices, called the [Child Abuse Guide](#). It helps them capture children's views and needs. Managers from investigation teams examine cases and evaluate how well officers listen to children and consider their views. This process is focused on the quality of action that is taken, but it isn't brief – supervisors must invest time in it. This gives the force an opportunity to learn from children's experiences and improve.

The West Midlands MARAC Survivor Feedback Project is a survey of the survivors of domestic abuse who have received support through the MARAC process. The survey's report, which was prepared in January 2023, makes 20 recommendations to improve the service MARACs give, although it isn't clear if the force has taken action to address these recommendations.

The force has made some useful changes. We look forward to learning how its delivery plan makes sure that widespread use of feedback from victims, including children, leads to better services for victims.

The force uses the Domestic Violence [Disclosure Scheme](#) (also known as Clare's Law) to protect vulnerable victims and potential victims

Under [Clare's Law](#), 'right to ask' gives any member of the public the right to ask the police if their partner may pose a risk to them, and 'right to know' allows the police to disclose information to protect a potential victim. Our data from 31 March 2023 shows that the force's use of 'right to know' applications has grown. In the quarter ending 31 March 2023, the force received 191 'right to know' applications and made 78 disclosures, whereas for the same period in 2022 it had received 25 applications and made 13 disclosures.

The force's Clare's Law team handles these applications. The force told us that it processes approximately 225 requests each month, and 30.0 percent of these are 'right to know' applications. They are reviewed promptly. The team also considers safeguarding needs and promotes the use of Clare's Law to the wider force. This appears to be effective, with safeguarding teams demonstrating their awareness of Clare's Law by proactively considering 'right to know' referrals for MARAC cases.

But we learned that many cases are handled over the telephone due to demand. Best practice states that this should only be done when other methods aren't possible. The force has introduced a domestic abuse desk that uses video calling – it could consider using similar technology when processing Clare's Law applications. This would help it to validate applications efficiently, so vulnerable victims could quickly find out about their partner's or ex-partner's previous abusive or violent offending.

Managing offenders and suspects

Inadequate

West Midlands Police is inadequate at managing offenders and suspects.

Area for improvement

The force needs to make sure it manages outstanding suspects and offenders effectively in order to protect the public

The force has a clear policy concerning the management of outstanding suspects and offenders. This sets out the process officers follow when circulating information on the [Police National Computer](#). They prioritise outstanding suspects using a 'recency, frequency and gravity' analytical tool. This ranks suspects using the Cambridge Harm Index, which measures the seriousness of harm caused to victims of crime. The number of outstanding suspects is scrutinised at a monthly meeting led by the deputy chief constable, who holds local commanders to account for their performance. The force's data indicates that the number of outstanding suspects has reduced since the force changed its operating model in April 2023. This shows that the force understands the threat posed by outstanding suspects. However, when we examined a selection of cases, we found that the force wasn't always taking effective action. Suspects wanted for serious offences had gone on to commit more offences, while the action taken by officers wasn't always clear, and in some cases, we didn't see evidence of supervision.

Causes of concern

The force doesn't manage the risk posed to the public by registered sex offenders effectively

The force's management of sex offenders complies with some of the [authorised professional practice](#). But it has significant problems which inhibit its ability to minimise the risks posed by these offenders. We have highlighted some of these problems, including the workloads of sex offender managers, in previous inspection reports.

The force uses [active risk management system \(ARMS\)](#) assessments to assess risk factors associated with sexual re-offending. These are important because they support the effective management of sex offenders. But we found that many were overdue. The force didn't have enough data to understand the level of risk in cases where ARMS assessments and home visits were overdue. The force told us that in May 2023 it had 276 cases with outstanding ARMS assessments.

We were told that the technology sex offender managers use to detect further offending is unsuitable. Some are reluctant to use it because they don't understand it and think it would create more work. Some wanted more support from the digital forensics unit in assessing and prioritising digital devices for specialist examination. These factors were affecting their morale and well-being.

Since our inspection, the force has responded quickly by implementing an improvement plan to address demand, welfare and training. This plan is reviewed monthly by the deputy chief constable and other senior leaders. The force told us that it has moved the management of sex offender manager teams to its public protection unit. It is updating its performance management process to give it a clearer understanding of risk and demand. And it has assessed the well-being support it offers to sex offender managers. These are positive steps and we will monitor the force's progress closely.

Recommendation

Immediately, West Midlands Police should make sure that:

- its operating model supports the robust management of registered sex offenders by trained staff to minimise the risks to children;
- it implements an effective management framework so it can make fully informed decisions about the current and future capability and capacity it needs to protect children from registered sex offenders;
- it uses information about its performance to accurately assess and respond to the demand faced by sex offender managers, including data on active risk management system assessments, risk management plans, visits and the number of cases per officer;
- supervisors review cases at appropriate intervals in line with expected standards;
- it supports sex offender managers' well-being; and
- sex offender managers use digital tools effectively to identify offending.

The force doesn't manage the risk posed by online child abuse offenders effectively

During our inspection, we examined the work of the online child [sexual exploitation](#) team (OCSET). This team is responsible for detecting offenders who access indecent images of children online and for putting safeguarding measures in place. We noted that the force had adapted a tool called [KIRAT](#) to accurately assess the risks posed by suspects who view indecent images of children online. And it was using child protection software frequently. This is positive. But we found significant shortcomings in the force's approach.

The force supplied data about the number of cases referred to OCSET for investigation. The force told us that since 2018 the number of referrals has doubled, but the force hasn't allocated any more staff to handle them, despite anticipating that demand would grow. The force told us that this led to a backlog of 81 outstanding cases by May 2023. It wasn't reassessing risks in the backlog after a certain amount of time had passed to see if suspects' circumstances had changed and if it should reprioritise any cases.

We found that some of the working practices of the digital forensic unit (DFU) were preventing investigators from submitting devices promptly for examination. And the force wasn't making enough use of the [Child Abuse Image Database](#), which brings together all the images found by the police and the National Crime Agency. The Child Abuse Image Database supports the investigation and prosecution of offenders and the identification of victims.

The force uses consent searches and [voluntary attendance](#) more often than warrants and arrest powers. The force told us that in 2022, 230 cases out of 400 were enforced without the use of warrants. We did find the force prioritised arrests in cases where the suspect lives with a child or is in a position of trust, but relying on consent to search in other circumstances means that evidential or safeguarding opportunities might be missed.

We found that referrals to social services weren't being made as soon as a suspect is believed to be having contact with a child. This prevents the use of early safeguarding and prolongs the risk of the child experiencing abuse.

The force has implemented an improvement plan, which we refer to earlier in this report. This plan is comprehensive and reviewed regularly. The force has assessed the demand faced by OCSET and allocated more resources to it based on its projection of demand over the next three years. The force told us that the number of outstanding cases had reduced to 21 by 17 August 2023, and staff told us their well-being was better supported. All OCSET officers wear body-worn video when attending scenes, which means they can live-stream footage to the DFU, who provide advice. The force participated in a trial scheme to share information with Birmingham City Council's Public Health Department to make sure children are safeguarded quickly. This approach has now been expanded to all the West Midlands local authority areas.

Significant investment in the DFU means more staff are available to give support to investigators, including specialist digital/cyber vehicles that attend warrants. During fieldwork, we saw how the force uses cloud technology to manage data more efficiently and how different digital tools are being assessed for their effectiveness at detecting offences. These steps are notable and we look forward to learning of their outcomes as we monitor the force's progress.

Recommendation

Immediately, West Midlands Police should make sure that:

- it implements an effective management framework so it can make fully informed decisions about the current and future capability and capacity it needs to protect children from online child abuse offenders;
- it addresses the backlog of cases awaiting assessment by the online child sexual exploitation team, in particular any cases that are overdue, ensuring that intelligence is reviewed regularly to help risks to be reassessed;
- the speed and nature of the enforcement action it takes reflects risks and reduces the likelihood that evidence will be lost, and that warrants and arrests are prioritised;
- safeguarding measures are used for potential victims and suspects, and referrals to social services are made as soon as a suspect is identified as having access to a child;
- it assesses the demand faced by the digital forensic unit and mitigates the effects of any delays caused by evidence not yet being available;
- it uses performance information to accurately assess and respond to the demands faced by the online child sexual exploitation team and digital forensic unit staff;
- it supports the online child sexual exploitation and digital forensic unit teams' well-being; and
- it uploads images to the Child Abuse Image Database frequently.

Main findings

In this section we set out our additional findings that relate to how well the force manages offenders and suspects.

The force considers the safeguarding benefits of pre-charge bail and uses it appropriately

The force understands the requirements of new [bail](#) legislation introduced by the [Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022](#) and has improved its management of bail cases. Investigation teams hold monthly service improvement meetings, and an assistant chief constable chairs quarterly performance meetings where a wide range of data and information about bail is scrutinised. This includes the number of outstanding suspects with lapsed bail and details of backlogs. Sergeants and inspectors now play a greater role in ensuring bail is used appropriately. In the year ending 31 March 2023, there were 5,529 lapsed bail cases. The force told us that it had reduced lapsed bail cases to 1,769 by 31 August 2023. We confirmed that it uses bail more often than [released under investigation](#). The force told us that during August 2023, out of 1,257 cases of domestic abuse, it used bail in 1,243 cases and released under investigation in 12 cases. This suggests the force balances safeguarding needs and other priorities when making decisions about bail.

Building, supporting and protecting the workforce

Requires improvement

West Midlands Police requires improvement at building and developing its workforce.

Promising practice

The force's Talent Module app supports the continuing professional development of its workforce

The force has worked with a commercial partner to create a software application called Talent Module, which helps it to identify personal development needs. Members of the workforce who have developed specialist skills or aspire to various positions in the force are classified using a '9-box' grid system. This helps the force to recognise their potential, so it can decide what development opportunities it should offer them.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to make sure that its occupational health unit effectively supports its workforce's well-being

The force has identified shortcomings in how the [occupational health unit](#) (OHU) supports its workforce. Its improvement plan aims to tackle the causes of ill-health among officers and staff. The plan includes pre-employment screening, immunisation and physiotherapy. But the OHU faces high demand. The force told us that in 2022 approximately 3,300 referrals were made to the OHU and 868 appointments were made with the force medical adviser.

Our data shows that in the year ending 31 March 2023, there were 3,425 referrals to the OHU. But the OHU doesn't have the capacity to meet this demand, so staff may experience considerable delays before they receive support. However, the exact nature of demand is unclear because the force told us that some cases could be handled without OHU involvement. The force can't easily identify whether the same person has been referred to the OHU more than once. And some supervisors weren't always aware of when referrals should be made or what other support they could give. The force should assess the full nature of demand the OHU faces. And it should give supervisors more guidance on when to refer people to the OHU for support, so it can operate more efficiently.

In the year ending 31 March 2023, West Midlands Police had 25.3 occupational health referrals per 100 employees. This was in line with other forces in England and Wales.

The force needs to better understand why officers, particularly new recruits, wish to leave the force, in order to improve the support it gives them

The force doesn't have effective processes in place to understand why new recruits leave the force. We were told that some student officers had completed a survey during the last week of their initial training. But they hadn't been asked about their views since then. This would be useful for the force to understand their well-being and development needs and identify any challenges they face. The force has a limited understanding of the reasons behind differences in achievement, particularly for those from under-represented groups.

The force's student welfare and performance board reviews information about student officers who undergo the force's case management process, including those who are experiencing ill health, undergoing [misconduct](#) procedures or whose performance needs to improve. The force told us this cohort accounts for 16 percent of the total student population. However, the force focuses on the number of staff undergoing processes, rather than identifying the underlying reasons and addressing these, or identifying any patterns and themes for improvement.

During our inspection, some students told us that the induction they had when joining their stations didn't meet their needs, and the demands faced by students and tutors are high. Others felt they were put into operational or investigative roles too early. Several told us they were concerned about changes to the force's operating model. These changes mean they must investigate crime, which they felt they didn't have enough experience or capacity to do effectively.

The force needs to review and improve its processes to monitor new recruits' satisfaction levels. Analysing retention and exit information along with new recruits' feedback will help it to identify patterns and trends. This will help it understand why new recruits leave, including those who are from under-represented backgrounds. And it can use opportunities to encourage them to stay.

The force is developing a new 'attraction strategy'. As part of this, it intends to evaluate why it loses officers and staff, in order to reduce this in future.

The force needs to make sure that the professional development review/appraisal process is effective and valued by its officers and staff

We carried out a PEEL workforce survey from 12 June to 14 July 2023. We received 343 responses, which is an estimated 2.7 percent of the total workforce. Of these, 105 respondents said they had line management responsibilities, of whom 91 said they weren't enrolled on any West Midlands Police or College of Policing leadership courses, programmes or workshops. The College of Policing's effective supervision guidelines hadn't been shared with 63 of 105 respondents.

All police officers and staff should have conversations with their line managers in which, together, they plan and review their professional development over a 12-month period. These should be seen as effective and valued by the workforce. 'WM Conversations' is the force's name for structured discussions about performance and professional development.

During our last PEEL inspection we found that these discussions were used well. However, only 73.0 percent of the overall workforce completed an annual assessment in the year ending 31 March 2023. During our reality testing, we found WM Conversations weren't always used properly, and they weren't viewed positively. We were told that some supervisors don't routinely discuss personal development with their staff. Our PEEL workforce survey found that 51.6 percent (177 of 343 respondents) had a formal professional development review in the last 12 months. Of these, only 36.7 percent (65 of 177 respondents) agreed that the performance development review was an effective tool in their development, while 48.6 percent (86 of 177 respondents) said that they value these reviews. This is disappointing, given the force's previous work in this area. It means that some officers and staff won't perform to the best of their ability. This reinforces why the force's drive to enhance leadership skills through new management programmes is essential.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to how well the force builds and develops its workforce.

The force understands the factors that have a positive and negative effect on its workforce's well-being, but it needs to communicate about change more effectively

The force's well-being strategy is linked to national well-being initiatives. In November 2022, the force completed a workforce survey. Each local policing area (LPA) has developed an action plan to support the workforce's well-being that is assessed each quarter. The action the force takes is reported to its senior leaders. However, the force acknowledges that it needs to communicate the outcomes of these plans more positively to its workforce. It is carrying out a review to determine how it can manage resources, staff development needs and well-being more effectively. This is encouraging because well-being was a prominent theme of this inspection.

In April 2023, the force changed its operating model to reflect its priorities. It intends to balance its operational needs with the well-being of its workforce. We saw how the force has allocated more resources to teams where demand pressures are most acute. An example is the online child sexual exploitation team (OCSET), where officers spoke positively about recent changes that aid their well-being. We found good examples of the force consulting with and supporting its workforce when making decisions that affected them. Leaders communicate with their teams using weekly team 'dial-in' meetings and the intranet. We noted that the chief constable was about to start a series of 'roadshows' across the force to engage personally with officers and staff about their experiences.

But views about well-being were often negative. During our reality testing, staff felt that their well-being wasn't properly considered when the new operating model was introduced. Managing and communicating change well within the workplace means that staff will feel included and part of the force, regardless of their role or rank. In our PEEL workforce survey, 15.4 percent of respondents (53 of 343) agreed that change is managed well in West Midlands Police. And 38.2 percent of respondents (131 of 343) felt that the force keeps them informed about matters that affect them. We acknowledge that the force has implemented changes rapidly to improve its service to the public, and the extent to which these changes affect staff varies. But the force needs to demonstrate that it is actively considering the impact on its workforce's well-being, to help mitigate any negative effects.

The workforce has access to a range of measures to improve their physical and mental well-being

The well-being support the force offers includes an employee assistance programme called Vivup, which is available 24 hours a day. This gives access to counselling and advice from specialists. There is widespread use of [trauma risk management \(TRiM\)](#), a process that helps staff who have experienced traumatic events. Annual psychological screening is offered to officers and staff in roles where they are more likely to be exposed to negative influences on their well-being. These high-risk roles include OCSET, sex offender managers, crime scene managers, [authorised firearms officers](#), collision investigators and forensic scene investigators. However, we learned that the force has to make difficult decisions about the teams it offers screening to, because of the costs involved.

The force circulates information about well-being in the form of 'top tips'. It also works with the national police well-being service, [Oscar Kilo](#), to understand where there are gaps in its well-being provision and how it can improve. The force told us that by September 2023, 156 officers had participated in their Passport to Management course for newly promoted supervisors, which includes training about well-being. This means supervisors will be better equipped to support well-being.

In the year ending 31 March 2023, 1.5 percent of police officers in West Midlands Police were on long-term sickness absence as a proportion of full-time equivalent police officers. This was in line with other forces in England and Wales.

The force makes new recruits feel welcome and included, and helps supervisors to foster an ethical and inclusive working environment

The force's strategy for diversity and inclusion is called 'Fairness and Belonging'. It has three strands: Our People; Our Communities; and Our Partners. It reflects the force's ambition to be an employer of choice, and to be more representative of its communities. The strategy is managed by the force's fairness and belonging governance board, led by the deputy chief constable. The cross-industry network Inclusive Companies [ranked the force 4th](#) in its list of the top 50 inclusive UK employers in the year ending 31 March 2023.

We saw how the force is developing its leaders so they can contribute more to an inclusive culture. The Passport to Management course includes modules on moral courage, managing inclusion and understanding fairness. Mandatory training on the [Equality Act 2010](#) helps staff to recognise the importance of inclusive language and the negative effects of ‘micro-aggression’, which is defined as indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination. A useful guided reflection toolkit, ‘Driving Inclusion’, is available on the force’s intranet. Supervisors can use it to guide discussions with staff about inclusion and identify areas for improvement. The force uses equality analysis to understand the impact of its decisions on protected groups, including student officers. It trains its staff so they can complete equality assessments when making changes to practice. These help it to make sure that its policies and services don’t discriminate, and to evaluate how its work affects diverse groups of people.

The student welfare team makes sure that students and their trainers understand the range of support available, including the use of reasonable adjustments and help from different staff associations. Every student officer is offered a dyslexia screening test. New students are introduced to the team and told about the force’s procedures for dealing with reports of inappropriate behaviour, to help give them confidence in those procedures. Alongside the daily face-to-face support that sergeants offer, the force’s student support and welfare hub offers advice and guidance to student officers and their line managers. Student support surgeries are held in LPAs, and students have the opportunity to ask questions and seek help in a quarterly online forum. Learning support agreements are used, and in some cases breaks in studies are given. The force also helps some officers to work flexibly so they have time for prayer.

A supportive, ethical working environment is important because it affects job satisfaction, well-being and the way the force is perceived by its workforce and the public. We found that the force reinforces the importance of high ethical standards. All officers and staff must undergo an annual [integrity health check](#). This is a guided discussion to establish whether their personal circumstances have changed and if they have any new integrity risks. A record of the discussion is made and the force closely monitors completion rates. This helps to make sure that all officers and staff understand the [code of ethics](#), the force’s values and the standards of behaviour expected of them.

As part of our PEEL inspection, we carried out an anonymised workforce survey across the whole force. This provides an insight into the thoughts and feelings of staff. We received 343 responses to our survey for this inspection, which is only around 2.7 percent of the force’s total workforce.

The results regarding diversity, quality and inclusion showed that, of those surveyed:

- 84.5 percent agreed that their line manager challenges discriminatory behaviour;
- 82.8 percent agreed that their line manager creates an ethical working environment;

- 81.3 percent agreed that their line manager creates an inclusive working environment;
- 77.8 percent agreed that their line manager models high standards of behaviour; and
- 71.5 percent agreed that their line manager nurtures an environment of trust and confidence.

The force offers some support to police officers and staff from under-represented groups to help them develop and progress, but it needs to understand more about barriers to promotion and progression

West Midlands Police aims to be an employer of choice. Strategic leaders emphasise the importance of the force being representative of its local communities, so it is more able to serve the public. This means it must invest in its staff. The force has worked hard to increase the proportion of its workforce who are from under-represented groups. It has a good understanding of the composition of its workforce, which is monitored by the fairness and belonging governance board. We saw that diversity and inclusion data includes details of the numbers of officers from ethnic minority groups who are successful in promotion processes, and the proportion of students from those groups who leave the force. We set out above that more should be done to reduce the number of student officers who leave the force.

Supervisors support the development of colleagues from under-represented groups. For example, they help prepare personal development plans that reflect career aspirations. The force offers the College of Policing's Aspire development programme for officers and staff in leadership roles who identify as being from under-represented groups, including women, LGBTQ+, and Black, Asian or other ethnic minority groups. But it is in the early stages of assessing how under-represented groups experience barriers to promotion. At the time of our inspection, the force hadn't completed an assessment of why people from these groups are prevented from progressing or applying for promotion, and it didn't have a [positive action](#) plan. The force would benefit from carrying out a self-assessment and producing an action plan so that it can better understand the barriers and challenges, and put in place actions to overcome them.

Leadership and force management

Requires
improvement

West Midlands Police's leadership and management requires improvement.

Innovative practice

The force's 'digital workforce' improves productivity and efficiency

The force uses robotic process automation (RPA) to complete some repetitive administrative tasks. RPA works by using software to replace repetitive processes that would have been completed manually.

The force has ten RPA licences. These are known as a digital workforce. They perform a variety of processes to help the force be more productive. These include:

- automatically uploading electronic statements;
- linking digital evidence;
- completing quality assurance checks in a database;
- helping with vetting checks;
- transferring online reports onto force computer systems;
- updating HR records;
- addressing data quality issues; and
- sending victim of crime referrals for people who ask for support.

The force developed a digital dashboard to track the benefits of RPA. The force told us that approximately 1.2 million tasks had been performed, which would have taken 94,000 hours to complete if a person had done them manually. The time saved by RPA has helped to remove demand from some parts of the workforce so they can carry out other work and be more efficient and productive.

Areas for improvement

The force needs to make sure that strategic decisions are supported by effective business change processes and data is used effectively to support performance improvement plans

The force has invested in technology and has access to comprehensive data. However, during our fieldwork we found that it doesn't always use the data that it has to support important strategic decisions.

For example, the force rapidly introduced a new operating model to improve the quality of the service it gives to the public and to help it meet demand. The reasons for this change are clear. However, the force couldn't clearly demonstrate how data was used to develop the new operating model's design. Nor could it show how resources were aligned with demand data. Decisions should be supported by high-quality data and information so that appropriate levels of resources are invested in the right places based on needs.

The force would benefit from reviewing its workforce data to make sure resources are allocated where they are most needed, and to confirm that its decisions offer value for money. The force should make sure this data is consistently used before workforce decisions are made. This will help it to optimise its services so it can improve performance at a time when it also needs to make savings.

The force doesn't fully understand its demand as it isn't using all the data it has access to, which affects its ability to manage demand effectively

The annual [force management statement](#) includes an assessment of current demand, and the demands the force expects to face in the future. When we reviewed West Midlands Police's most recent force management statement, we found that it omits detail and tends to describe what the force currently does. It should explain how current demand informs its expectation of future demand and the changes it needs to make to address this.

We acknowledge that the force has done some good work to understand and address some sources of demand – for example, by investing in technology. But it is making savings by not recruiting to replace some staff who leave. This means demand that should be dealt with in one area is transferred to other parts of the workforce due to targeted understaffing. It isn't clear how the force has assessed the consequences of this decision.

The force also needs to develop its understanding of demand in its [force control room](#). During our inspection, we found that demand from calls that don't result in an incident being created or a crime being recorded wasn't understood well enough. These records are created each time a call is made to the control room. But the force told us that it has difficulties in accessing them, so they don't get analysed. The force should find a way to access this data so it can be analysed. This would give it a valuable understanding of the underlying reasons for these calls so it can work on ways to reduce them. And it would help it to manage and reduce demand without having to invest more resources.

The force needs to develop its business processes so it can understand more about the issues that are affecting performance and productivity

The force doesn't make the most of its capabilities when evaluating the benefits from changes and project work. Its new operating model is an important development that forms part of its financial savings plans. But the force couldn't describe exactly how savings will be achieved by the new operating model's design, or say when a post-implementation review will be completed to establish this essential information.

A post-implementation review is an important stage of project management because it compares expected benefits with those that have been gained. It provides an opportunity to learn what went well and what didn't, and to determine whether any changes are needed to make further improvements. But the force removed the team who did this work as part of an earlier savings programme, so its ability to do this has reduced. This affects the force's business change process, because it makes it more difficult to evaluate whether projects are effective. The force needs to confirm that it has a robust evaluation process to check and test whether its projects have realised the expected benefits.

Main findings

In this section we set out our main findings that relate to leadership and management.

The force has an effective strategic planning framework, making sure it tackles what is important locally and nationally

The force has a three-year strategy called 'This Work Matters', which reflects the West Midlands [police and crime commissioner's *Police and Crime Plan 2021–2025*](#). During our inspection, we assessed how the force scrutinises the performance of its workforce to make sure it meets its priorities. Recent changes to its management structure have improved scrutiny of performance. Leaders are held to account for their areas of responsibility by the deputy chief constable at a strategic monthly performance meeting. Data is used to evaluate performance and make improvements. The force is adjusting other parts of its governance framework to make sure lines of accountability are clear across all areas.

However, we found that the force isn't managing risks effectively. Senior leaders confirmed that knowledge of risk management is inconsistent across the organisation, and that leaders need training in the principles of risk management. This will make sure that leaders have the skills to manage local risks more effectively, and to decide what issues need to be escalated for strategic oversight at a force level.

The force's new operating model was at the first stage of its implementation at the time of our inspection. Its LPAs closely align with local authority boundaries. Each LPA has a commander with overall responsibility for the policing and management of their area. This helps to build relationships with partners. The force is investing in its estate and has opened two more custody suites to support local policing functions. There are early signs that performance is improving. But the force needs to confirm that it has allocated enough resources to each LPA based on good-quality data. This will make sure that each LPA has the capacity and capability it needs to provide effective and efficient local policing services.

There is a good level of investment in leadership

The force invests in its leaders and has developed a range of training programmes to give them the skills they need. The strategic talent board manages leadership development. It identifies skills gaps among current and future leadership and gives access to a range of learning opportunities. The force has introduced a frontline leadership programme and offers a range of other programmes that are tailored to an individual's leadership position in the force.

The force also recognises the benefits of recruiting external talent. It has a good track record of attracting people to the force at all levels. They bring valuable knowledge and experience gained from working in other forces and organisations. This helps the force to innovate and improve.

The force's financial plans, including its investment programme, are affordable and will support it in meeting future demands

The force displays an effective approach to financial management. The forecasts in its mid-term financial plan are based on realistic assumptions about future funding and expenditure.

In the year ending 31 March 2023, West Midlands Police received [£688m in funding](#). Like other forces in England and Wales, it receives a core grant from central government and the remainder is raised through the [council tax police precept](#). The force received a total of £156m of funding through the precept, about 20.0 percent of its total funding. This is lower than most other forces.

West Midlands Police has received help from an increase of its precept in 2023/24 by the maximum amount allowable under government rules. The increase was [£15 per band D property, and was allocated to hiring an extra 450 neighbourhood police officers](#). Despite this increase, the force estimates it will still have a budget deficit of £25m in 2023/24. The force has identified areas where it will make savings. It has a strong track record of making savings and it is confident that its plans are achievable.

Capital expenditure for 2022/23 amounted to £25m, which the force used to bring about improvements in performance and efficiency. It invested £10m in IT and equipment to increase efficiency. The rest was spent on the vehicle fleet, improvements to existing buildings and the purchase of new premises.

The force uses its reserves prudently, but budgetary pressures mean it has needed to draw on them frequently. The force holds general reserves of approximately 1.8 percent of its net revenue budget, which is adequate.

Report to the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel

Police and Crime Commissioner Update on Key Activities and Key Decisions: November 2023 – January 2024

Date: 15 January 2024

Report of: Kevin O’Keefe, Chief Executive Dudley MBC, Panel Lead Officer

Report author: Sarah Fradgley, Overview and Scrutiny Manager, Birmingham City Council

Email: wmpcp@birmingham.gov.uk

1 Purpose

- 1.1 The Panel is responsible for scrutinising the actions and decisions of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
- 1.2 The Panel is invited to consider the list of key decisions posted by the Police and Crime Commissioner since the last Panel meeting (attached at Appendix A). The List includes links to decision reports where available. This information is also available on the Commissioner’s website [Police and Crime Commissioner Decisions](#)
- 1.3 The Panel is invited to consider the Police and Crime Commissioner’s update report (attached as Appendix B) detailing the activities the Commissioner and his team have been engaged in since the meeting of the Police and Crime Panel held on 13 November 2023.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 **That the Police and Crime Panel consider the update provided by the Police and Crime Commissioner on recent activities and the recent key decisions published by the Police and Crime Commissioner.**

3 Finance Implications

- 3.1 There are no financial implications relating to the recommendation in this report.
- 3.2 The financial implications of the key decisions made by the Police and Crime Commissioner are outlined in the individual decision reports published by the Commissioner.

4 Legal Implications

- 4.1 There are no legal implications relating to the recommendation in this report.
- 4.2 The powers and responsibilities of panels are set out in Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011 which give panels the authority to scrutinise all decisions or actions in connection with the discharge of the PCC’s functions.

4.3 The legal implications of the key decisions made by the Police and Crime Commissioner are outlined in the individual decision reports published by the Commissioner.

5 Equalities Implications

5.1 There are no equalities implications relating to the recommendation in this report.

5.2 The equalities implications of the key decisions made by the Police and Crime Commissioner are outlined in the individual decision reports published by the Commissioner.

6 Appendices

6.1 Appendix A - Key Decisions: November 2023 – January 2024.

6.2 Appendix B - Police and Crime Commissioner Update: 15 January 2024

Appendix A

Police and Crime Commissioner Key Decisions: November 2023 – January 2024

The following key decisions have been published by the Police and Crime Commissioner since the last Panel meeting on 13 November 2023.

Further details of decisions, including non-confidential reports and supporting documents are available on the website: [Police and Crime Commissioner Decisions](#)

13 December 2023 [PCC Decision – 030-2023 – Microsoft Enterprise Subscription](#)

This is a confidential decision relating to a Microsoft Enterprise subscription.

12 December 2023 [PCC Decision – 029-2023 – WMP Taser Replacement Project](#)

This is a confidential decision relating to the Taser Replacement Project.

11 December 2023 [PCC Decision – 028-2023 – CCTV services](#)

PCC Decision 028-2023 is a decision relating to the award of contract for CCTV services.

11 December 2023 [PCC Decision – 027-2023 – Office Furniture](#)

PCC Decision 027-2023 is a decision relating to the award of contract for the provision of office furniture.



Police and Crime Commissioner Update: 15th January 2024

Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner

1. Purpose

I set out below a summary of just some of the many activities that my team and I have been engaged in, since the previous meeting of the Police and Crime Panel on 13 November 2023.

2. HMIC PEEL Report 2023-2025

HMIC published its PEEL Report 2023-2024 on 22 December 2023. I welcome publication of the Report. I am pleased that, as a consequence of my representations to HMIC, publication of the report has been expedited. This is important, in the interests of clarity and transparency, bearing in mind my serious concerns in connection with the decision-making procedure and that HMIC announced its decision to place West Midlands Police into 'Engage', prior to publication of the report.

I am treating this matter with the utmost seriousness and as a top priority. I am committed to holding West Midlands Police to account and working with the Chief Constable, HMIC and other relevant partners, to address and resolve the four areas of concern, areas for improvement and recommendations as a matter of urgency, so as to ensure that the people of the West Midlands receive the service from West Midlands Police, that they are entitled to.

In view of my having attended an Extraordinary General Meeting of the Police and Crime Panel on 18 December 2023, in connection with the decision of HMIC to move West Midlands Police into "Engage"; that the PEEL Report has been publicly available since 22 December 2023; and that doubtless members of the Panel will already have read the Report in full, it is not my intention to attempt to summarise the detailed 56 pages long Report within this Update.

For the purpose of this Update, I focus on the 4 Areas of Concern raised by HMIC:

Area of Concern: Investigations

West Midlands Police is not carrying out effective investigations which lead to satisfactory results for victims.

Investigations: Action

- New Operating Model: increased capacity for volume investigations
- Established Operation Vanguard: improve knowledge and standards

- Robust performance framework: weekly reporting: KPIs
- DCCs Monthly Performance Day: Areas of Concern
- Volume of open crimes: reduced from 36,000 to 30,000
- Unallocated crimes: halved to c. 3,500
- About 60% of investigations have a supervisor review: up from 50% in September 2023
- The outcome rate has risen steadily: 11% in week commencing 04.12.13

Area of Concern: MARAC

West Midlands Police is not making sure Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARAC) – meetings where statutory and voluntary agency representatives share information about people at high risk of domestic abuse – work effectively to keep vulnerable people safe.

MARAC: Action

- MARAC is a partnership responsibility - not exclusively that of WMP
- Cases are to be triaged against a revised referral criterion
- Based on a benchmarking exercise with other forces
- Early indications are that this will reduce referral rates by 21%
- Additional MARAC meetings/what additional resources required

Area of Concern: Sex Offender Management

West Midlands Police is not effectively managing the risk posed to the public by registered sex offenders.

Sex Offender Management: Action

- WMP had recognised these vulnerabilities as part of the new Model
- LPA SOMS teams centralised under the PPU
- Additional staff allocated to SOMS
- New Performance Management Dashboards: improve SLT oversight
- Aim to reduce outstanding visits/assessments/reviews to zero: 31.01.24
- SOMS officers supported by Operations and LPAs

Area of Concern: Online Child Abuse

West Midlands Police is not managing the risk posed by online child abuse offenders effectively.

Online Child Abuse: Action

- By September 2023 the volume of outstanding packages reduced from 80 to 20
- Current outstanding packages within timescales for enforcement
- Digital Forensics backlog eradicated
- Social services referral requirement implemented in LA areas: 31.07.23
- Performance is continuing to be maintained

The report acknowledges: firstly, the acute environmental factors that influence the ability of West Midlands Police to respond to demand, including the high levels of deprivation experienced in the West Midlands; and secondly, the requirement for West Midlands Police to be provided with the resources it needs to prevent, tackle and reduce crime and protect the vulnerable.

However, the West Midlands Police's share of police funding is significantly below its share of estimated needs; the current system of policing funding does not properly reflect need; and recent investment has further amplified this inequality: IFS Report: R269: August 2023 and NPCC Report: Strategic Assessment of Workforce: August 2023.

I have repeatedly warned the government that the reckless cuts it imposed on policing, essential preventative public services and our criminal justice system and its continued support for an unfair funding formula, will have adverse consequences for police visibility, response times, the conduct of investigations, community safety, the rights and welfare of victims and the ability of West Midlands Police to prevent, tackle and reduce crime and protect the vulnerable. The contents of the PEEL Report are yet further evidence of the damage inflicted on West Midlands Police by the government.

The following Action is being taken:

- Chief Constable weekly meeting: Standing Agenda Item
- Pre-Meeting: Policing Performance Oversight Group: 28.12.23
- Strategic Policing and Crime Board: Agenda Item and Reports
- Hold Chief Constable to account and monitor progress
- Policing Performance Oversight Group: 16.01.24
- Target date for WMP to aim for removal from Engage: 31.03.24
- Police and Crime Panel: further updates and reports
- OPCC participation in: WMP HMIC Board and Risk Board

- OPCC Performance analyst: agree metrics and reporting
- Joint work: OPCC, WMP and partners to address MARAC
- Reporting: JA Committee: HMIC: recommendation/risk management
- Briefings to partnership meetings: work with partners to address issues

3. Provisional Funding Settlement and Budget Consultation

The provisional Police Grant Funding Settlement, was announced by the Minister for Crime and Policing on 14 December 2023. I immediately launched my Budget Consultation on 14 December 2023.

The proposed Funding Settlement is exceedingly disappointing, from the perspective of the West Midlands: the sixth-worst financial settlement through core grant among all forces, coupled with a council tax referendum limit, that will restrict the increase in our precept to a mere £9.2 million. This amount is scarcely more than the Force anticipates spending due to inflationary pressures, amounting to £8.8 million.

Furthermore, the "formula" underpinning the grant is flawed. The statistics it is based on are now 11 years old, and the tapering that would have allowed the actual formula to be implemented over time was paused. Consequently, West Midlands Police is missing out on £40 million per year of funding from this source. That is the equivalent of 800 police officers.

The preferred course of action is for firstly, central government to rectify the overall shortfalls in funding since 2010 and provide additional government funding. This would ensure that local Council Taxpayers are not unfairly burdened, by having to pay more local Council Tax for less local policing and secondly, a fairer funding formula is established, preventing the West Midlands from being disproportionately disadvantaged. This must be accompanied by a cross-party commitment to implementing any new formula, ensuring that its full impact is realized, as opposed to the halt it faced in 2013.

If that is not the will of government then an alternative, for areas such as the West Midlands with low police precepts, would be to provide the option to increase their precept at a rate that would allow them to catch up with other areas. I am against shifting the burden of central government cuts to local Council Taxpayers, particularly given that Council Tax is a regressive tax, but providing precept flexibility would allow financing options to be considered locally, to increase the resources to front line policing so as to improve justice, safety and security for the people of the West Midlands.

The so-called uplift funding, essentially facilitating a partial recovery of police officer numbers lost during austerity, has been integrated into our core grant. We trust that this is respected in any upcoming core spending review. However, funding for 625 officers nationally is available for 2024/25, and I will collaborate with the Chief Constable, to gauge his willingness to onboard as many of those officers as possible.

Given that we are historically more than 800 officers below our 2010 baseline, I argue that we should be prioritised for these additional officer numbers. This contrasts with Forces like Thames Valley and Surrey, who, through the uplift program, now have even more officers than in 2010. There has been no levelling up for the West Midlands.

I am responding to the Provisional Police Grant Settlement 2024/25 consultation and writing to the Minister for Policing, emphasising two key points:

- **I urge the Minister to call a halt to the time wasting and messing around, get a grip, show some leadership and bring forward a reformed funding formula and precept proposal, so as to deliver fair funding for West Midlands Police as a matter of urgency.**
- **I urge the Minister to allocate the 625 officers available for funding in 2024/25, to those areas that have lost the most officer numbers, according to measures which are both absolute and per head of population and fully funding the recruitment and sustainability of those police officers.**

Budget Consultation

In view of the shortfall in the government's funding formula settlement, I have launched my annual budget consultation, to engage the West Midlands public's views on raising the police precept. The government has provided for a council tax police precept flexibility of up to £13 per year for a Council Tax Band D property.

In the West Midlands, we have one of the lowest precepts in the country at £202.55 for a Band D property. As part of the consultation, I have emphasised the importance of a modest increase to sustain services and support community policing.

The budget consultation does not close until 31 January 2024. Residents are encouraged to participate in the consultation to provide their views on these matters, while also providing input on their policing priorities. As at the date of the preparation of this Update, we had received 388 responses in connection with which:

- 88 per cent say there is not enough policing in their community
- 57.7 per cent would be happy to pay more to support policing
- 43 per cent would be happy to pay £2 pcm for a Band D property.
- Anti-social behaviour, burglary and knife crime top the responses as to what people think the police should be prioritising.

The final results will be shared, once the consultation closes.

4. Business Summit

Since the end of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have seen an increase in violence against our frontline workers, a rise in fraud, increasing rates of cybercrime and a significant

uptick in thefts. I have been working hard to bring business communities together, to address these issues.

I have established the country's first public health approach to fraud steering group; engaged with numerous retailers on a one-to-one basis, to get to grips with the anti-social behaviour and crime they are experiencing in their stores; and have set up a regular working group, focused on violence against shopworkers. However, the effect of the cost of living crisis is relevant to many of these crimes.

Due to the prevalence and relationship between many of these crimes, on the 18th January 2024, I am hosting an annual summit on the theme of the Cost-of-Living Crisis and its Impact on Business Crime. We are bringing businesses together, to gather their views on how they are being affected.

We want to know what more we can do, what more they can do and what more the government can do, to prevent, tackle and reduce the ASB and crime that affects local businesses. Our ambition is to amplify the voice of the business community and to provide them with the help and support that they need.

5. Transition of PCC Powers

The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, gained royal assent on the 26 October 2023. This Act provides Mayors with the power to request approval from the Home Secretary, to take over the Police and Crime Commissioner's ('PCC') role, functions and powers.

This change benefits only the government and the West Midlands Mayor. It is cynical, divisive and undemocratic. On the 2 November 2023, the West Midlands Mayor, wrote to the Home Secretary to formally request the functions of the PCC be transferred to the West Midlands Mayoralty, in time for the election in May 2024. On 6 November 2023, I wrote to the Home Secretary and the Mayor, opposing this request.

On the 6 December 2023, I received a letter from the Home Secretary, in which the Rt Hon James Cleverly MP approved the transfer of PCC powers, from my office to the office of the Mayoralty.

Following my receipt of that letter, I released a statement setting out my response. I highlighted that the decision was undemocratic and will mean that preventing, tackling and reducing crime is not a top priority. I also called for the West Midlands Mayor to let the public decide who they would like to represent them as their PCC.

On the 8 December 2023, I wrote to Mayor Street, the Combined Authority and the Home Secretary, stating that if the Mayor's proposed takeover were to go ahead, I will seek a judicial review. This would require a determination, as to whether the Mayor and/or the Home Secretary have acted in accordance with the law. This review does not determine whether this decision is right or wrong, only whether the decision has been made in accordance with the law.

On the 20 December 2024, without any prior notice, I received a letter from Chris Philp, the Minister for Crime, Policing and Fire, regarding the launch of a public consultation on the proposed transfer of PCC functions to the Mayor of the West Midlands. The

Home Secretary is now consulting in connection with a decision that he has already taken.

The consultation asks people whether or not they agree with the transfer of PCC functions to the Mayor and will run from 20 December to 31 January 2024. Following the announcement of the consultation, I released a statement on 21 December 2023, in which I urged the public to take part in this consultation.

6. Calls for an end to modern slavery

Modern slavery is a grave violation of human rights, that affects up to 130,000 people in the UK, who are forced into various forms of exploitation, such as sexual abuse, domestic servitude, criminal activities or labour exploitation.

On 18 October 2023, I hosted the West Midlands Anti-Slavery Day Conference in Birmingham. I invited experts from various sectors and organisations to share their insights and best practices on how to combat this heinous crime.

The conference highlighted the need for a coordinated and collaborative approach among all stakeholders, including law enforcement, local authorities, health services, charities, businesses and communities, to identify, protect and support victims, and to ensure that perpetrators are held to account, via the criminal justice system.

As the Police and Crime Commissioner, I have made it one of my priorities to support and fund several initiatives and interventions that aim to prevent, tackle and reduce modern slavery in our region, that include the following:

- The West Midlands Modern Slavery Network, which brings together key partners and agencies to share information, intelligence and resources, and to develop a regional strategy and action plan to tackle modern slavery.
- The Slavery Adult Safeguarding Case Conference (SASCC), which has been in operation since March 2021. This centres wholly on the pre-national referral mechanism (NRM) phase of identification and recovery of potential modern slavery victims.
- The Independent Modern Slavery Advocate (IMSA) that helps WMP to develop their practice around identifying victims and supporting criminal prosecutions. WMP now work in partnership with the IMSA, to conduct daily scanning of the force custody blocks for persons in custody for signs of slavery, including Cannabis Cultivation. They link in with Force CID officers, to ensure consistent guidance around the Section 45 defence being applied, NRM/crime recording, safeguarding and other advice. When a victim has access to a support worker pre-NRM such as an IMSA, the IMSA can support all aspects of safeguarding, investigation and intelligence gathering. Advocate involvement can prevent the revolving door for victims, who are re-trafficked by offering the wrap around care to victims and agencies to navigate the complex safeguarding, funding immigration and accommodation options for victims.

- Late last year, Harjeet Chakira, Victims Policy Manager at West Midlands PCC, received the 2023 Marsh Charitable Trust Award for her pivotal role in the West Midlands OPCC's efforts against modern slavery. Her effective collaboration with various agencies and consistent support has greatly benefited victims. Harjeet's unique perspective as a survivor and advocate has made her knowledge invaluable. Harjeet is committed and dedicated - challenging the status quo and urging improved responses from statutory services, in the fight against modern slavery and human trafficking.

I am pleased with the work that has been done so far, but I am also aware that there is still much more to do. That is why I am calling for a coalition of committed, determined and tenacious people and organisations, who share the vision of eliminating modern slavery from the 21st Century.

7. Youth Commissioners and the Youth Assembly

Youth Commissioners

Between July and October 2023, the OPCC ran a recruitment for the new cohort of Youth Commissioners.

Youth Commissioners are elected by their peers, to represent young people across the West Midlands. They are aged 18 and their role is to advise the Police and Crime Commissioner on issues affecting them and their peers. They also:

- Consult young people on the Commissioner's Police and Crime Plan.
- Speak directly with the Police and Crime Commissioner, police officers and decision makers, raising issues affecting young people including community safety, youth justice, victim services and crime prevention.
- Engage and consult with other young people in their local communities and listen to their views.
- Hold West Midlands Police to account for the service they provide for young people.
- Build relationships with police and break down barriers that exist between officers and young people.

The 16 elected representatives – two per LPA - four covering Birmingham LPA – serve a two- year term. The current group consists of 12 females and four males, aged between 13 and 17. They are from a diverse set of ethnic origins (seven different ones), that are representative of the West Midlands.

The young people have been inducted with safeguarding and social media awareness and have already carried out a foot patrol with WMP around Birmingham's German Market. Between January and March 2024, they will experience a Response ride along and film a walk about and Q&A podcast with their LPA Commanders. At the same time, they will work with OPCC staff, to organise a Force-wide Youth Summit in March 2024, with this year being the tenth anniversary of the Youth Commissioners.

The working meetings of the Youth Commission, held every 4-6 weeks, will enable the Youth Commissioners to be in direct conversations with the PCC and Dudley's Commander, Anthony Tagg representing WMP. Presentations will equip them with knowledge on a wide range of policy and operational policing topics.

This will be supplemented with a programme of visits to custody suites, Taser training, Border Force, Stop and Search patrols, community sports projects and police dog training, so as to provide them with first-hand experience of a wide range of police and OPCC commissioned services.

Youth Assembly

The Youth Assembly is a body of young stakeholders that has been established, so that the VRP can include, consult and be informed by the very people they are aiming to reduce violence for. The ambition is that they should be young people, who are aged between 14 and 18 and have some experience of being affected by crime, violence, trauma, exclusion, gang membership and so on.

Strategic partners to the VRP should embrace youth voice and young service users, influencing how service delivery might be improved - in preventing more young people becoming victims or falling through safety nets of support. The Youth Assembly model recognises that these youth representatives might currently be less engaged, have less trust in adults, have more chaotic lives, and therefore both recruitment, activity and retention may be more challenging.

Positive Youth Foundation have been commissioned by the VRP, as an organisation with long standing youth engagement experience, to recruit youth assembly members in each local authority area. It is also hoped that other youth representatives such as Youth Commissioners, Youth Council and community youth clubs will work together. The OPCC and WMP has a role in raising awareness of the Youth Assembly with young people, and encouraging cooperation between youth representatives on issues that they wish to voice or gain wider support.

There have been 41 young people recruited to date, with a healthy balance of ethnicities and gender split across the region. In those few areas where uptake has been low, we have in place an action plan to mitigate this, through ongoing close contact with partners across the region.

The main upcoming focus of activity will be around:

- The official launch of the Youth Assembly
- Ongoing dialogue with the VRP, to establish clear roles for the VRP YA, linking with existing and emerging policy support areas, to ensure young people's voices are represented and heard
- An integrated Counter Narrative programme, which will be a public facing campaign, established to support young people to tell an alternative version of their reality to members of the public as well as policy makers

8. Tackling Youth Violence and Knife Crime

I am able to report, that the work to reduce knife and other bladed crimes in Coventry, are so far proving to be positive. The latest figures show a 49% decrease, compared to the same period last year. However, I am not remotely complacent about this. We need constant and unremitting action to prevent, tackle and reduce youth violence and knife crime.

This achievement comes after the implementation of the Community Initiative to Reduce Violence (CIRV) programme, which we launched in Coventry and Wolverhampton in May 2023, with £2 million funding from the Home Office and the Youth Endowment Fund. CIRV is one of many initiatives that are having a positive impact in our communities and keeping our young people safe.

The CIRV programme is a proactive and preventive approach, that identifies and supports individuals who are at risk of being involved in violence. It provides them with 24/7 access to a team of professionals, who can help them address the root causes of their behaviour and offer them positive alternatives.

The CIRV programme is based on evidence and best practice from other countries, where similar interventions have reduced violence significantly. It is also aligned with the vision and strategy of the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership, which was established to coordinate and oversee our collective response to preventing and reducing violence in the West Midlands.

The CIRV programme will run until August 2025 and will be subject to a formal evaluation on its impact and outcomes. However, the initial results have been promising and indicate that we are on the right track, to protect our young people and make our communities safer.

Since the launch of the initiative, we have identified almost 400 individuals that could be eligible for the support, based on the criteria and have received 400+ referrals from partners. To date, we have 55 individuals in Coventry and 51 individuals in Wolverhampton, who have taken up the support and are engaging with CIRV.

I would like to thank all the partners and stakeholders who have been involved in the delivery of the CIRV programme, especially West Midlands Police, who have been instrumental in engaging and referring the children and young people to the programme. I will update you on the progress and achievements of the CIRV programme in the future.

VR Headsets

I would also like to share an update on the Violence Reduction Partnership's innovative project, using virtual reality headsets, to reduce violence among young people in our region.

This project is part of our wider strategy to prevent, tackle and reduce violence, protect young people and save lives. It is delivered by the West Midlands Violence Reduction Partnership, in collaboration with Round Midnight, an award-winning creative arts company.

The project involves using virtual reality headsets, to provide interactive videos on gangs or knife crime to children aged 10 to 14 in schools and communities across the region. The videos present different scenarios and allow the participants to make choices that affect the outcome. The aim is to help them build empathy, resolve conflict, make good decisions and learn how to minimise risk.

The project also includes workshops and curriculums to facilitate discussions and reflections on the videos, and to support the participants to share their personal experiences and challenges.

Since September 2022, the project has reached 4,165 children and 358 professionals. The feedback from the participants and the facilitators has been very positive and encouraging. The project has also attracted media attention and public interest.

The project is due to run until April 2025. We believe that virtual reality is a powerful and unique tool to communicate with our young people and to influence their behaviour and attitudes.

9. Helping Communities Fund

As part of the helping communities fund, I have released a further £166,000 in December 2023, to help communities tackle issues that matter most to them in the West Midlands and make their areas safer.

The money is made up from cash, that the police have seized from criminals under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002,

Up to £5,000 will be given to support locally based projects, which aim to contribute to crime and violence prevention and reduction, support vulnerable citizens and community safety in local areas.

This year, the application form has been simplified, with a dedicated online web form created to make the process easier.

Many community-led initiatives are benefitting from this investment. The Helping Communities Fund also involves communities in deciding which bids are successful in receiving this money, via an online community panel.

The fund, which has already seen more than £500,000 handed out to community groups across the West Midlands, was open to applications from 4 December 2023 to 29 December 2023.

Final decisions on those who have been successful will be made around 12 February 2024.

So far, there have been a total of 121 applications submitted, with a further 40 applications that have been partially completed, but not yet submitted. We have sent an email reminder to those 40 who have not yet submitted completed applications.

When the number of applications is broken down by Local Policing Area (LPA), there have been 50 from Birmingham, 14 from Sandwell and Coventry, 15 from Dudley, 13 from Walsall, 10 from Wolverhampton and 5 from Solihull.

10. ASB Hotspot Pilot areas

I was successful in securing investment of £1million for an ASB Hotspot pilot. My office has worked with local authorities and local policing teams to identify LSOAs (Lower Super Output Areas) that are ASB hotspots. This identified 68 LSOAs, though with some of these having excluded zones, where there is overlap with Operation Guardian areas - serious youth violence hotspots, separately funded by the Home Office.

Within these hotspots, regular short patrols have been undertaken by those in uniform - a mixture of police officers, police community support officers, local authority staff and detached youth workers, in high vis clothing - to both act as a deterrent and to engage with any young people and divert them to other meaningful activity, as may be available in their community. We have also used the funding to secure an additional 3 off-road bikes and train an extra 8 officers, to provide West Midlands Police with a total of 12 trained officers in the team.

Table 1 below, shows the number of patrols that have been undertaken in each LPA up until the end of November which total 4,827. My team will be considering over the coming months, whether our approach has been successful and how to take this project forward into 2024/25, when we will receive a further £1 million to continue this activity.

Local Policing Area	Number of Patrols
Birmingham Patrols	
July	145
August	473
September	430
October	654
November	502
Total	2204
Coventry Patrols	
July	70
August	232
September	252
October	215
November	237
Total	1006
Dudley Patrols	
July	33
August	42
September	51
October	99
November	72
Total	297

Local Policing Area	Number of Patrols
Sandwell Patrols	
July	29
August	44
September	59
October	26
November	164
Total	322
Solihull Patrols	
July	27
August	32
September	66
October	73
November	64
Total	262
Walsall Patrols	
July	98
August	128
September	82
October	68
November	117
Total	493
Wolverhampton Patrols	
July	18
August	75
September	37
October	34
November	79
Total	243

Simon Foster

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner

3 January 2024

Report to the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel – Work Programming for 2023/2024

Date: 15 January 2024

Report of: Kevin O’Keefe, Chief Executive Dudley MBC, Lead Officer of the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel

Report author: Sarah Fradgley, Overview and Scrutiny Manager, Birmingham City Council

Email: wmpcp@birmingham.gov.uk

1 Purpose

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed work programme for the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel (‘the Panel’) for 2023/24, based on the statutory duties the Panel will have to undertake and standard items.
- 1.2 This report will be continuously updated throughout the year to enable the Panel to respond in a flexible and timely way.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Panel
 - i. Notes the information set out in Appendix 1 and identifies if any further topics need to be added to the menu of topics for the Panel to explore over the coming year.
 - ii. Agrees, subject to further input from the Chair and Deputy Chair, the issues that the Panel will consider during February 2024 – March 2024 and the proposed aims and objectives.

3 Background

- 3.1 Following the introduction of the Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011, the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel was established. The Panel acts as a joint scrutiny body of the West Midlands Local Authorities with a dual role to ‘support and challenge’ the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC).
- 3.2 The Panel acts as a critical friend to the PCC on behalf of West Midlands residents and must perform the following statutory functions:
 - Review and comment on the PCC’s draft Police and Crime Plan
 - review the PCC’s Annual Reports
 - scrutinise decisions and actions of the PCC

- Review (with the power to veto) the PCC's proposed Council Tax precept
- hold confirmation hearings before the PCC makes senior appointments (Chief Constable, Deputy PCC, Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer) with the power to veto the Chief Constable appointment
- handle non-criminal complaints about the conduct of the PCC and Deputy PCC, referring serious complaints to the Independent Office for Police Conduct
- Appoint an acting PCC, if required
- Suspect the PCC, if charged.

3.3 The Panel's work programme consists of statutory tasks (listed above) and wider exploratory work to fulfil its role to hold the PCC to account. This will build knowledge and insight into the strategic policing and the wider community safety and criminal justice landscape. The Police and Crime Plan will form a large part of this work.

3.4 The Panel must maintain a strategic focus is scrutinising the work of the PCC, rather than operational detail. The role of the Panel is to provide oversight of how the PCC is holding the Chief Constable and West Midlands Police to account; the Panel does not provide direct oversight of the Chief Constable. This is the role of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

3.5 A well planned and timely work programme enables the Panel to consider the right issues in an informed way. It may be necessary for the Panel to prioritise issues and consider factors such as public interest and performance when carrying this out.

3.6 The Panel will liaise with the PCC and the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner to provide the issues the Panel would like to explore, and their specific areas of focus.

4 Work Programme 2023/24

4.1 Appendix 1 sets out the topics the Panel will consider over the next few months. The Panel will amend and update this work programme during the course of the year.

5 Finance Implications

5.1 The Home Office provides an annual grant to support the administration of Police and Crime Panels. This will cover all costs relating to the secretariat to support this work programme.

6 Legal Implications

- 6.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

7 Equalities Implications

- 7.1 The Panel has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:
- a. eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
 - b. advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - c. foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics and groups outlined in the Equality Act are age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion and belief; sex, and sexual orientation.
- 7.3 The Panel will ensure it addresses these duties by considering them during work programme development, the scoping of work, evidence gathering and making recommendations. This should include considering how policy issues impact on different groups within the community, particularly those that share a relevant protected characteristic; whether the impact on particular groups is fair and proportionate; whether there is equality of access to services and fair representation of all groups within the West Midlands; and whether any positive opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and/or good relations between people are being realised.
- 7.4 The Panel should ensure that any recommendations which contribute towards reducing inequality, are based on evidence.

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 [Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act 2011](#)
- 8.2 [Policing and fire governance: guidance for police and crime panels](#)
- 8.3 [West Midlands Police and Crime Panel – Panel Agreement \(2012\)](#)

9 Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 – West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Work Programme January 2024

West Midlands Police and Crime Panel Work Programme 2023/24 – January 2024

Meeting Date	Item/Topic	Aims and Objectives	Additional Information and Outcome*
11 September 2023	Road Safety	<p>To Understand how the PCC is providing oversight of WMP and holding the Chief Constable to account to improve road safety across the West Midlands and action undertaken by WMP is delivering on the Police and Crime Plan where it relates to road safety.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WMP's approach towards improving road safety for all road users including an outline of its current enforcement strategy and partnership work with Local Authorities. - Current data and trends for road casualties (including fatalities). - Performance information demonstrating the impact of the s222 injunctions and other measures to address street cruising. - The challenges and barriers to delivering improved road safety across the West Midlands. - Recognising the role of the Panel to challenge and support the Commissioner, the Panel would like to understand if there are ways it could consider support to overcome identified barriers. 	Item requested at the July 2023 meeting
22 September 2023 Member Visit	Drugs Strategy	Information briefing	OPCC officers provided a briefing to members
22 September 2023 Member Visit	Neighbourhood Policing New Policing Operational Model	Information briefing	Chief Constable outlined his proposals for the new operating model and responded to questions from members.
9 November 2023 Conference	National Police (Fire) and Crime Panel Conference 2023	<p>Conference Theme: Collaboration and Challenge - Making it Work</p> <p>Panel representatives : Councillor Alan Feeney, Independent Member Kristina Murphy and Councillor Tersaim Singh</p>	
13 November 2023	Annual Report of the Police and Crime Commissioner on progress made on the Police	<p>Review the draft Annual Report for 2022-23</p> <p>Agree recommendations for PCC to consider in final Annual Report</p>	This is a statutory duty.

Meeting Date	Item/Topic	Aims and Objectives	Additional Information and Outcome*
	and Crime Plan objectives during 2022-23	To include specific reference to progress fulfilling PCSO target.	Latest Annual Report, 2021-22 is available here .
13 November 2023	Fairness and Belonging Strategy – the work of the Police and Crime Commissioner	<p>Understand how the PCC is providing oversight to deliver the objectives within the Fairness and Belonging Plan.</p> <p>Consider the outcome of communications and publicity plans in relation to the Fairness and Belonging Plan and WMP recruitment.</p> <p>Consider the impact of the plan to date.</p> <p>Outline actions to address the findings from the recent WMP Employee Survey relating to staff morale, engagement, and culture. (To also include any relevant information relating to PCSO survey findings and action).</p>	<p>Report provided to Strategic Police and Crime Board in September 2022.</p> <p>The Fairness and Belonging Plan was launched by West Midlands Police and the PCC in July 2020.</p> <p>The Police and Crime Panel Public Confidence in Policing Scrutiny Inquiry recommended the PCC present an annual report on the Fairness and Belonging Strategy</p>
13 November 2023	Tackling Serious Violence	The OPCC to provide further information about the establishment of local Violence Reduction Boards to that Members can understand the structure and arrangements for community engagement with the boards and local Community Safety Partnerships.	Item requested as part of the WMPCP tackling serious violence item in January 2023 to understand the local governance and operational structures.
13 November 2023	Establishment of Budget Subgroup	The Panel to consider establishing a Budget Sub-Group to examine the Police and Crime Commissioner’s budget and precept proposals and develop robust lines of enquiry to inform the Police and Crime Panel review of the Commissioner’s precept proposals in February 2024.	Terms of reference and suggestions for the membership of the subgroup to be considered by the panel.
Budget Sub Group 12:30pm 15 January 2024 Room TBC Dudley Council House <u>Members:</u>	Understanding police finance, the proposed policing precept and the PCC budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To provide members with an introduction/ refresher on police finance. Examine the PCC draft budget and precept proposal for 2024, budget pressures and mitigations. 	The full police and crime panel on 5 February will conduct the statutory review of the proposed policing precept 2024 and make a recommendation to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Meeting Date	Item/Topic	Aims and Objectives	Additional Information and Outcome*
<p>Cllr Heather Delaney Cllr Sam Forsyth Kristina Murphy – independent Member</p> <p>All members are invited to the session.</p> <p>Dudley Council House Committee Room 3</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify recommendations and points of clarification to inform the Police and Crime Panel review of the proposed policing precept 2024 on 5 February 2024 	
<p>15 January 2024 Dudley Council Chamber</p>	<p>Tackling Drugs: including data on impact and the link with acquisitive crime levels</p>	<p>To examine how the PCC is addressing the concern raised in his Annual Report 2022/23 that:</p> <p>“It has been estimated, that half of all homicides and acquisitive crimes are drug-related, Accordingly, preventing and reducing substance misuse might be the single most important action that we can take to tackle crime and make our communities safer”</p> <p>The session will cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police and Crime Plan commitments and progress against these commitments National Drugs Strategy West Midlands Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Partnership (WMCDAP) The latest position on Naloxone in the West Midlands Operation Mabble 	
<p>15 January 2024</p>	<p>HMICFRS PEEL Inspection 2024</p>	<p>To discuss with the Police and Crime Commissioner the findings of the 2023-25 HMICFRS PEEL Inspection of West Midlands Police.</p>	<p>The HMICFRS PEEL Inspection report was published on 22 December 2023.</p> <p>The 2021 HMICFRS PEEL inspection report can be downloaded</p>

Meeting Date	Item/Topic	Aims and Objectives	Additional Information and Outcome*
15 January 2024	PCC Update Report and Recent Key Decisions (Standing Item)	The PCC to provide the Panel with an overview of activity undertaken since November 2023.	<p>Action arising from the extraordinary meeting on 18 December included a review of the parameters and format of information sharing.</p> <p>This paper has been compiled to provide headline information of recent activity by the PCC ahead of this review.</p> <p>Key decisions are published on the PCC website</p>
5 February 2024	PCC Proposed Policing Precept for 2024/25 and PCC budget	Formally review the proposed policing precept 2024 and make a recommendation to the PCC.	<p>This is a statutory duty of the Panel.</p> <p>The Panel has the power to veto the proposed policing precept. If this happens, this is revisited at a further meeting of the Panel on 19 February 2024.</p>
5 February 2024	PCC Update Report and Recent Key Decisions (Standing Item)	The PCC to provide the Panel with an overview of activity undertaken since January 2024.	This paper has been compiled to provide headline information of recent activity by the PCC ahead of a review into information sharing.
5 February 2024	HMICFRS PEEL Inspection : Update on actions to address the four Areas of Concern and other HMICFRS recommendations	<p>To receive an update from the Commissioner on his oversight of the performance of the Constabulary, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Chief Constable's actions to address the 4 areas of concern identified by HMICFRS - OPCC actions, metrics and work with partners 	<p>Actions to be taken by the PCC and WMP were reported to Panel on 18 December 2023: and include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Chief Constable to report to HMICFRS Policing Performance Oversight Group on 16 January 2024 - The OPCC participation in WMP HMIC Board and Risk Board - OPCC Performance analyst to agree metrics and reporting

Meeting Date	Item/Topic	Aims and Objectives	Additional Information and Outcome*
			- OPCC and WMP to working with partners to address issues.
19 February 2024	PCC Proposed Policing Precept for 2024/25	Formally review the proposed and revised precept	Provisional meeting date – if the proposed precept was vetoed on 5 February 2024. The Panel does not have a second veto.
18 March 2024	Complaints received by the Panel	Consider the process and outcomes from the handling of complaints to the Panel	Annual Report of the Lead Panel Officer
18 March 2024	Panel Budget and Expenditure	Consider and approve the total budget and expenditure of the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel	Annual Report of the Lead Panel Officer.
18 March 2024	PCC Update Report and Recent Key Decisions (Standing Item)	The PCC to provide the Panel with an overview of activity undertaken since February 2024.	This paper has been compiled to provide headline information of recent activity by the PCC ahead of a review of information sharing.

Menu of Options for Future Consideration

The Panel is invited to identify potential topics for future consideration. This approach enables the West Midlands Police and Crime Panel to remain flexible and respond in a timely manner to emerging issues.

This is a live work programme work programme. New items may be added, or items removed during the course of the year. Proposed aims and objectives may also be subject to change.

Item/ Topic	Proposed Aims and Objectives	Additional Information
Developing an Information Sharing Protocol	Action arising from the extraordinary meeting on 18 December included working with the Police and Crime Commissioner on improving the processes for sharing information The aim is to: - build understanding of what information is available - identify information requirements to support effective scrutiny - clarify expectations on scope and format of information to be provided	

Item/ Topic	Proposed Aims and Objectives	Additional Information
Tackling serious violence.	To examine how the PCC is progressing his objectives relating to tacklin serious violence. (Aims and objective to be developed further)	This item was suggested in November 2023