

WEST MERCIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL 26 SEPTEMBER 2017

CURRENT AND NON-RECENT SEXUAL OFFENCES

Recommendation

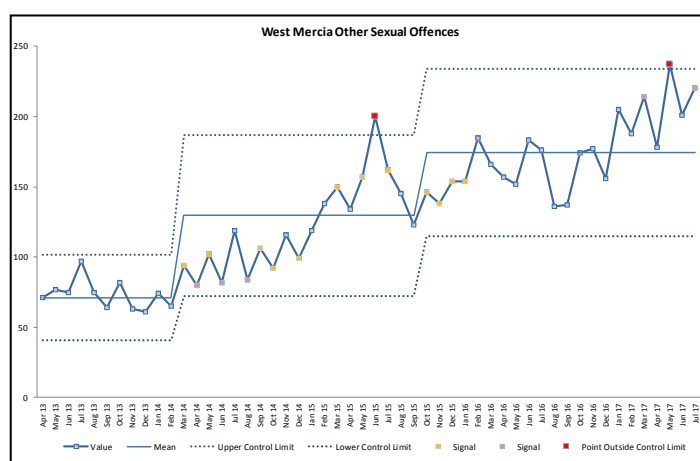
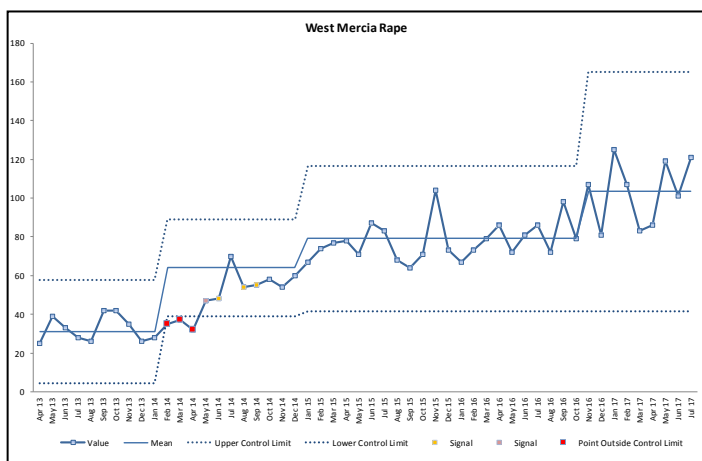
1. The West Mercia Police and Crime Panel are invited to consider the West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioners Report meeting on current and non-recent sexual offences and determine whether it would wish to make any recommendations to the PCC for consideration.

Background

2. Following submission of a briefing paper to the Panel's June meeting on current and non-recent sexual offences, the purpose of this report is to provide members of the Police and Crime Panel with a more detailed response as requested by the Chairman of the Panel in his letter dated 7 July.
3. The Report seeks to address members specific concerns on the increased volume of sexual offences, the number of offences resulting in action being taken and the five resource related concerns set out in the Chairman's letter.

The increase volume of reported sexual offences

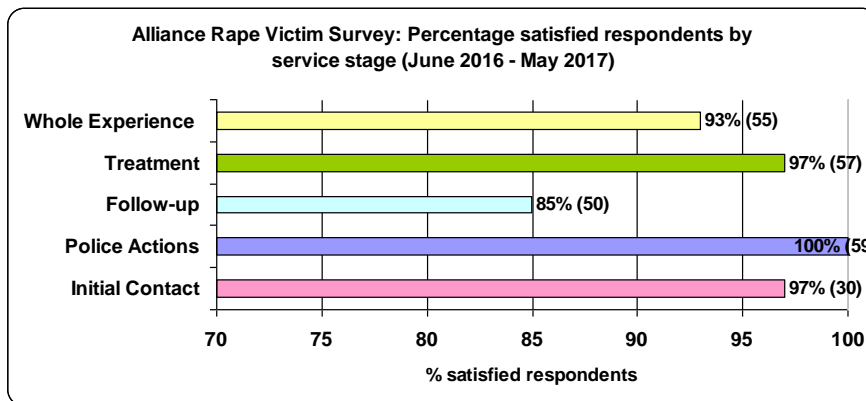
4. The volume in both rape and sexual offences across West Mercia is monitored weekly and monthly and the increases have been noted. Below are the most recent data from the July monthly performance report for the period April 2013 to end of July 2017. Whilst there are monthly fluctuations in volumes the overall trend for both rapes and other sexual offences is upwards.



5. These increases are not unexpected, or necessarily unwelcome, as it is known that both rape and other sexual offences are under reported. Certain national high profile cases have assisted in encouraging more people to report offences. The

'signs of improvement' that the force seeks to achieve are to provide wider opportunities for victims to report offences and for its investigations to meet victim expectations. The aim is always to reduce the levels of offending but also to increase confidence in reporting. The recent 'Stop Rape Now' campaign is evidence of its proactive work to educate, raise awareness and reduce offending.

6. To ensure the force delivers a high quality of service and to continually improve how it deals with serious sexual offences, it has introduced a telephone survey with rape victims. The chart below shows the satisfaction levels over a recent 12 months period.



7. These levels of satisfaction exceed those seen in any other surveyed area i.e. violent crime, burglary, vehicle crime and hate crime. Whilst it is not possible to be complacent and acknowledging that there are still improvements to be made, the satisfaction levels does give confidence that the quality of service provided to rape victims is high.
8. It is also important to acknowledge that as a direct consequence of HMIC's 2014 crime recording inspection all police forces in England and Wales have been working to improve their crime recording practises. Since 2015 West Mercia's Force Crime Registrar has been closely scrutinising all crime recording. Incidents of rape and serious sexual are subject to a daily focus to ensure they are recorded correctly and only the Deputy Chief Constable is authorised to 'no crime' a reported rape. This more vigorous approach has led to an increase in the number of rapes and sexual offences being recorded as such.

The number of offences resulting in action being taken

9. There are 21 outcome codes which can be assigned to all crimes at the point of filing. A copy of the full list is attached at appendix 1. These outcomes are grouped into 5 categorises as shown below.

CODES	HMIC OUTCOME GROUP DESCRIPTION
OC1,1A,2,2A,3,3A,4,6,7,8	Action Taken
OC5,9,10,11,12,13,15,16,17	No Action Taken
OC14,18	Investigation complete - no suspect identified
OC20	Transferred to external agency
OC21	Further investigation not in public interest

10. It is important to note that whilst reference is made to 'action taken' and 'no action taken' this relates to formal criminal justice action and should not leave the impression that there is no police or partnership activity in terms of safeguarding, reassurance and prevention.

11. Whilst only a small proportion of sexual offences are filed under the 'action taken' grouping it is important to note that West Mercia ranks 2nd against a peer group of 6 most similar forces for sexual offences assigned 'action taken' outcomes and are above the group average.

Resources

12. This section of the report seeks to address the following additional information requested by the Panel.

- *The resources allocated to dealing with the crimes as set out on those pages in both the report and the briefing note, differentiating between historic (suggest more than five years might be helpful) as well as recent reported crimes.*
- *Those resources to be quantified separately in terms of manpower, finance and associated costs (e.g. counselling both victims and their families).*
- *The changes in staffing and other resources which have been allocated over 2015-7 to reflect the increased caseload needing investigation.*
- *The time taken on average with those cases, both historic and recent, segregating the two if substantially different.*
- *The reduction in other criminal investigations or policing caused by the substantial rise in such cases*

13. Rape and other serious sexual offences are often complex investigations, particularly when the offence is non recent, taking longer to finalise than many other types of criminal investigation. Attached at appendix 2 is a short case study to demonstrate the complex nature of investigating such an offence, however each such offence will be individual in terms of resourcing demands and investigative enquiries.

14. There is no data available to show the number of man hours that each investigation consumes. As stated the specific circumstances of each case can vary greatly with some investigations taking relatively few hours and other being hugely complex. The only data available to address the above concerns is in relation to how long an investigation is open or live.

	Total of offences outcomed between 1.4.16 and 31.3.17	Average investigation days
Rape	1170	192
Other sexual offences	2186	110

This does not equate in any way to the number of hours work or the financial cost of the investigation.

15. As a response to the rise in both recent and non-recent offences the force have implemented a number of measures to mitigate the impact upon demand. Principle amongst these changes is an adaption in the investigative model. As a result, offences traditional dealt with in isolation by specialist teams have been mainstreamed into general CID. This allows for a greater pool of officers to investigate serious sexual offences and is consistent with the force aim to ensure that vulnerability is '*everyone's business*'.

16. On a daily basis investigations can be reviewed in order to ensure that resources are prioritised on the basis of threat, risk and harm, and that the greater pool of officers can be used in a 'surge capacity' to supplement and support individual investigations at key points (arrest phase etc).

17. In addition the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) process has been strengthened. This allows for a more rigorous and structured approach to information sharing. It also allows for increased opportunities for early intervention and enhanced post incident safeguarding providing a whole system approach.

18. Clearly with any finite resource (officer numbers) then any extra demand will impact upon capacity to investigate offences and there is a continual process of assessing demand against inherent threat, risk and harm. A proportionate investigation will always be conducted, but the level of what is proportionate will not remain constant. Individual major incidents or a rise in the reporting of specific crime types (such as SSO's) will impact upon the capacity to investigate 'lower' level crimes. The measures taken around the investigative model are intended to mitigate the rise in the reporting of SSO's.

Conclusion

19. The volume of rapes and sexual offences reported to West Mercia Police has increased, however resources have been realigned and processes reshaped to address the increasing demand of this complex policing area.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Outcomes Framework.
Appendix 2 – Case study

Contact Points for the Report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Head of Legal & Democratic Services) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Letter from the Chairman of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel dated 7 July 2017 requesting a further report on Current and Non-Recent Sexual Offences

Agenda and Minutes of the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel of 19 June 2017

[All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)

Outcomes Framework

CODE	DESCRIPTION
OC1	Charge / Summons
OC1A	Charge / Summons - alternate offence
OC2	Caution – youths
OC2A	Caution - youths - alternate offence
OC3	Caution – adults
OC3A	Caution - adults - alternate offence
OC4	Taken into consideration
OC5	The offender has died (all offences)
OC6	Penalty Notices for Disorder
OC7	Cannabis warning
OC8	Community resolution
OC9	Prosecution not in the public interest (CPS) (all offences)
OC10	Formal action against the offender is not in the public interest (police)
OC11	Prosecution prevented- Named suspect identified but is below the age of criminal responsibility
OC12	Prosecution prevented- Named suspect identified but is too ill (physical or mental health) to prosecute
OC13	Prosecution prevented- Named suspect identified but victim or key witness is dead or too ill to give evidence
OC14	Evidential difficulties victim based- Named suspect not identified: The crime is confirmed but the victim either declines or is unable to support further police investigation to identify the offender
OC15	Named suspect identified: Victim supports police action but evidential difficulties prevent further action
OC16	Named suspect identified: Evidential difficulties prevent further action; victim does not support (or has withdrawn support from) police action
OC17	Prosecution time limit expired: Suspect identified but prosecution time limit has expired
OC18	Investigation complete: No suspect identified. Crime investigated as far as reasonably possible- Case closed pending further investigative opportunities becoming available
OC19	National Fraud Intelligence Bureau - Filed (for use by NFIB only)
OC20	Transferred to external agency
OC21	Further investigation, resulting from the crime report, which could provide evidence sufficient to support formal action being taken against the suspect is not in the public interest - police decision

Case study

The following is an example of the typical 'journey' of a Serious Sexual Offence (SSO) during the initial investigative period.

- Report of offence attended by uniformed resources.
- Serious nature of offence dictates that a Special Trained Office (STO) is deployed to deal with the victim.
- CID resources will be allocated.
- House to house enquiries and CCTV trawl undertaken by uniformed resources (where relevant CCTV found specialist resources from the imaging department may be required to recover).
- Crime Scene Investigators (CSI) will make forensic assessment and recover items from scene of offence.
- Victim will be subject to a forensic medical exam by a suitably qualified medical practitioner, with ancillary evidence recovery (photographs of injuries etc) performed by a further CSI.
- If an offender is identified an arrest team will be dispatched.
- A search will need to be conducted at the offenders address and both 'wet' and 'digital' forensic recoveries made.
- At custody the offender will have various forensic samples taken by a suitable qualified medical practitioner.

It is important to note that during the above process due consideration must be taken regarding cross contamination – the same staff should not have contact with the various 'scenes' from where evidence will be recovered. 'Scenes' include both the victim and the offender.

- Dependent upon the severity of the crime the ongoing investigation will be allocated to an appropriate investigative OIC, either uniform or CID.
- Ongoing support for the victim will be provided by Independent Sexual Violence Adviser (ISVA) and other support services.
- The ongoing investigation will then very much depend upon the individual circumstances – often dependent upon the quantity and complexity of the forensic samples recovered.