

## **WEST MERCIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL**

### **18 SEPTEMBER 2018**

## **REPORT ON THE HOME OFFICE SERIOUS VIOLENCE STRATEGY**

---

### **Summary**

1. This report has been prepared by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in response to a request from the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel.

### **Background**

2. The Serious Violence Strategy was launched by Home Secretary Amber Rudd, on 9 April 2018. The strategy is intended to balance the need for prevention and early intervention with effective law enforcement. It focuses on a partnership approach to tackling serious violence, with all agencies working together to address the challenges.
3. The strategy includes several proposals for PCC involvement and sets out a new challenge for Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and other local groups. The strategy also sets out new initiatives including the Early Intervention Youth Fund (EIYF) and a National County Lines Co-ordination Centre.

### **Areas of PCC Involvement**

4. Five main areas of PCC involvement were identified within the strategy and are outlined below:
  - (i) **Local Leadership Role** – PCCs asked to play a key leadership role, bringing local partners together to address serious violence.
  - (ii) **New Early Intervention Youth Fund** – £22m to support local partnership initiatives. This will be PCC driven through setting strategic direction and working with CSPs and other community groups.
  - (iii) **Police & Crime Plans** – inclusion of serious violence as a priority in Police and Crime Plans and setting out what action will be taken.
  - (iv) **Strengthening Links with Health** – further consideration to be given to widening the PCC role e.g. around drug treatment.
  - (v) **Sharing information and Best Practice** – with specific mention of the ACE project in South Wales and the multi-agency analytical hub in Avon & Somerset.
5. This report seeks to provide the Panel with an update on the West Mercia PCC's strategic response to the national strategy in respect of these five areas.

6. The report is structured in such a way as to answer the specific questions put forward by the Panel.

## **Understanding Serious Violence in West Mercia**

7. As set out in the Home Office Counting Rules for Recorded Crime, serious violence is recorded under Violence with Injury. Violence with Injury includes murder, attempted murder, assault where there is injury, an attempt to inflict injury and death by driving. 10,161 violence with injury offences were recorded in 2017/18; a 2% reduction compared to the previous financial year. Current volumes of violent crime (Q1; Apr – Jul 2018) are below projected levels and are 3% below the same period in 2017/18.

8. Assault with injury (i.e. ABH / GBH) accounted for 90% of all violence with injury offences. Homicide offences (including attempt murder) accounted for less than 1% of total violent crime in West Mercia. Domestic abuse is a significant driver of violence, accounting for almost a third of all violent offences in West Mercia.

9. In relation to knife crime, 710 possession of weapons offences were recorded in West Mercia in 2017/18; an 8% increase compared to the previous year. The increase was driven by “other firearms offences”, such as offences related to illegal trade, supply and repair etc. There was no increase in possession of knives / bladed articles and firearms during this period. Data related to the use of knives / firearms is recorded separately and outlined below.

10. Knife crime data is submitted to the Home Office on a quarterly basis. This data covers a number of specific crime types (violence, sexual offences and robbery), and includes threats and attempts in addition to actual stabbings. The data also includes offences involving bladed instruments such as needles, scissors, broken glass and razor blades<sup>1</sup>.

11. 466 knife crime offences were recorded in West Mercia in 2017/18; an increase of 21 offences compared to the previous financial year. The increase at force-level (5%) is considerably less significant than that seen nationally (16%). The most recent data confirms that knife crime in 2018/19 has remained stable.

12. Gun crime data is submitted to the Home Office on a monthly basis. A gun is taken to be involved in an offence if it fired, used as a blunt instrument or used as a threat. 81 gun crime offences were recorded in 2017/18; an increase of 15 offences compared to the previous financial year. Volumes remain low (0.064 offences per 1,000 residents).

13. This data is scrutinised by the PCC on a monthly and quarterly basis. Existing governance arrangements such as the PCC’s monthly holding to account meetings and quarterly local policing meetings are used to escalate performance issues. Knife crime was raised at holding to account meetings in June and July 2018.

---

<sup>1</sup> Definition of Knife Crime based on Home Office Annual Data Return for all forces.

14. The force have produced a number of intelligence products related to serious violence. These include a knife crime problem profile, a County Lines problem profile and a County Lines presentation for partners (attached at Appendix 1). These products are routinely shared with the PCC.

15. The partnership presentation has been shared with Panel members. A number of key headlines from the operationally-sensitive intelligence products are included below<sup>2</sup>:

- The highest rates of knife crime occurred between 23:00 – 01:00 hrs. Knife crime is often linked to the night time economy but only 3% of offences were committed within night time venues.
- 53% of offenders were known to their victims either as an acquaintance, associate or family member. Domestic abuse related offences accounted for almost a quarter of all knife crime.
- The greatest concentration of knife crime offences were in Telford, with hotspots also identified in Worcester City and Redditch.
- 76 county lines are currently reported as active within West Mercia.
- Over 95% of reported county lines originate from the West Midlands force area. The remainder originate from Merseyside and the Metropolitan force area.
- County Lines is linked to high harm offending including the physical, mental and sexual exploitation of children and vulnerable adults in our communities.
- County Lines groups across the force area have, and continue to use high levels of violence. The carrying and use of knives features heavily in reporting.

16. Telford & Wrekin has been identified as the pilot area to embed the Serious Violence Strategy in West Mercia. The pilot is set to run for 12 months and the PCC will provide scrutiny of the pilot through holding to account processes. Activity undertaken in Telford & Wrekin will be based on ongoing analysis of serious violence within the area including the link between serious violence, deprivation and houses of multiple occupation (HMOs).

17. Analysis undertaken by the office of the PCC has also contributed to the serious violence evidence base; examining the link between homelessness and serious violence. This analysis concluded that individuals with no fixed address generate disproportionate demand on custody. However these individuals are primarily involved in acquisitive offences with little evidence of serious violent offending.

18. The PCC also commissioned analysis in regards to Stop and Search. Data shows that there has been a small increase in positive Stop Searches in relation to

---

<sup>2</sup> Data from Alliance Knife Crime Profile published April 2018, for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017 – 31 March 2018. Data from Alliance Violence and Vulnerability Profile: County Lines published April 2017, as at February 2018.

carrying offensive weapons (increase of 28 offences). The Stop and Search data base was amended in June 2018 to enable the collection of data specifically in relation to the carrying of knives. The force will be able to report on this data in the future.

## **Local Partnership Co-ordination and Governance**

19. A partnership approach is essential to tackling serious violence and the PCC plays a key role in bringing partner agencies together. The PCC is linked in with partners nationally through the APCC Serious Violence Task & Finish Group. Existing partnership arrangements such as Serious Organised Crime Joint Action Groups (SOCJAGs) and CSPs will be useful vehicles for co-ordinating local partnership activity.

20. SOCJAGs are in place in every county and bring partner agencies together with the aim of pursuing, preventing, protecting and preparing against serious organised crime (SOC). Partners (including the police) share data and intelligence within this forum to inform multi-agency activity. A PCC representative attends every SOCJAG meeting and the PCC's Crime Reduction Board (CRB) provides overarching governance across the 4 SOCJAGs.

21. The CRB comprises of senior officers from the Criminal Justice System (CJS) and CSPs and brings together CSPs, SOCJAGs, Reducing Reoffending Boards, Integrated Offender Management (IOM) and MAPPA partners. The CRB provides governance for these key local partnerships and provides the PCC with assurance that they are delivering effective prevention, early intervention and reducing reoffending programmes in line with PCC funding arrangements. Serious violence will feature across the breadth of these partnerships.

22. A number of serious organised crime (SOC) partnership conferences have been arranged to further raise awareness and understanding of SOC across West Mercia. The first conference was held in Worcestershire in July 2018. Further conferences will be held in Shropshire / Telford and Herefordshire in September 2018. Each of these conferences will be opened by the DPCC / PCC.

23. Inputs on SOC, serious violence and County Lines are fed into CSPs by police force leads. PCC representatives attend CSP meetings to ensure the activity undertaken by the CSPs reflects these important local, regional and national priorities.

24. In 2017/18, the PCC undertook a full consultation with CSPs to review CSP analyst provision. It was agreed that the analysts should be brought into the Police Analysis and Service Improvement team to improve information sharing and raise awareness of key priorities including SOC and serious violence. The CSP analysts have been based at Hindlip since July 2018 and have been tasked with refreshing the local SOC profiles which will be utilised by all partners.

25. As part of the Serious Violence Strategy, the Home Office's Violence and Vulnerability Unit (VUU) has offered 3 key areas of support and intervention to forces and PCCs. This includes Locality Reviews, Strategic Framework Reviews and

training packages. With support and funding from the PCC, West Mercia is one of few areas that has taken up all three offers.

26. A Locality Review was undertaken in Worcestershire, bringing together practitioners from a range of agencies to build a picture of key issues and drivers of County Lines, gangs, youth violence and vulnerability. The findings of the review were published in April 2018 and shared with the PCC and partners. A Locality Review has since been commissioned for Telford.

27. A number of recommendations from the Worcestershire Locality Review are being taken forward by the PCC. The PCC has funded a programme of multi-agency training on County Lines and vulnerability via the Home Office Gangs, Violence & Vulnerability online training package. The PCC has purchased 500 training licences for partners at a cost of £5,000.

28. The PCC has also funded a Strategic Framework Review at a cost of £25,000. The review focuses on County Lines, gangs, violence and vulnerability across West Mercia. This is the most comprehensive review offered by the Home Office VVU and includes extensive consultation with senior leaders and practitioners from partner agencies. The consultation is undertaken by Home Office representatives and will be used to inform a Home Office produced strategic framework for county lines. The framework will set out key principles and recommendations for activity and action for all partners around key workstreams including intelligence, prevention and safeguarding.

29. The PCC is also in the process of launching a number of initiatives to address vulnerability factors underlying serious violence. This includes:

- A pilot targeting vulnerable missing children in Shropshire
- Development of a long term strategy for Restorative Justice (RJ) to include children excluded from education.
- Development of a Drugs Strategy to tackle drug misuse and associated criminality including serious violence and County Lines.

30. The PCC is working closely with local authorities and third sector agencies in the development of these areas of work.

### **Early Intervention Youth Fund (EIYF)**

31. The DPCC sits on the APCC Serious Violence Task & Finish group. This group feeds into the national Serious Violence Task Force, Ministerial meetings and facilitates wider discussions with Home Office officials.

32. It was made clear at the most recent APCC Task & Finish group that PCCs would need to evidence either a rise in serious violence or persistently high levels of serious violence to be successful in any bid to the EIYF. As West Mercia has not had an increase in serious violence and volumes of gun / knife crime remain relatively low, a decision has been made to put in a bid as a region (comprising Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Mercia and West Midlands). West Mercia are leading on the development of the bid in conjunction with CSPs, on behalf of all four PCCs.

33. The bid will focus on county lines from a regional perspective, with a specific focus on prevention and early intervention. If the bid is successful, the PCC will work with CSPs to expand existing diversionary initiatives to specifically target young people at risk of SOC and serious violence.

34. Existing diversionary initiatives within West Mercia have supported over 2,000 young people. A PCC representative has visited and evaluated every PCC grant-funded diversionary initiative. The evaluation has been deemed best practice nationally and provides assurance that further investment in these initiatives would lead to positive outcomes for young people.

35. The additional investment into the diversionary initiatives would enable an in-depth risk assessment to be conducted for each young person to fully understand their needs and vulnerabilities. Each young person would benefit from having a caseworker to provide tailored holistic support including access to community-based activities.

36. The diversionary initiatives would combine existing PCC activity with CSP diversionary projects to become the building blocks for a diversionary network. This network would work alongside other stakeholder providers supported by partners such as CSPs, police, Youth Justice Services, National Probation Service, the local Community Rehabilitation Company, third sector providers such as YSS and local authorities.

37. Each CSP has been consulted in developing the initial proposals for the EIYF and the PCC is grateful for the contribution and positive feedback received from the CSPs thus far. The PCC's commissioning team will work closely with the CSPs, and the 3 other PCC offices in the region to refine the bid prior to submission.

### **PCC Commissioning Intentions**

38. The PCC's commissioning intentions in regards to serious violence are not limited to the EIYF. The PCC supports a range of programmes and services focused on vulnerability factors and early intervention and prevention activity including but not limited to:

- YSS ARC and Divert projects: mentoring support and access to community based activities for 13 – 24 year olds in, or at risk of being involved in the CJS.
- Willowdene farm LINC initiative: rehabilitative and diversionary multi-agency pathway for women, in or at risk of being involved in the CJS.
- West Mercia Youth Justice Service for Diversion: A range of interventions to support youth cautions and conditional cautions and supports the joint decision model for young people committing offences.
- Herefordshire Voluntary Organisations Support Service No Wrong Door project: a collaborative network of offering a single point of contact for 11 – 25 year olds to access information, support and guidance. Topics covered include drugs / alcohol, housing advice, stress / anxiety and relationships.

39. The PCC directed that all existing diversionary initiatives to be reviewed (irrespective of the EIYF bid) to ensure they support young people at risk of SOC and

serious violence. As part of the review, the PCC's commissioning team is also looking at expanding the network to include projects aimed at children who have been, or are at risk of being excluded from schools such as RJ and cyber safety.

40. The PCC is exploring a number of avenues to target children and young people who are associated with, or related to individuals involved in SOC. This includes Project Elevate in Telford (the pilot area for implementing the serious violence strategy) and funding for a West Mercia Youth Ambassador event. Project Elevate is specifically focused on targeting Muslim youth in North Telford where the majority of local OCGs are based. Youth Ambassadors will be serving police officers who will have special training to work with young people.

41. As mentioned previously, the PCC is currently developing a Drugs Strategy to tackle drug misuse and drug-related criminality. The strategy will be informed by national policy and evidence-based research, as well as recommendations following a review of drug provision across local authorities in West Mercia.

42. The strategy will focus on a partnership based approach to early intervention / prevention, reducing criminality associated with SOC and county lines and building recovery through treatment. Once the strategy has been finalised, the PCC will consult on and publish his commissioning intentions.

43. Once completed the Home Office Strategic Framework Review will include a number of recommendations for activity and action. As such, the findings from the framework will inform future commissioning decisions in relation to serious violence and county lines, and may alter or influence the PCC's current commissioning intentions.

### **Police and Crime Plan**

44. Serious Violence is already a priority within the PCC's Safer West Mercia Plan. As part of Building a More Secure West Mercia, the PCC has committed to focusing on the most serious crimes committed against individuals and the most vulnerable in our society.

### **Strengthening Links with Public Health**

45. A number of existing PCC-driven partnership forums and projects involve close working relationships with health. The PCC also funds CSPs in which health are a statutory partner.

46. One of the key aims of the PCC's CRB is to enhance partnership working between the CJS and partners including Public Health. The CRB encourages partner agencies to identify opportunities to reduce demand on both sectors, undertake early intervention and engagement activity and improve outcomes for individuals and communities.

47. The PCC has established strong working relationships with Public Health, particularly in respect of serious violence within a domestic setting. This includes the co-commissioning of the Drive project together with a multi-agency funding bid to

support children affected by domestic abuse and domestic abuse specialists working within A&E. Each of these projects is outlined in more detail below.

48. The PCC has undertaken a significant project with Worcestershire County Council Public Health team to co-commission the pilot of the Drive service in Worcestershire; a new response to tackling serious violence in a domestic setting. The approach being taken provides an example of how partners can come together to tackle complex offending behaviour that causes significant harm.

49. The PCC, in partnership with a number of partner agencies (including the Public Health teams within each of the local authorities), is submitting a bid to the Home Office for funding for Children Affected by Domestic Abuse. Part of the bid will be to look at a common assessment criteria which includes the identification of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how a wraparound service can be adapted to shape the needs of the child/young person.

50. The PCC is in discussions with Public Health teams, CCGs and Acute health services about having a domestic abuse specialist worker based in hospital settings. As the PCC is re-commissioning the IDVA service provision from April 2019, the commissioning team is exploring the possibility of incorporating this requirement into the IDVA contract from April 2019.

51. The PCC is closely linked into and has met with NHS England in respect of their Liaison & Diversion programme for those in police custody. Based on the higher demand in that area, this will be launched in Worcestershire in November 2018 and will be rolled out across West Mercia where demand requires it. The programme is funded by the NHS and looks to signpost offenders to support pathways, diverting people from the CJS. The programme is looking at the possibility of referring into the PCC's diversionary network.

52. The PCC's new drug strategy is currently in development. The strategy will highlight the importance of partnership working across a number priority areas including early intervention and prevention, reducing drug-related criminality and building recovery through treatment and support services. Public Health will be a key stakeholder in any future PCC approach to tackling drug misuse.

## **Supporting Information**

Appendix 1 – Violence and Vulnerability Profile: County Lines (to follow)

## **Contact Points for the Report**

Sheena Jones, Democratic, Governance and Scrutiny Manager

Tel: 01905 844871

Email: [sjones19@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:sjones19@worcestershire.gov.uk)

Andy Champness, Police and Crime Commissioner Chief Executive

[andrew.champness@westmercia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:andrew.champness@westmercia.pnn.police.uk)



## **Background Papers**

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

[HM Government: Serious Violence Strategy April 2018](#)

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