

**Supplementary Papers for
West Mercia Police and Crime Panel
Monday, 15 June 2020, 11.00 am,**

Membership:

Mr S J Mackay (Chairman)	Substantive Member - Worcestershire County Council
Mr M Wood (Vice Chairman)	Substantive Member - Shropshire Council
Mr R Evans	Co-opted Member - Shropshire Council
Mr W Parr	Co-opted Member - Shropshire Council
Mr D Tremellen	Co-opted Member - Shropshire Council
Mr S Bowen	Substantive Member - Herefordshire Council
Mr B Durkin	Co-opted Member - Herefordshire Council
Mr Kuldip Sahota	Substantive Member - Telford and Wrekin Council
Mr J Lavery	Co-opted Member - Telford and Wrekin Council
Mr R C Adams	Substantive Member - Wychavon District Council
Mr A D Kent	Substantive member - Bromsgrove District Council
Mr P Whatley	Substantive Member - Malvern Hills District Council
Mr J Grubb	Substantive Member - Redditch Borough Council
Mr J Riaz	Substantive Member - Worcester City Council
Ms H Dyke	Substantive Member - Wyre Forest District Council
Mrs C Clive	Co-opted Independent Lay Member

Agenda

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Annual Report 2019-2020

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Foreword

Towards the end of this municipal year we were faced with a number of challenges. I believe these challenges truly highlighted the strength and resilience of the force, as well as the communities it serves as people came together during these testing times.

As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, PCCs have had their term extended by a year. I will use this time to build on the great work that has been achieved, and continue to deliver a Safer West Mercia.

From last year's budget, and additional support from the Government's officer uplift programme, I have been able to deliver on my promise to increase the number of officers policing the areas we live in, as well as delivering on the priorities that matter most to communities. This year's budget also allowed me address community concerns by ensuring funding was available to support vital areas of policing, as well as projects and initiatives that reduce criminality and improve victim services.

This last year saw the end of the strategic policing alliance with Warwickshire, which will allow all our resources to be fully focused on delivering the best possible services to the communities of West Mercia, increasing efficiency and effectiveness.

I am committed to ensuring victims and survivors of all crimes are receiving the necessary support in order to cope, recover and thrive more quickly.

I have continued to place a great amount of focus on reducing the number of people abused or exposed to domestic abuse. I have worked with partners and the force to disrupt behaviours and improve the police response. I have made a significant investment in tackling this horrendous crime and I have shown a further commitment to make improvements through my domestic abuse strategy. As Commissioner, I will continue to fight for those who are affected.

Through public Q&A sessions, Roads Focus events, summer events and Rural Focus drop-ins, I have had the opportunity to engage with thousands of West Mercia residents. West Mercia is a large area and, as Commissioner, I have made it my priority to get out and meet as many people as possible. It's not only important that I am able to hear views first-hand, but also work with the community and partners to address any concerns. I will continue to build on this by working with the force and communities to ensure that they feel safe, and their concerns are reflected in the priorities for West Mercia.



John Campion

West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

The year in numbers

Putting victims and survivors first

RJ 42 restorative justice cases were completed with positive outcomes for the victims

 2,665 children and young people received the SELFIE programme

 80% of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by West Mercia Police

82% 82% conviction rate for domestic abuse cases at court

 89% of witnesses attended court

Reforming West Mercia

£ £226.7M budget

 141,476 999 calls received

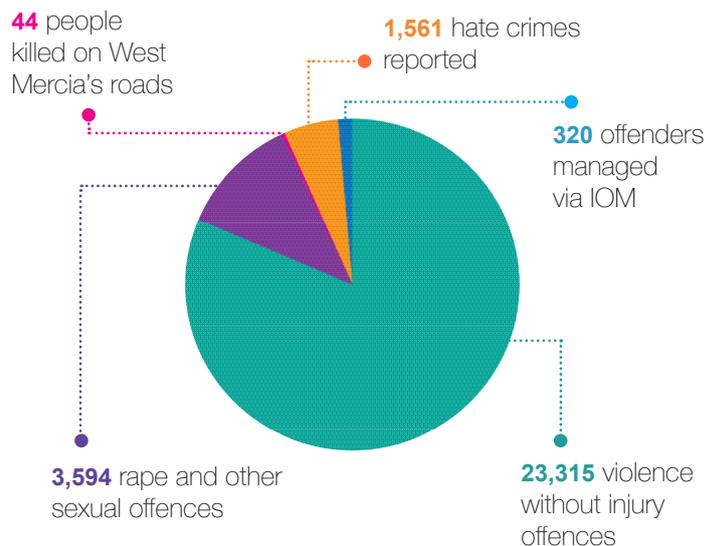
 91% of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds

 79% of residents are confident they could access the police in an emergency*

66% 66% of 101 calls answered within 30 seconds

Building a more secure West Mercia

87,176 offences were recorded:



Reassuring West Mercia's communities

 83% of residents have confidence in West Mercia Police*

 54% satisfied with levels of local policing*

67% 67% feel crime and ASB are either not much of a problem, or not a problem at all in their local area*

+ 36.4% of stop and searches resulted in a police action being taken

 44,000 hours of police volunteer time

 217 independent custody visits

CMS 14% reduction in recorded police complaints

* West Mercia Public Confidence and Perceptions Survey 2019/20

Putting victims and survivors first

I pledged to ensure victims of crime have access to the best possible services to support them to cope and recover after being affected by crime. I have continued to work hard to deliver on that promise in the last year.

April 2019 saw the launch of a new support service for victims of crime in West Mercia. Previous arrangements had delivered a good service however, by engaging with victims through the early stages of my term, opportunities for significant improvements were identified. Feedback from victims consistently showed that they felt they had to tell their story too many times before getting to the person or organisation that they really needed.

The Victim Advice Line (VAL) is designed to get victims faster access to the right help, by ensuring they only have to tell their story once. It provides a single point of entry into support services and a defined pathway for victims, who were also clear that they wanted to regain a sense of choice and control over their lives. These principles have shaped all that the Victim Advice Line has now started delivering, including victims of crime having increased confidence to seek support, whether or not the crime has been reported to the police.



“Dear VAL, Thank you for sending all this helpful information...You were so kind on the telephone.... I will keep the numbers and contacts you have sent us.... With many thanks again for all your kindness at the time and for your helpful email”

Feedback on VAL from a sexual violence victim

The service also enables better multi-agency working, which ensures victims are supported throughout the entire criminal justice system from the very beginning of their journey through to the end. During 2019/20 over 71,000 crimes have been transferred to the Victim Advice Line. More than 60,000 offers of support have been offered, and more than 12,000 tailored packages of support have been delivered to victims. I have also continued to commission services from Victim Support around an effective restorative justice (RJ) service for West Mercia.

In the last year, 50% of their caseload has involved sensitive and complex issues including sexual violence and attempted murder. RJ has been shown to be an effective outcome for both victims and perpetrators and I have been pleased to see its use develop in West Mercia.

‘...It made feel sad about what I had done. It makes me feel happier to know that the victim feels safe and better about the situation. I have learnt a lot about how your actions can affect others. I have found it very good and I hope my victim has too.’

Offender feedback on RJ participation

Specialist support

Domestic abuse has a devastating impact on victims and families. As a society, more needs to be done, we cannot continue to just accept and justify this behaviour as a fact of life. It is a priority for me as Commissioner, the police service and the services I have invested in, to do all we can to tackle it in all its forms.

I fund Women's Aid to provide an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Service across West Mercia. In the last year, I have given additional funds to enable them to provide a hospital based IDVA provision across West Mercia. This approach is nationally recognised best practice and improves the early identification of domestic abuse victims. Serving as a victim's primary point of contact, IDVAs normally work with their clients from the point of crisis to assess the level of risk and to develop tailored options and safety plans.

This support has been maintained throughout the current Covid-19 pandemic, with all IDVAs providing a support service while homeworking. In the last year, 98% of service users achieved increased health and wellbeing, 94% had increased resilience and strategies to prevent further experiences of violence and abuse and 100% of service users had access to immediate support or advice.

K was extremely grateful for the work that we completed with her. The knowledge that she could apply for housing in her chosen area offered her empowerment for change.

The referring GP expressed her satisfaction at how IDVA paid attention to N and the support that has been put in place

L felt the support she received was helpful and I believe the staff were appreciative for an IDVA to be based at the hospital to draw on our support and advice.

Extract from Women's Aid outcome assessments on domestic abuse victims

We all have our part to play in preventing domestic abuse and I will continue to work with partners to ensure resources are in place to support victims, survivors and their families. Earlier this year I, along with Worcestershire County Council, reaffirmed our support for the Drive programme. This important work involves working with some of the most high-risk domestic abuse perpetrators, and challenges them to change their behaviour. The Council and I agreed to match-fund the extension of the Drive project in Worcestershire until the end of March 2021.

Since Drive was introduced, 176 high risk domestic abuse perpetrators have been referred to Drive. Of which, 184 victims were associated with the individual and 262 children and young people were also identified as being associated. Those victims are referred to support services specific to their needs. A new children and young people worker was introduced in July 2019 to reduce the impact of domestic abuse by working with the whole family.

MR stated that without DRIVE and IDVA she would not be here today. She felt like she was going mad.

Feedback received by DRIVE project



Domestic abuse should never be tolerated. Whilst there is a lot of positive work being done in West Mercia to stop the abuse from ever happening, and ensuring the right support is available, it is clear more needs to be done to break the cycle and change behaviours. In support of this I have recently published my own draft domestic abuse strategy which sets out my ongoing commitment towards tackling this form of abuse.

Over the last year I have worked with partners to improve outcomes for victims of sexual violence. In October I brought partners together from local agencies and government organisations, including health, care and justice to discuss how the core priorities set out in the NHS England national sexual assault and abuse services strategy can be delivered at a local level to provide a more holistic approach to ensure victims and survivors of sexual assault and abuse get the support they need in order to recover, heal and rebuild their lives.

I continue to provide significant financial support to AXIS and West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC) to provide Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) services across West Mercia. Both service providers have continued to use the funding provided to enhance their services. This has enabled AXIS to lower the age limit of clients to age five and they now provide a service to anyone over five, who has experienced recent or non-recent sexual abuse, regardless of whether or not they have reported to the police. In the last year, AXIS has received 554 referrals for victims seeking its specialist support, including 60 under the age of 12.

E is 13 year old who was subject to prolonged grooming and abuse by a suspect in his 20's. After about 9 months of working with the ISVA, E started to accept that this was a crime and not a real relationship in the sense she had hoped it was.

Extract from AXIS ISVA case study

The WMRASC grant maintains the current key frontline ISVA, Male ISVA, Family ISVA and Children & Young Peoples (CHISVA) service provision and supports continued delivery of the SELFIE training and awareness raising programme.

“I am beyond grateful for your honesty, consistency and your support, and I feel so fortunate to have been guided by you for so long”

WMRSASC CHISVA client

I have recently been successful in securing an additional £176,065 of Government funding to further enhance these services. The additional funding will enable the recruitment of several additional members of staff, who will enable more victims to be supported. There will be a specific focus on supporting male victims, and those who have additional needs, along with ensuring victims have the right support to cope and recover.

In addition I have provided funding to the West Midlands Paediatric Sexual Assault Service (SARC) which is a region-wide service providing expert care for children and young people who have disclosed sexual assault, or who may have been subject to sexual abuse. Clients are seen by an experienced paediatrician with specialist training in

forensic examination and are supported by a crisis worker.

In line with other specialist service providers, both AXIS and WMRASAC are having to develop safe ways of working for both their staff and clients during the current pandemic. My office is proactively engaging with service providers and the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) to ensure that the impact on services both during and after the lockdown are minimised to better protect victims. I have recently been informed that we have been successful in securing £434k of emergency Covid-19 funding for domestic abuse and sexual violence services within West Mercia. This will help us support and protect victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence most in need at this unprecedented time.

I am committed to improving the victim journey wherever possible to deliver the best outcomes, and prevent scenarios where individuals may be let down by agencies failing to work together. My Victims' Board has led a review of how the Criminal Justice System improves compliance with the Victims' Code of Practice. This work has led to significant improvements in compliance with key entitlements, such as the ability to make a victim personal statement and have the statement read out in court. In addition, the Board has supported the Citizen's Advice Witness Service outreach programme, which is designed to provide enhanced support to vulnerable and intimidated victims and witnesses. Over the past year the work of the Board has resulted in more victims and witnesses attending court and I am pleased to report that West Mercia has the highest witness attendance rate in the West Midlands region at 89%.

Building a more secure West Mercia

I am committed to building communities where people are safe and feel safe. To achieve that commitment, it is important that the police provide the right response at the time when it is needed most, so that with support from communities and partners, together we can deliver the best possible results in building a more secure West Mercia.

Policing demand

The first three months of 2020 have brought unprecedented challenges which have and still continue to impact on all our lives. Significant, and sometimes devastating, flooding affected many communities across large parts of West Mercia in February and March, followed by the Covid-19 pandemic. West Mercia Police has an essential role during these times of crisis, to work with partners and communities to provide an effective emergency response while at the same time continuing to provide a visible and responsive police service.

The additional challenges brought about by these events impact on police demand, however, I am reassured that West Mercia Police is well prepared and has responded quickly and effectively on both occasions. I commend the Chief Constable and all the officers, staff and volunteers working for West Mercia for rising to the challenges faced and showing us the very best of policing in our communities. I will continue to ensure the force has the resources it needs to deal with the current issue and keep us safe, and that the views and needs of our communities and our police force are heard within Government.

I want to assure our communities that despite the ongoing health crisis, West Mercia remains focused on other key priorities. An example of this is increasing officer numbers, with 76 of the 93 additional officer posts created this year already recruited.

I listened when the public said they wanted more police, and for them to be visible and accessible in their communities. I promised to bring officer numbers up to 2,145 by the end of the financial year, after the public asked for more visible policing. I have delivered more officers than promised, and four months earlier than promised. This new cohort of officers along with an additional uplift of 93 officers from the Government's national recruitment programme will improve the service, make the police more accessible and ultimately make West Mercia safer and more secure.



I have secured commitments from the Chief Constable around performance improvements to be delivered in conjunction with the uplift in police officers. With the officer uplift delivered at a record pace and ahead of schedule, these improvements can and should now be delivered for our communities.

One area for improvement identified in the HMICFRS PEEL inspection report 2018/19 is that the force had not successfully implemented its Pathfinder model of 'omni-competent' investigators. The uplift in officer numbers has enabled the force to redesign its investigative model in response to the issues identified. The new model will see up to an additional 88 investigative posts phased in across the organisation in the coming year. The increase in resources and improvements in standards through the provision of consistent high quality investigations, investigators and specialist police staff will ensure better outcomes for the most vulnerable in our communities.

During the last year the force's Harm Reduction Hubs became Problem Solving Hubs with the newly named hubs playing a crucial role in helping to reduce harm and reduce demand across West Mercia. There is now a North Problem Solving Hub and South Problem Solving Hub with staff based in all local policing areas dedicated to working with partners to identify, manage and reduce risk to our most vulnerable people, finding longer term solutions to identified issues. For example, in Hereford, the problem solving hub, with support from West Mercia Housing and local residents, has been successful in securing a closure order to prevent cuckooing in Hereford.



Cuckooing

Are you living next door to drug dealers?

The closure order related to a house in Hereford where the vulnerable occupant was involved in Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB), and reports of alcohol and drug related crime including cuckooing. The Closure Order was served to protect the tenant from continuing to be the victim of exploitation, as well as to provide neighbours with respite from continued ASB. By utilising a problem solving approach, and working with partners, the area is a safer and better place to live.

For the additional resources I have delivered to be truly effective, it is important that the force fully understands and manages the demand it faces.

While the force has seen a 3% increase in the number of 999 calls made when compared to the previous year, there has been a 6% reduction on the number of 101 calls made. Analysis shows that around half of calls coming into the force do not relate to policing matters, demonstrating

the need to better manage demand, including with communities and partners. Providing more opportunities for people to self-serve queries and to report crimes and anti-social behaviour via the force website has helped the force reduce 101 demand, which frees up valuable resources for more serious incidents. The value of this facility has been highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic, which has seen a surge in members of the public reporting breaches via 101. Providing an automated online reporting mechanism specifically for breaches has seen demand being better managed at a time when police resources are stretched.

As part of my 2019/20 budget proposals I am committed to improving police resource, enabling the force to reduce the number of incidents which are un-resourced by 25%. The force has more than doubled on this promise with this figure falling 54% in the first six months alone.

Other commitments, made possible through the additional resources, include ensuring everyone who needs a non-urgent appointment to see a police officer will be offered one within two days, or at a later time by mutual agreement. Improvements have also been made in response times to emergency calls, with the average call being answered in 13 minutes

Tackling crime and reducing harm

In the last year, recorded crime has only seen a small increase of 1.1% showing a continued decline in the rate of increase. There have also been some notable reductions in some crime areas. For example, levels of residential burglaries saw an 11.2% reduction when compared to the previous year.

The force has recently been subject to an HMICFRS inspection of its crime recording processes. The resulting Crime Data Integrity report shows that since the last inspection in 2014, the force has improved its crime recording processes and the force is now rated as 'good', ahead of other similar forces. The report is encouraging news for victims of crime, confirming that in the vast majority of cases West Mercia is performing well, crimes are being accurately recorded, and at the point of initial reporting, victims are getting the right service.

I am aware that acquisitive crime, including burglary, robbery and theft, harms our cause huge harm to communities. A person's home and possessions often carry an emotional attachment and when crime interferes with this it can have a long-lasting impact on its victims. West Mercia Police are committed to protecting people from these crimes. 'We Don't Buy Crime' (WDBC) demonstrates this commitment, by taking an innovative approach to reducing and disrupting the market for stolen goods and protecting homes and possessions by making them less attractive to the 'would-be criminal'. In total, more than 28,500 homes across West Mercia are now protected and offer a real deterrent to would-be criminals.



The success of WDBC was recognised earlier this year when the scheme was announced the winner of a national Tilley Award for its partnership approach.

There are now five strands to WDBC with the team working with second-hand shops to identify stolen goods, fuel stations to not just prevent people from driving off without paying for their fuel but to work with police to report any suspicious activity, and utilising the latest in covert techniques to catch criminals when they do commit crime.

Last year, to help address the associated harm that often comes with serious acquisitive crime, an exploitation and vulnerability strand was launched.

This involved staff providing inputs to organisations and community groups to help them recognise the signs that someone may be being exploited and what to do if they do suspect they are. This work is led by two dedicated exploitation and vulnerability trainers, whose posts were created using additional funding I provided following evidence of a need for this support both with the force and within communities.

West Mercia remains a comparatively safe place, but we are not immune to serious and organised crime (SOC). The impact of crimes such as child sexual abuse, county lines, modern slavery and human trafficking can be devastating. They can destroy individuals and damage entire communities.

In 2018, HMICFRS graded the force as inadequate in its response to SOC. Since that time, SOC has seen an even greater focus and become a more regularly recurring theme of my holding to account agenda. I am pleased that this scrutiny has led to major improvements for our communities in West Mercia, with the force rated as good by inspectors in 2019. This means that more of our communities are protected from harm and more crime is being prevented or actively disrupted by our police.

The force has developed a clear understanding of its SOC threats and has in place a SOC Strategy and delivery plan to strengthen its response to SOC. I launched my own SOC Strategy in September 2019 which outlines how I will play my part and work with others to ensure our communities are safer and feel safer. I have recently developed a SOC delivery plan to monitor progress against the recommendations set out in my strategy.



Serious and Organised Crime Strategy

A key focus of both the force and PCC SOC strategies is to ensure a relentless and coordinated approach to tackling the emerging threat of 'County Lines'. County Lines is a term used to describe a model of drug supply whereby criminal gangs target the sale of drugs, often in smaller towns, exploiting vulnerable adults and young people through coercion, intimidation and violence.

With its partners, the force has had a number of notable successes in tackling this crime, but it remains a continuing challenge. During the National Crime Agency's (NCA) co-ordinated week of activity targeting county lines (October 2019), weapons and phones as well as more than £13,500 cash were recovered, thousands of pounds worth of drugs were seized including crack, cocaine, heroin and cannabis and over 30 arrests were made.

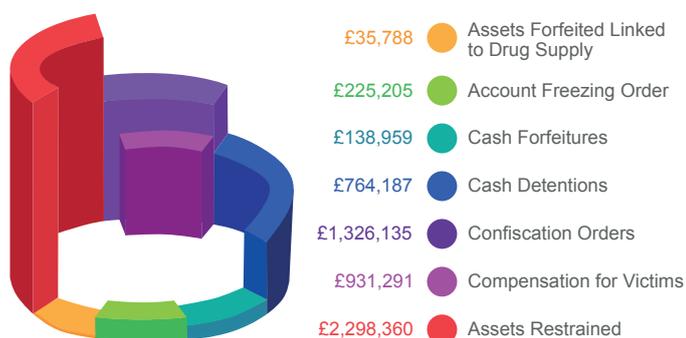
I have championed a public health approach to tackling county lines and recognise the value of preventative work to reduce the number of children in our communities being drawn into County Lines and other forms of criminal exploitation. As a result I have reviewed my existing diversionary initiatives and have ring-fenced over £500,000 into an early intervention fund to implement a West Mercia Diversionary Network (WMDN), assisting partners to reduce youth crime and exploitation. Following a successful provider and stakeholder market event in the summer, and a procurement process, The Children's Society has been chosen to run the service. Despite the current Covid-19 pandemic, Climb, the new name for the service, has just been launched and is already taking referrals. Climb will adopt a 1:1 trusted adult, trauma informed, child-centred approach. They will be working with children and young people (11-17) evidencing early indicators of being at risk of CCE/entering the Criminal Justice Service. All referrals will be assessed via a triage process on their level of risk.

My current funding to diversionary projects includes £33,935 to Energize Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin's More than Sport initiative. This aims to support young people aged 13-24 to achieve community integration and reduce anti-social/offending behaviour through engagement in sports related diversionary activities. In the last year, 67 young people were referred onto the scheme with over 90% achieving a positive outcome as a result of the intervention.

Seriously 4 weeks ago I'd never would have imagined I was going to start boxing again.... it was not possible without you...thank you very much

Feedback from a 15 year old male suffering from high stress and anxiety levels with a potential to evolve into criminal activity referred onto More than Sport

One of the tactics proactively used by the force to disrupt organised criminals is to takes every opportunity to seize cash and assets as part of criminal proceedings. The processes and procedures to do this can be extremely complex and time consuming but in the last year the force's Economic Crime Unit (ECU) has had some notable success. The ECU has removed a total of £4.7 million from criminals using their powers under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971. The ECU has also obtained over £1.1 million in compensation for victims of financial crime. The assets stripped from criminals in 2019, are broken down as follows;



Knife crime is a complex issue nationwide that doesn't have a single, specific cause. Naturally our police have a central role to play in protecting us from knife crime, and in September the force launched its knife crime strategy, 'Calling Time on Knife Crime'. Elements of the strategy were piloted in Telford and will be rolled out across the force, with a serious and violent crime Sergeant responsible for tackling knife crime based in both the North and South Problem Solving Hubs. Working in partnership with other agencies plays a crucial role in the strategy and I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account to ensure that this work is happening effectively. I am committed to continuing to work with partners to further reduce knife crime in our communities.

Drug trafficking and supply is the primary crime type for over two thirds of Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) in West Mercia. Drug misuse is an inherently complex issue and there is no single solution. My own drugs strategy sets out how I will play my part, both in terms of my own role, and working with others to deliver the best possible results. Included are my commissioning intentions and existing funding commitments for substance misuse including £250,377 in support of drug intervention programmes (Dip) across the West Mercia area.

CH completed a 6 month DRR after a sentence for arson, in January 2020. CH is now opiate free and in secure accommodation in a long term tenancy, he is engaging with venture and completing his unpaid work.

Outcome from a Drugs Rehabilitation Requirement of an offender in Shropshire

I have recently chosen to recommit my Dip funding across all areas of West Mercia. Specifically in Worcestershire, I have worked with partners to successfully co-commission a substance misuse service for the county.

Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT) are emerging and developing areas of crime, commonly associated with SOC, which I am committed to tackling in West Mercia. To support this commitment, I have allocated some of my grant funding to provide victims of modern slavery, human trafficking and forced marriage, who are in crisis, with immediate support. This funding enables West Mercia Police to provide individuals with immediate access to food, drink and secure accommodation for up to seven nights. I hope that the funding I have allocated to be used, when victims need temporary accommodation, will help bring them comfort and support before more permanent living arrangements can be made.

This year I have worked with the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) and the Youth Offending Service (YOS) to collectively grant £135k to recruit a 'CCE link worker' in every local policing area. The 'trusted adult' works with children and young

people who are being criminally exploited (high risk of harm/risk assessed as 'red'). The funded posts are embedded within partnership panels and Children's Services dependant on local area requirements.

"Thank you for everything you have done, you have truly worked wonders with J and I can't thank you enough. You have been brilliant and he thinks a lot of you."

Father of J, a 17 year old male who had low self-esteem, a cannabis addiction and a poor support network. J had admitted to working for a gang, he was a clear victim of Child Criminal Exploitation although he did not recognise himself as being a victim at the time of referral to the Link worker in Worcester

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) continues to be a key priority both at a force, regional and national level. I awarded £305,735 to West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC) to run the Branch Project, which provides educational interventions and support to young people who are at risk of or have been a victim of CSE in Worcestershire, Herefordshire and Shropshire. As part of the service, a CSE awareness session has been delivered to 1,343 children and young people, providing them with invaluable advice to help keep them safe. To date, 128 young people have been referred into the project, receiving tailored education, intervention or support. J is a 15 year old female referred into Branch as a high risk victim of CSE, trafficking and multiple sex offences. Her behaviour in school was putting her at risk of exclusion.

The Branch Project Worker attended a meeting at school and explained that the young person was in crisis and was not a 'naughty' child but a traumatised child. The outcome of this particular case was that the school agreed to keep the young person in, and attempt to limit the exclusions as they were adding to the young person's vulnerability.

I made a commitment in my Safer West Mercia Plan to increase the proportion of hate crimes reported to the police. The last year has seen a 17% increase, compared to the previous year, with over 1,500 reports of hate crime. However, I want the force and partners to do more. In South Worcestershire, the force is pioneering how it supports victims of hate crime with a new pilot initiative of Specialist Hate Crime Advocacy & Liaison Officers (HALOs). These 26 officers provide an information and support service that provides a designated contact for the victim to talk to throughout the investigation, in addition to investigating officers. I will be using my holding to account programme to monitor progress of this initiative and to ensure that, if effective, it is rolled out to benefit all of West Mercia's communities.

Safer Roads is one of the key policing priorities for West Mercia Police, and I welcome this clear strategic focus. 44 people were killed on our roads last year, a reduction from 52 in the previous year, but too many people are dying on our roads and there is still more to be done. As part of my own commitment, I want to raise more awareness of road safety and reduce the amount of those being killed or injured. I am seeking to reduce the number of those committing road traffic offences through further projects and initiatives.



To support this, I have published my draft roads safety strategy. I have also developed and implemented a Roads Focus campaign with Worcestershire and Shropshire Councils. Further details can be found in the Reassure part of this report.

I have directed resources towards initiatives that address the rising number of people killed and seriously injured on West Mercia's roads. This money allows more focus to be placed on something that is a priority, and concern, for everyone.

One example of this is #MORSE. A road safety initiative that aims to focus on individuals who are repeatedly committing driving offences, as well as those who are at risk of re-offending. Targeting these individuals and addressing their driving behaviour will make our roads safer. The initiative is delivered by a partnership of West Mercia Police, Worcester-based charity YSS, Hereford &

Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, and Warwickshire & West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company (WMCRC).

The most important piece of work has been to find CL accommodation. This has provided him with stability and structure.... Furthermore, this has been essential for reducing his driving offending behaviour, as CL does not have to break into cars for somewhere to sleep.

Offender referred to YSS through #MORSE

Reducing reoffending

To continue to break the cycle of crime and reoffending of individuals, as well as lessen the impact this behaviour has on our wider community, it is important that partners work together to provide the right interventions at the right time. Through my Crime Reduction Board I am able to bring together representatives from key agencies to ensure this approach is happening in West Mercia.

Over the last year, we have focused on how to build on the success of Integrated Offender Management (IOM) to see how we could improve our approach to reducing the harm and crime associated with different types of offenders.

The work focused on identifying those offenders in the community who posed the greatest risk. As a result of the work our IOM teams are now working with and managing a wider range of offenders. For example, IOM teams now supervise high risk

domestic abuse perpetrators, violent offenders alongside prolific offenders.

As a result of the new approach we have already started to see some significant improvements in how we manage our high risk offenders in the community. At the same time improved assessments makes it easier to identify high risk offenders who should be managed through the scheme.

We are also working closely with the National Police Chiefs Council lead on IOM as we want to ensure there is a consistent approach for IOM across the country. We have also started to explore the use of IDIOM. IDIOM is a Home Office tool which measures reoffending rates and calculates cost savings associated with any reductions in crime, which will help support our understanding of the value for money, or return on investment linked to our IOM approach.

As well as working locally with partners to reduce reoffending and harm, I have continued to support the Government's redesign of the Probation Service. I am working closely with the new West Midlands director to ensure that services are designed to meet the need of offenders across West Mercia. In order to ensure that we have a close working relationship and there is collaboration across the region, we have set up a West Midlands regional group, which brings together the four PCCs and relevant stakeholders, thereby ensuring a consistent approach for the region.

As well as providing leadership and governance through my Crime Reduction Board, I have also committed funds to ensure vulnerable offenders in our communities receive the support they need. The support provided often enables offenders the opportunity to address key areas affecting them, such as drug and alcohol misuse, or providing education and learning support. The support provided is designed to help someone address the behaviours behind their offending behaviour so they are able to give up their life of crime and in doing so make our communities safer. In the last year I have committed around £250,000 towards addressing reducing reoffending. Examples include:

- Willowdene Farm for the LINC project (Local Initiatives Nurturing Change). This project is for women at risk of entering the criminal justice system, or to reduce their risk of reoffending.
- Remember Veterans. This is a programme designed to identify and support military veterans who come into contact with the criminal justice system.
- West Mercia Youth Justice Service for the Substance misuse (SM) programme. This aims to provide interventions for young people at risk of entering the youth justice system.

Collaboration and Partnership Working

Building a safer West Mercia is not and cannot be the sole responsibility of any one person or organisation and I remain committed to developing strong collaboration and partnership arrangements to deliver shared outcomes, improve services for our communities and achieve efficiencies.

A 12 month tri-service pilot 'Mental Health Street Triage Service' (MHSTS) in South Worcestershire is one example of collaboration which, it is hoped, will bring real benefits to some of the most vulnerable people in our communities. Funded by the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group) the team consists of a Paramedic, Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) and Police Officer crewed together in a marked ambulance. Working together they can ensure a person in a mental health crisis receives appropriate support at first point of contact. As well as a more effective use of resources, it will ensure that any detention under the Mental Health Act (MHA) is the last resort and not the only option available, thereby improving the outcomes and experiences of people who come into contact with the police while in a mental health crisis.

In 2019/20 I have provided CSPs with £602,000. This budget is spent on proactive community safety initiatives, addressing local needs and creating a safer and more secure West Mercia.

I have worked collaboratively with regional colleagues to ensure that the Strategic Policing Requirement is met and I maintain oversight of the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU), National Air Police Service (NPAS), Roads Policing, Counter Terrorism (CT) and other national programmes. Two regional policy officers shared between the four Police and Crime Commissioners in the West Midlands Region have been invaluable in strengthening our scrutiny and oversight of key national programmes which impact on our region.

Together with the other PCCs in the West Midlands region, I jointly commissioned a six month study into criminality in prisons. The report has assisted in identifying an approach to collectively tackle organised crime gangs which are embedded in our prison system. These organised gangs are not only causing harm in the prisons but in our communities too, and I will continue to work with the Government and other partners to ensure this harm is reduced.

Reforming West Mercia

Reforming West Mercia Police remains a central part of my mission as Commissioner and there is still significant potential to deliver more effective and efficiently run services. Following the joint decision with the Chief Constable to withdraw from the alliance with Warwickshire Police, an extended period of negotiation took place during 2019 to resolve the issues of bringing the strategic alliance to an end. These negotiations did not reach resolution before the end of the original notice period, which led the Home Secretary to mandate both forces to continue the existing collaboration agreement for a further six months, until April 2020.

When a mutual agreement couldn't be made, an independent team was brought in by the Home Office to advise. Their advice highlighted a number of areas for the provision of hosted services and for an agreement of reasonable termination costs. This sees West Mercia providing transactional, forensic services and file storage on a service provider basis for 18 months and continuing to collaborate on IT services. The new agreements to provide service and collaboration are at no cost to West Mercia as they are on a full cost recovery basis.

I am pleased to report that we have also agreed on a settlement figure of £10.5m as a full and final payment. This figure is lower than was recommended by the Home Office's independent body and significantly lower than the amount requested by Warwickshire. As part of exiting a £300m policing alliance, this settlement is good value for money for the communities of West Mercia. It will be paid in instalments over two financial years from reserves and efficiencies.

Investing in our people

As previously outlined, I am committed to ensuring the force has the support and resources it needs to provide a modern and dynamic innovative force. I have invested in an additional 215 officers in 2019/20, bringing officer numbers back to the highest level since 2012. This significant uplift will enable the force to increase resilience and visibility in our communities, improve the response to operational demand and provide enhanced support for the health and wellbeing of our officers.

2019 was the year of wellbeing in West Mercia, and it is important to me as Commissioner that the force provides adequate, tailored support for all officers and staff, particularly those exposed to work related traumatic events.

The improved approach set out this year not only included the specialist support for those affected by PTSD, and other mental health related issues, but a range of other schemes and initiatives. This included a travelling wellbeing bus, where free health check-ups can be accessed, free app 'Backup Buddy' that offers 24 hour support and advice, peer supporters trained by the charity Mind, multi-faith chaplaincy and mental health first aid training for front line supervisors. Investing in the health and wellbeing of the workforce provides officers and staff with the support they need to carry out their role and deliver an excellent service to our communities.

I have supported the force in developing the new police constable degree apprenticeship (PCDA) scheme. This is a new route into policing which sees recruits completing a three year apprenticeship with on and off-the-job learning. On successfully finishing the programme, and completing their probation, recruits will achieve a recognised and accredited degree in Professional Policing Practice from Staffordshire University. The first ever intake of PCDA student officers joined West Mercia in January 2020, with planning under way for further intakes across the next financial year.

I am hopeful that the development of the PCDA route will encourage a more diverse pool of candidates to consider a career in policing, and will help the force to achieve its aspiration for a workforce that better represents its communities.

I want West Mercia Police to be truly representative of the communities it serves. The force has made a significant commitment to improving diversity and inclusion in the workforce through a range of initiatives, such as the appointment of Positive Action officer, introducing unconscious bias inputs throughout officer and staff training packages, and the innovative #UncoverYourPotential educational campaign, which challenges unconscious bias and aims to encourage more women to join up.

In August 2019, West Mercia Police was awarded Gold in the Ministry of Defence's (MOD) Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS). This prestigious award celebrates the advocacy and support that the police give to the armed forces community.

It's important for West Mercia Police to be representative and inclusive, in order to offer the best possible service to the communities they serve, and the outstanding work with the armed forces is a great example of this.

The force continues to implement 'MAX', to maximise the potential of the workforce and ensure the contribution to organisational goals and priorities. 'MAX' seeks to

- Support improved health and wellbeing
- Recognise and reward achievements
- Realise aspirations
- Support and develop people, based on individual needs
- Recognise and foster talent, growing potential for the future, and;
- Ensure clarity in focus and direction



**Maximising contribution
and potential**

This year, as my own commitment to investing in people, I recruited a graduate policy intern and a graduate communications and engagement intern to work in my office for 12 months. As part of their placement they have gained an invaluable insight both into the work of my office and a wide range of force functions, as well as developing valuable workplace skills. This internship scheme will continue next year.

Investing in technology

There are many projects under my 'reform' agenda and the force has a number of significant transformational projects that are a key part of these reforms. I am committed to working with the force to mitigate any impact resulting from the alliance termination to secure the planned efficiencies. For example, negotiations with the supplier of a new Command and Control System, Saab SAFE, for the Operational Control Centre (OCC) are ongoing to establish West Mercia Police as the sole customer. In other transformation areas, such as digital services, the change programme will be coordinated jointly across both forces to enable smooth transitioning of applications and services to new infrastructure by March 2021 to avoid unnecessary delay.

Body worn video is playing a significant part in my plans to reform and modernise West Mercia Police. The technology was rolled out to regular officers in 2017, and has proven its benefits for both police and local communities. Smartphones help officers spend less time in the police station, and more time in the community. Body worn video captures vital evidence from incidents, providing reassurance for both officers and the

public. In a typical month, more than 13,000 clips are recorded. More than 2,000 are retained as evidence



The proven benefits of mobile technology has enabled me to invest a further £250,000 in the same equipment to enable the technology to be rolled out to the 300 or so Special Constables in West Mercia. Our Special Constables play an incredibly valuable role in our communities. It is absolutely right they have the same equipment and support as regular officers.

My aspiration to modernise West Mercia's technology is not limited to the force as I am supportive of wider reforms to the criminal justice system (CJS). This has included working with partners to introduce Video Remand Hearings (VRH). In February I committed approximately £19,000 for a three month proof of concept video remand hearing pilot within the Telford Custody suite, so the CJS can model the cost v. benefits in order to make an informed decision regarding future funding. The VRH pilot is designed to reduce the burden and costs associated with centralising remand hearings, making the entire CJS more efficient and effective. I look forward to receiving results of the pilot.

Investing in our estate

Our communities have legitimate expectations around police estates. They expect them to be fit for purpose, located where they are most effective and efficient, and where they can help provide visibility, accessibility and reassurance. My work around estates has focused on delivering against those needs.

This is being achieved through a combination of new build, refurbishment and co-location projects across the portfolio. Examples include:

- ▶ The sale of Whitchurch Police Station, Shropshire, for £331,000 following the co-location of the safer neighbourhood team with Whitchurch Community Health Clinic
- ▶ The lease renewal for the force's vehicle workshops in Worcester, which now includes a break clause that will enable me to terminate the lease, should they wish to proceed with the potential One Public Estate Worcester Depot project
- ▶ Securing £84,000 towards the feasibility for the Hereford Joint Police and Fire Station
- ▶ Securing office space and use of welfare facilities in the newly built Wyre Forest Emergency Hub, to co-locate with Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and (SARA) Search and Rescue. The force is due to move into the space during summer 2020

The police estate needs to be fit for purpose to enable a modern and agile police force to deliver good quality services to the people they serve. To support this ambition my Strategic Estate Manager was appointed to coordinate projects on behalf of policing and to ensure our estates management strategy is delivered.

The Strategic Estate Manager has concluded a comprehensive line by line review of the Planned Minor Revenue & Minor Capital Works Programme 2019/2020, to bring the programme back into budget. This has been successfully achieved, ensuring that the 2019/20 Planned Programme together with the future 202/21 Planned Programme now provides for a variety of improvements to operational working environments, staff welfare areas, specific security safeguarding measures, compliance, as well as improving internal spaces to remove any risks to staff wellbeing and health and safety.

In the final quarter of the year, the Strategic Estate Manager has reviewed the current Estate Strategy to determine its effectiveness in terms of how the physical estate and built environment supports the delivery of policing in West Mercia. This work will enable a new approach to be taken, remodelling the estate which will provide for a more modern, fit-for-purpose estate, together with a service delivery model that reflects our collective strategic, operational and transformation activities, goals and objectives.

Reassuring West Mercia's communities

In the last year I have continued my focus on ensuring that our communities are safe, but also feel safe.

My decision to increase officer numbers in West Mercia has been a central and recurring part of this work. I have worked to make sure our communities are aware that officer numbers are increasing, particularly through the Government uplift and my investment, and then highlight this further through police recruitment, highlighting when new officers are in training, and when they then complete that training and go out into our communities. Despite the ongoing health crisis we have faced, the force remains focussed on increasing officer numbers with 76 of the 93 additional officer posts created this year already recruited.

Delivery against my Communications and Engagement Strategy has been regularly monitored. Engagement will be explored in more detail later in this report. With regards communication, in the last year I have issued more than 250 public comments or articles in order to ensure local communities are aware of my views, decisions, or strategies.

I have seen a significant increase in contact from the public. The contact management system allows much greater resilience and efficiency in how public contact is managed within my office, and it continues to ensure that anyone contacting me as Commissioner receives a prompt, personal service.

Growth in communication and engagement has also been significant across digital platforms, with a focus on Facebook. In the last year my official page has seen an increase of

37% for page 'likes', with content reaching around 36,000 people each month.



On Twitter, the most recent analytics show impressions of more than 162,000 in the last month, as well as just under 1,500 profile visits by users.

My website is continually audited to ensure transparency and to engage our communities. I continue to work to increase transparency in my role through the publication of all appropriate decision notices, financial information, office information, strategy documents and FOI disclosures. I have further enhanced this work through staging West Mercia's first public 'holding to account' meetings, which are discussed in greater detail later in this report. In the last year, almost 23,000 different users have visited my website, an increase of 15% on the previous year. There were over 31,000 individual sessions (up 16%), and more than 72,000 page views (up 15%).

I continue to support initiatives to enable our communities to play an active role in supporting the work of our police force. Volunteers within policing, including Special Constables, police service volunteers and police cadets clocked up a total of almost 45,000 hours of service in the last year. This is an exceptional contribution in support of our regular officers and staff and makes a real difference in our communities.

In the last year, I have continued to develop the Roads Focus initiative, which aims to improve road safety across West Mercia. The initiative began as a pilot project in partnership with Worcestershire County Council, with an initial week of targeted engagement in communities with known road safety concerns. This included a free road safety course, drop-in sessions with local SNTs, highways teams and the Safer Roads Partnership.

Since then, I have worked with Shropshire County Council to run a similar week of activities. I then ran a further two weeks of action with Worcestershire County Council to coincide with National Road Safety Week. In addition to this, I ran further driver awareness courses in partnership with national driver-education providers TTC, as well as hands-on driver training to give people the opportunity to become more confident drivers. These sessions were very well attended with many finding them beneficial. The sessions also gave attendees the opportunity to brush-up on skills and knowledge they had forgotten, or not known about.

Just a note to say thank you for the Driver Training course this week. Very instructive and a lot of fun as well.

Attendee of the driver training session, November 2019.

More sessions were planned to take place, but were delayed due to Covid-19. It is hoped that further drop-in sessions and driver awareness sessions will take place in the future, which allows partners to come together to listen to the concerns of communities.

Rural and Business Crime

West Mercia is a predominantly rural police force area with over a third of its residents living in smaller towns and villages, where farming and the countryside are focal points for the community and represent major parts of the local economy. Rural crime can have a significant cost, in a way that is more than just financial. It brings increased stress and pressure which impacts on mental health, leading people to feel more isolated. My rural crime strategy sets out how I will actively work with communities and partners to tackle rural crime to build safer more secure rural communities. In support of my approach I earmarked additional funding from the 2019/20 precept specifically for rural crime. This has enabled the force to provide warranted officers in each local policing areas whose role is focused on rural and business crime, this is in addition to the five existing rural and business officers (RABOs). These officers and staff form part of the Wider Problem Solving teams mentioned earlier.

As additional officers were invested in, I wanted to make sure that they had the right tools needed to carry out their roles to provide a visible and effective response which is why I provided five dedicated rural and business crime vehicles. The five vehicles, with the distinctive 'Rural Matters' and 'We Don't Buy Crime' branding, are based across the force area and used by officers to support rural communities and work to reduce crime.



Cyber-crime

Cyber-crime remains a national policing priority and can have a detrimental effect across all our communities. To help raise awareness of cyber-crime, my Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner chairs the West Mercia Cyber-Crime Partnership. This is a diverse group of public and private sector organisations and businesses, working together to raise awareness of cyber-crime and to help individuals and businesses take steps to prevent it. In January, the group ran a training event for SMEs to help businesses keep themselves and their customers safe. The event in Hereford attracted over 30 delegates who were able to take part in an interactive training session provided by a cyber security expert. Delegates were also able to access security advice from the We Don't Buy Crime Smartwater team, and the Rural and Business officer for Hereford amongst others. The event will be evaluated with a view to hold similar events across West Mercia. This is just one example of how I'm enabling individuals,

communities and business with the tools to help keep themselves safe.

Following support from the Partnership, I have provided West Mercia Police with £11,000 to work with Get Safe Online. Their website is a unique resource providing practical advice for individuals and businesses in the fight against fraud, identity theft, viruses and many other problems encountered online. As well as online resources, Get Safe Online have also run a cyber training event for force personnel and partners; and attended two public events in September 2019, the Ludlow Food Festival and Worcester 10k where over 9,000 cyber advice packs were distributed.

Police Ethics

I want to ensure our communities can have trust in me as their Commissioner and the police force I hold to account on their behalf. Ensuring that West Mercia Police upholds an ethical policing culture is an important part of my role and I have continued to liaise closely with the force's Professional Standards Department (PSD). I ensure complaints are dealt with fairly, and complainants receive the service they need, and in doing so provide assurance to individuals that their concerns are listened to and addressed.

Recent legislative changes brought significant changes to the police complaints system, including a much greater role for PCCs. As of 1st February 2020, my office has taken on responsibility for carrying out complaint appeals that were previously referred to the force.

I have appointed a Complaints Review Manager to ensure the new statutory obligations are met and that my office provides an impartial, and timely service to members of the public. I welcome these national reforms and see this as a real opportunity to increase independence and improve public confidence in the police complaints system. The changes reinforce and further develop my role in holding the local police force to account on behalf of our local communities

“Over 80% of residents said they trust WMP, believe they treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are and act with integrity” [West Mercia Public Perception Survey 2019/20]

Independent Custody Visitors

My Independent Custody Visitor (ICV) Scheme sees trained volunteers make unannounced visits to all West Mercia's custody suites to check on the welfare and treatment of detainees. By observing and reporting on the work being carried out in custody suites, it directly involves independent members of the public in scrutinising an important part of police work and ensures public confidence in the police. There are currently 54 ICV volunteers, who carry out their visits at any time of the day or night, seven days a week. A total of 217 visits were carried out until mid-March 2020 when visits were suspended as a result of Covid-19. Working with the custody inspectors, the coordinator has been able to continue oversight of the scheme during this challenging time by dip sampling custody records

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- 16,484 detainees in custody 2019/2020
 - 54 ICVs
 - 217 visits undertaken by ICVs
 - 84% of detainees available consented to meeting with ICVs

ICVs fulfil a crucial role in providing reassurance to communities about how police are handling people under detention. The age range of our ICVs spans from 18 to 88, and I am grateful to all of our volunteers for their invaluable contributions, particularly those with many years of experience and service. I have accompanied ICVs on their visits on numerous occasions and my Deputy attends ICV Panel meetings in order to understand and support their roles and experiences.

I have been committed to the ongoing development of the scheme, ensuring it has both the resources and resilience to be as effective as possible. This has seen the introduction of an electronic recording system to enable ICVs to submit their visit reports as quickly as possible. Promotion of the scheme with students at Worcester University has resulted in a number of new and younger volunteers, as well as changes to the scheme's annual report to make it more accessible and informative.

It's been really great seeing your scheme thrive, no doubt down to a lot of hard work.

Chief Executive of ICVA

Community engagement

I promised that as Commissioner I would actively engage with our communities, listen and be responsive to their concerns, to ensure they are safe, and feel safe, and are happy with the service they receive from their police force. In the last year, the scale and scope of my community engagement has grown significantly as I believe it is important to be as accessible as possible.

Over the last year, I have held a number of different community engagement events. I held Q&A sessions across the whole of West Mercia over a number of months. During these sessions, I, along with local SNT officers, the local Rural and Business Officer and We Don't Buy Crime Smartwater team, went to different towns and villages to give members of public the opportunity to ask questions and discuss any concerns they had. In total, 19 of these events were held and I personally engaged with over 200 people.



I also held Rural Focus events across West Mercia to speak to communities that may be feeling more isolated than others, or that may be concerned about rural crime. Five of these were held, with more planned following the easing of Covid-19 related restrictions.

Face to face engagements have also been carried out via my annual programme of summer event. Hundreds of people came to meet me and my team last summer across the six events, and gave me their views on local policing and crime. Working alongside the We Don't Buy Crime and Smartwater team, we were able to hand out 1,000 property marking kits to anyone who visited the stand.

Between myself and my deputy, we have also carried out more than 600 face to face engagements in the community over the last year. My Community Ambassadors have carried out more than 300. Although it is worth noting that due to the floods, that affected many parts of West Mercia, and the Covid-19 crisis, many engagements were postponed.

In an attempt to ensure I am reaching more residents of West Mercia, I have been sending regular articles to parish magazines. Within these articles are short updates that may affect that particular policing area, or will provide invaluable crime prevention advice and initiatives that they may not be aware of. To ensure I am making the best use of technology to connect with West Mercia's communities, I developed a podcast series. The PCC's 'The Safer West Mercia Podcast' series aims to shine a spotlight on areas of policing and services that provide support to victims of crime, by speaking with those at the

heart of it. It was my intention that listeners will not only gain an insight into these areas, but they will also benefit from practical advice.

As with previous years, thousands of people from right across West Mercia have been interviewed, gathering their perceptions on local policing and crime. This has, for the first time, given both myself and the force statistically relevant samples of community perceptions, within each local policing area. I was clear when I increased investment and officer numbers in West Mercia Police that I wanted every community to feel the benefit of this uplift. This feedback helps inform my holding to account agenda, and ensures I can be confident of exactly where improvements are being felt in our communities, how much those improvements are being noticed, and where more work is still needed.

These projects have supported and further reinforced ongoing feedback from the community into my office throughout the year, which has increased significantly. At the end of the last PCC's term around 500 items of correspondence were being logged each year. For comparison, in the last year more than 1,000 case files have been logged, processed and individually responded to within my office.

In the last year I have continued to develop new outlets and platforms to engage with our communities. As outlined previously, I have maintained transparency around the 'holding to account' aspect of my work, by making more of my holding to account meetings with the Chief Constable public. These meetings continue to be streamed live on Facebook, giving communities

the opportunity to submit questions both in advance, and live during the event. The videos are permanently added to my social media content for anyone to view who misses the broadcasts. As a result of the Covid-19 lockdown, and communities feeling unsure about the changes to police officer powers, I held a Q&A session with the Chief Constable via a video call. We took questions before the session, and it was then streamed on social media channels to allow communities to watch. Plans are in place to hold more events like this.



Performance and accountability

Oversight

I want the public to have confidence and trust in my work, along with that of the force. To achieve this I have continued to monitor force performance, using weekly, monthly and quarterly performance reports to inform my regular meetings with the Chief Constable and other senior leads. My office is actively engaged in the development of a new performance framework for the force, both supporting and challenging as it develops. These processes ensure I can effectively scrutinise force performance on behalf of our communities and push for change and improvements where needed.

My regular programme of local policing area visits has enabled me to discuss performance and community issues with the local command teams and to engage with officers and staff on an informal basis. This increased oversight, along with my scrutiny of other performance data and attendance at a range of internal organisational meetings, has provided me with effective oversight of wider force activity.

Holding to account

My monthly assurance meetings provide a clear and robust way for me to closely scrutinise key areas of the force and to hold the Chief Constable to account for ensuring the force's efficiency and effectiveness.

In the last year I have held the Chief Constable to account around performance, workforce issues, local policing, modern slavery and human trafficking, and serious acquisitive crime.

In each case, actions have been followed up and performance reviewed in future meetings with outcomes published on my website. My Facebook live meetings serve an important purpose in significantly increasing public transparency of my scrutiny process, and ensuring communities have a clear, direct voice in policing. In the last year I have held two Facebook live meetings, one in June on rural crime and one in January on the budget. I then held the pre-recorded session in April to cover Covid-19.

**Facebook Live
events reach**

15,763

**Facebook Live
event views**

5,531

As set out in my Safer West Mercia Plan, I am committed to putting victims and survivors first. Victim satisfaction is a key indicator of force performance against this objective, ensuring improved consistent services for the victims who suffer most from crime and ensuring that officers and staff have the skills to properly support victims. Satisfaction has remained an ongoing focus for me and I am pleased to see that satisfaction has improved from 78% in March 2019 to 80% in March 2020.

In October, I sought reassurance from the Chief Constable regarding the reliability of the satisfaction survey and data obtained from it. As a result of raising this issue, the force has reviewed this process and changes made to the survey. These changes will improve

how the force engages with victims to better understand their service delivery and identify where improvements can be made.

Furthering my commitment to victims of crime, I have maintained a focus and scrutiny on the satisfaction for victims of hate crime over the last 12 months and, as a result, a significant improvement has been seen. Since April last year, hate crime satisfaction has increased by 10%, highlighting that victims of hate crime are more satisfied with the service they have received.

It is important to me that the police are visible and accessible to the public and a key feature of Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) is that they are out there in the communities providing reassurance. As part of my scrutiny of Local Policing, I carried out some dip sampling of the automated email response when contacting a SNT and identified some inconsistencies in the response received. Since my scrutiny I have seen improved contact channels for members of the public to be able to access neighbourhood policing.

Independent scrutiny

To support me in my oversight role, the Joint Independent Audit and Standards Committee was established to provide independent scrutiny of activities, processes and policies. Following termination of the alliance with Warwickshire Police, this committee has recently been reformed to be the West Mercia Audit and Standards Committee, with a focus solely on West Mercia.

HMICFRS, which is the lead body for the independent assessment of police forces and fire services, published its PEEL report on effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy in September 2019, nine months after the inspection took place. While the report rightly recognised the significant improvements made around tackling serious organised, assessing the force as good in this area, overall the force was judged as 'requires improvement' in each of the three areas. I am committed to working with the Chief Constable to deliver my pledge of building safer, more secure communities and I shall support the force in making the necessary improvements to ensure it can provide an efficient and effective service.

It is important that the outcome of key decisions and discussions are made accessible so that our communities can have trust in me as their Commissioner, and the police force I hold to account on their behalf. I have achieved this through my Facebook Live events as well as publishing reports notes and minutes from a wide number of governance and scrutiny meetings including the Holding to Account Meetings, the West Mercia Governance Meetings and my Crime Reduction Board and Victims' Board meetings. Additionally, the delivery plan I developed outlines how the commitments I have made in my Safer West Mercia Plan is reviewed on a monthly basis and reported to the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel, who are responsible for scrutinising my activities and responsibilities.

Our resources

The 2019/20 total revised net revenue budget for West Mercia is £226.711m, which is funded through a combination of central government grants, council tax and an amount from the budget reserve to fund transformation and improvements. At the end of the year, this budget was overspent by £1.598m. This means that the actual amount required from our reserve is slightly more (0.7%) than originally budgeted.

The main variances in 2019/20 are shown below:

Area of spend – under/(over) spending	£m
Policing	1.598
Office of the PCC	0.000
Total net underspend in 2019/20	1.598

West Mercia's reserve balances, which stand at £14.991m at the end of the year, are over £4m more than the minimum required. They will support me in achieving my objectives, principally to meet the challenges posed by Covid-19 and to build a new locally responsive and effective force following the termination of the strategic alliance with Warwickshire.

I can confirm that West Mercia Police has established robust and responsive operational arrangements following the end of the Strategic Alliance with Warwickshire. This will ensure it can meet the needs of its residents more effectively, putting them first. It will also enable the force to transform and reform the services it provides, and give it the ability to meet its savings targets of £9.858m in the next three years. In addition, an

exit strategy has been agreed with Warwickshire. Some collaboration on a small number of services will continue for a further year to ensure a smooth transfer. A financial settlement has also been agreed. This was funded from reserves. A new financial model, ensuring that the cost of the collaborated services is being shared fairly between the two forces, has been put in place.

The budget and mid-term financial plan (MTFP) was agreed with the Police and Crime Panel in February 2019, which outlined the planned use of reserves, reducing balances to £13.8m by 21/22. The use of reserves and reserve balances are reviewed rigorously each year to ensure that they remain adequate against the risks we face.

To ensure the force remains both effective and efficient, it is undergoing significant transformation, much of which is reliant on capital investment. During 2019/20 £7.4m of capital expenditure has been incurred across West Mercia. This includes £1.2m which has been spent on our estates strategy. Over £3.9m has been invested in our IT systems in 2018/19, to streamline and update systems to ensure they are capable of meeting the needs for 21st century policing and to improve their resilience. Significant levels of investment are planned to continue, with £74.7m anticipated over the period up to 2022/23 principally over estates and IT.

During 2019/20 I continued to work closely with many partners across West Mercia, providing financial support and assistance to a number of local projects and initiatives to protect people from harm. We have invested heavily in the support services we provide for those who are the victims

of crime, with the Victims Advice Line going live in April 2019, and Climb, the diversionary network for young people. New projects and schemes were also put in place to make our roads safer during 2019 and 2020.

I am continuing to drive value for money across all areas of the service, and believe that aside from the transformational changes being undertaken, this can also be achieved through greater collaboration across emergency services. During 2017/18, I submitted a business case to the Home Office which outlined how improved working, more effective services and greater efficiencies could be achieved across policing and fire, if there was closer collaborative working between Hereford and Worcester, Shropshire and Telford Fire and Rescue Services and West Mercia Police. The Home Office has accepted the business case and it is now subject to Judicial Review. I hope that the governance of these fire and rescue services will be transferred in 2020/21.

I am pleased that the Government has recognised the challenges policing faces and provided increased funding in the 2020/21 budget to employ additional officers with further investment planned in future years. I had already invested in an additional 215 additional police officers in 2019/20. I am currently working closely with the Chief Constable to improve our police service to create a locally responsive and effective service which meets the needs of the communities in West Mercia. I am confident, however, that the work the force is doing to reform will help to create a Safer West Mercia that is able to meet the challenges ahead.

Finally I wish to reassure the people of West Mercia that the Chief Constable and I are focusing on meeting the challenges posed by Covid-19 and above all on doing everything we can to keep West Mercia safe.

Commissioning and grants

My Safer West Mercia Plan sets the overarching framework for local commissioning. This has been complemented by my Commissioning Strategy, which has laid out a very clear process for deciding how to use the resources available to improve outcomes in the most efficient, effective, and sustainable way, responding to local needs.

My Commissioning team have a clear directive to invest in outcomes which are victim driven and deliver the best possible outcomes. They are also focused on tackling root causes of crime and victimisation to deliver the best possible results for our wider communities as well.

In 2019/20 I invested more than £6m across 40 different projects. These investments have been targeted towards supporting victims to cope and recover, as well as reducing offending and reoffending throughout West Mercia. I have also developed new approaches to increase collaboration and jointly commission services with partners across the West Mercia force area and beyond.

The diagram below shows how the monies are distributed. (See diagram on next page).

West Mercia Police Budget

... decided by the PCC and allocated to the Chief Constable for policing West Mercia's communities.

Victim Services

... the PCC receives an annual grant from the Ministry of Justice for supporting victims. West Mercia's PCC provides a 'top up' to this from his own budget to enhance provision.

Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Grants

... funding for local initiatives to meet the priorities of the CSP and the Safer West Mercia Plan.

The Commissioner's Grant Scheme (CGS)

... a ring-fenced fund to deliver the outcomes of the Safer West Mercia Plan. This is utilised for larger grants and contracts and it is usually awarded West Mercia wide. Thematic areas include preventing burglary, safer roads, reducing offending, diverting young people from crime, reducing substance misuse, preventing rural and business crime, etc.

Local Policing and Community Ambassador's Fund

... small localised projects, meeting the objectives of the West Mercia plan whilst adding value to communities. Initial decision making for this fund is the responsibility of local policing area commanders.

NB: A branch of this fund is for localised road safety initiatives.

Details of all the grants awarded are published on my website.

Local Policing and Community Ambassador's Fund (LPCAF)

Through my LPCAF fund I have continued to provide safer neighbourhood teams (SNTs) and my ambassadors with the autonomy to support local initiatives. Part of this fund is for 'safer roads', whereby SNTs can apply for funding to prevent the harm caused by road collisions in their local area. Examples of LPCAF funding include:

- Herefordshire - £300 to the Southwey Police Boxing Club for its summer holidays Fit & Fed initiative.
- North Worcestershire - £700 towards a joint pilot scheme between the Problem Solving Hub / Bromsgrove Pubwatch & Bromsgrove Town Centre Partnership for the use of cocaine wipes in pubs and clubs
- Shropshire - £600 to the Shropshire Hate Crime Perpetrator Group towards workshop costs
- South Worcestershire - £2,600 to the Worcester Community Trust towards the delivery of weekly classes to support targeted intervention for young people displaying risky behaviour
- Telford and Wrekin - £600 to the Leegate Community Centre to support drop in sessions.

I am writing to you on behalf of Eardisley Group Parish Council and its residents to thank you most sincerely for the substantial grant awarded to us.....We believe the two Speed Indicator Devices we are able to purchase as a result of this grant will greatly increase our ability to analyse and report on vehicles of all kinds traversing our highways.

Chairman of Eardisley Group Parish Council (awarded £6,972 from the LPCAF Safer Roads fund)

Covid Community funding

I have recently established a fund of £50,000, in response to the Covid-19 crisis. This new fund enables Town and Parish Councils across West Mercia to apply for the money, which then allows volunteer groups to get essential items such as face masks, gloves and ID badges. This allows them to continue the vital work they are doing in our communities, and support those that need it most.



To contact your Police and Crime Commissioner:

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This document is available in other formats,
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WEST MERCIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL 15 JUNE 2020

POLICE & CRIME PLAN ACTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

Recommendation

1. Members of the Panel are invited to consider this report.

Background

2. The purpose of this report is to provide members of the Police and Crime Panel with an overview of activity undertaken by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in support of his Safer West Mercia Plan and provide an update on police performance.
3. Members will be aware that in March 2020 the Government announced local government and police and crime commissioner elections were to be postponed for one year due to the coronavirus pandemic. By the time of the announcement preparation work was well underway within the PCC's office to ensure the work of the PCC and his staff would be compliant with pre-election 'Purdah' regulations and best practice. Planning had commenced for the post-election period and beyond in respect of establishing the new PCC in office, whatever the election outcome. The election postponement announcement brought all preparations to a halt temporarily.
4. The evolving situation regarding Coronavirus and associated lockdown restrictions also instigated a rapid period of planning to ensure the PCC and his staff could continue to function safely and effectively during the lock down that came into effect on the 23rd March. This approach meant that the PCC and his staff have been able to move to a position of maintaining business as usual as quickly, safely and effectively as possible.
5. The PCC and all his staff have the ability to work remotely and are doing so where possible in line with the Government's advice to work from home. The Commissioner and one or two key staff are attending the offices for necessary business as required. Solutions have been implemented to enable the PCC to continue carrying out key functions such as holding to account, commissioning services and public engagement. The pandemic has undoubtedly had an impact on the delivery of the PCC function, but the Commissioner and his staff have sought to minimise this impact as much as possible. Establishing these new working practices has in itself represented a significant amount of work, which remains ongoing as the impact of Covid-19 develops.

Delivery plan and assurance

6. The PCC's Chief Executive and staff have a delivery plan to support monitoring and assurance of the Safer West Mercia Plan. Progress against individual elements within the

plan is updated in line with an agreed timeline for each element. The delivery plan is subject to monthly scrutiny.

7. The current delivery plan is undergoing a review following the election postponement. This review will ensure it continues to be fit for purpose in adequately supporting the objectives set out in the Safer West Mercia Plan for the PCC's additional year in office. In addition, the proposed minor refresh to the Safer West Mercia will require some adjustments to be made to the delivery plan, to accommodate and reflect the changes in the plan. As a consequence an extract from the delivery plan has not been included in this report as usual. Examples of recent activity in support of the Safer West Mercia Plan's four key objectives, are set out in the following sections.

Putting victims and survivors first

COVID-19 Response

8. The PCC's commissioning staff are holding weekly/fortnightly conference calls with all victim service providers in West Mercia to ensure that the impacts of Covid-19 upon victim service delivery can be quickly identified and service delivery challenges addressed. This has resulted in the PCC giving funding for some of these services to provide IT equipment to facilitate working from home, ensuring contact with service users is maintained and for new referrals to continue. Staff are also participating in national APCC victim portfolio group meetings, to sustain links with the Ministry of Justice and other PCCs in relation to victim services meetings.

9. The PCC has recently been successful in securing £434k of emergency Covid-19 funding for domestic abuse and sexual violence services within West Mercia. This additional funding is now open to services that meet the criteria specified by the Government, via a bidding process. The PCC is encouraging services across West Mercia to apply. The funding is open to services which are currently commissioned by the PCC as well as those that aren't and is intended to ensure the right support services are in place and are reaching as many victims and survivors of domestic abuse and sexual violence as possible, during the pandemic.

10. A further grant fund has also been established by the Commissioner for local organisations to bid for support in maintaining key local initiatives and services impacted by the pandemic. This is discussed in further detail later in this report.

Sexual violence funding

11. In April the PCC was announced as one of 15 Commissioners across the country who were successful in being awarded additional funding that will see more Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVAs) recruited to support victims across West Mercia. The ISVAs, who are currently commissioned by the PCC, are specially trained to provide tailored support, advice and help to victims and survivors of sexual violence and abuse. The £176,000 secured, with match funding from the PCC, will enable the recruitment of several additional members of staff, allowing for more victims to be supported. The resources will be used specifically to support male victims and those who have additional needs, along with ensuring victims have the right support to cope and recover.

West Mercia Rape Review

12. Initial discussions have begun on the feasibility of replicating a London Rape Review which was commissioned by MOPAC, within West Mercia. Conversations are being conducted with the Force, service providers and Worcester University around doing a similar piece of work which looks at the whole end to end process for rape victims in West Mercia.

Victims' needs assessments

13. The PCC has procured an external consultant to conduct several needs assessments in the following thematic areas;

- a. Domestic Abuse
- b. Sexual Violence
- c. Child Sexual Exploitation
- d. Cyber Crime
- e. Hate Crime
- f. Modern Slavery Human Trafficking
- g. Road Safety
- h. Serious Violence
- i. Serious & Organised Crime
- j. Stalking and Harassment

14. All of the assessments are due for completion by the end of July 2020 and will focus on need from both a victim and offender perspective. The aim of having multiple needs assessments across crime types considering victims and perpetrators, is to provide the PCC with a greater understanding of the current picture (both national and local) and how best to deploy resources and funding. Through this enhanced understanding, commissioning intentions will be developed to enable services to be commissioned which better support victims to cope and recover from their experiences and reduce reoffending in perpetrator groups.

Building a more secure West Mercia

Strategy development update

15. As previously reported to the Panel, work is ongoing to develop a series of strategies in support of the PCC's strategic commitments. The strategies are at different stages of development; drugs, serious and organised crime have been published, public consultation on the draft domestic abuse and road safety strategies ended in the last two weeks and preliminary work has commenced on a victims and witnesses strategy.

16. Analysis of feedback on the draft domestic abuse and road safety strategies will be used by the PCC to inform any changes to the draft documents before they are finalised. Headline findings from each consultation are shown in appendix 1. Draft copies of the strategies are also attached at appendix 2 for the Panel's consideration and any feedback.

Climb

17. Following a successful procurement exercise the PCC had previously announced the Children's Society as the success service provider for the West Mercia Diversionary Network. Despite the current coronavirus pandemic, Climb, the new name for the

service, went live on the 11th of May and is already taking referrals. Climb will adopt a 1:1 trusted adult, trauma informed, child-centred approach. They will be working with children and young people (11-17) evidencing early indicators of being at risk of child criminal exploitation or entering the Criminal Justice Service. All referrals will be assessed via a triage process on their level of risk. The PCC commissioning team are working very closely with partners to implement and promote the referral pathways and criteria. Briefings are also being conducted with the Force to enhance the opportunities for partners to refer.

18. The PCC has very recently submitted a joint bid with the Children's Society to the government's Youth Endowment Fund to further expand the new CLIMB service. The results of this bid will be known later in the summer.

Safer Streets Funding

19. In April the PCC submitted a bid to the Safer Streets fund for £550,000 for a project in Telford to address areas persistently and disproportionately affected by acquisitive crime, such as domestic burglary. The outcome of this funding bid is still awaited.

Policing demand

20. At the end of March the PCC issued a joint statement with the Chief Constable on Covid-19 to provide reassurance to West Mercia's communities that they were working with partners across local authorities, emergency services, health and local charities. This was with a view to ensuring not only an effective policing service, but a range of other services and support mechanisms for our communities, particularly for the vulnerable and those most in need. This has included active work by the PCC to ensure appropriate PPE for West Mercia's police officers, staff and volunteers. An example of which included the Commissioner engaging with local gin producers, and asking them to turn their production to high alcohol hand sanitiser. Large deliveries of these products were taken and distributed across the force.

21. The force has adopted the National Police Chiefs' Councils 'four E's' approach to applying the legislation: Engage, Educate, Encourage, with Enforce as a final option. The force amended its patrol strategy to provide a more visible presence in communities when the lockdown legislation came into effect in support of the 4 E's, moving resources to support critical functions. The impact of Covid-19 on demand and resources is closely monitored by the force and the PCC. As lock down restrictions ease all local policing areas are seeing demand start to move back towards pre lockdown levels, following a number of weeks of reduced calls for service.

22. The PCC continues to hold the force to account for their ongoing response to Covid-19 including receiving regular briefings. In April a Q & A session was held enabling the PCC to put questions submitted on the crisis to the Chief Constable. This meeting was then broadcast over the Commissioner's social media platforms. The PCC is represented on the force's gold group, established in response to Covid-19 and is provided with a briefing following each of these meetings. In addition, the PCC is sighted on a Situation Report, produced by the force which provides an overview of demand, crime, resources and intelligence issues arising.

23. Where required, the PCC's Strategic Estate Manger has supported the force to ensure buildings are being cleaned and facilities are in place to ensure force personnel can comply with social distancing. As the PCC's staff are working remotely, this has enabled the force to utilise the office space normally occupied by the PCC's staff. This

temporary measure is helping ensure police staff can appropriately maintain social distancing, while continuing their important work.

Officer Uplift Programme

24. The PCC is reassured that West Mercia Police remains on target to hit its proposed increase in establishment in 2020/21, despite the Coronavirus pandemic. The majority of the additional officer capacity due to be implemented this year has already been recruited. Officer training programmes continue within the force. The Commissioner represents the Association of PCCs on the National Police Uplift Stakeholder group which supports the national effort to recruit the additional 20,000 police officers.

Criminal Justice

25. At a regional level with agreement from all four PCC's, one of the two jointly funded regional policy officers (RPO) has taken on responsibility for regional criminal justice. This role will co-ordinate the Regional Criminal Justice Collaboration Forum (RCJCF) and associated recovery groups, which look to address regional issues. The RPO is currently co-ordinating the monthly RCJCF (this will go back to once every 6 months, post Covid-19 recovery), looking at opportunities for regional collaboration on the commissioning of probation services and ongoing CJS recovery

26. The Coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on the wider criminal justice system. The PCC and his office have been actively engaged at a national, regional and local level working to help resolve some of the problems. The Commissioner has allocated funding and pressed for virtual court hearings to be introduced in April, with some rolled out early to combat the issues around Covid-19. More recently the Commissioner has written to the Secretary of State for Justice and to local MPs to express his concerns around the growing backlog of over 1200 criminal cases, with no clear plan in place to address the issues.

Reforming West Mercia

Strategic alliance update

27. An update on the strategic alliance has been provided to the Panel in a separate report.

Force transformation project

28. The original Alliance Transformation Programme has now ceased. There is now work being undertaken jointly with Warwickshire (under the new shared arrangements) to achieve digital network stabilisation. The digital network must be stabilised and decommissioned before August 2020 to avoid significant additional costs and risks. As of 31st March 2020 projects to achieve this were on target. Over 100 key digital applications are planned to be moved before this date in order to facilitate this. The transitioning of applications and services to the new IT architecture by March 2021 will be coordinated (across both forces) to avoid unnecessary downtime, rework and delay. A renewed West Mercia business planning cycle, overarching strategic approach (using the VMOST model) and ICT strategy have been developed.

Completion of the OCC project

29. West Mercia is now the sole customer for the new SAABSafe Command and Control system following Warwickshire's withdrawal from the project. The single force focus is enabling greater clarity, reduced complexity and therefore greater certainty of delivery. Programme delivery is planned for full go live by August 2020.

Strategic Estate Management

30. A preferred location for the replacement of Shrewsbury Police Station and provision of a northern hub is being identified. Initial discussions and negotiations on a potential preferred location, are to be held with the local planning authority by the end of June 2020.

31. The scheme to replace the current Hereford city centre police station and build a combined Police and Fire Station on the Holmer Road in the city with Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS), has now been cancelled due to HWFRS withdrawing from the scheme. The Commissioner's Strategic Estate Manager is now working with Place Partnership Ltd on an options paper for consideration by the PCC and chief officers.

32. A PCC/West Mercia Police steering group to deliver the newly remodelled estate has been established and is working to deliver the programme. In addition, the Commissioner, through the Estates function, is working with the force to provide options for a future service delivery model, as well as a provider to support the remodelled Estate.

Reassuring West Mercia's communities

PCC's media and communications

33. Despite lockdown restrictions the Commissioner's communications and engagement function has maintained as much community engagement as possible. Work with community groups has continued where possible, with the level of communication increasing to reflect the ever-changing landscape. For example, the PCC's monthly newsletter changed to fortnightly to ensure timely information continued to be available.

34. The Commissioner has worked with partners and used his Community Ambassadors to ensure that the most vulnerable in communities are being supported. The Commissioner established a Covid-19 Community fund to support charities and organisations to address concerns around domestic abuse, scams, exploitation of young people and cyber-crime, which are crime types associated with the pandemic. Messages have been issued across social media channels, as well as through local media. The Commissioner has also been working with partners through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to ensure key messages are captured and shared from all partners.

35. The Commissioner has sought to improve the use of technology to connect with the communities of West Mercia and has developed a podcast series. The 'Safer West Mercia Podcast' series aims to shine a spotlight on areas of policing and services that provide support to victims of crime, by speaking with those at the heart of it. It is the

intention that listeners will not only gain an insight into these areas, but they will also benefit from practical advice. There are currently nine episodes available on the [PCC website](#), as well as on all podcast platforms. Subjects to date have included a new diversionary project for young people, the role of independent custody visitors and how victims of domestic abuse are supported.

36. As a result of the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions and the resultant potential change in the role of the Police in enforcing them, (as previously referenced) the Commissioner held one of his regular one-to-one meetings with the Chief Constable to discuss the changes which was broadcast online. Taking the form of a Q&A session, the PCC discussed with the Chief Constable via a video call. The session was advertised ahead of the date in order to give members of the public the opportunity to submit questions. It was then streamed on social media channels to allow communities to watch. The PCC continues to review and revise his community engagement in light of ongoing social distancing requirements.

PCC's Covid-19 response fund

37. In response to the Covid-19 crisis, the PCC established a fund of £50,000. The fund enables Town and Parish Councils across West Mercia to apply for the money, which then allows volunteer groups to get essential items such as face masks, gloves and ID badges in order to allow them to continue the vital work they are doing in communities, and support those that need it most. Over £37,000 has been distributed so far with more than 25 groups benefiting from this funding.

Community Ambassadors

38. The PCC's Community Ambassadors have had their contracts extended, as a result of the election postponement. Despite the lockdown, they are maintaining business as usual to the best of their ability. This involves maintaining contact with communities and community groups they have been working with. In many cases, they have been able to carry out work remotely, and have utilised technology to do this. The two funding pots (general community fund and road safety) are continuing to be used, as assessments can generally be made remotely.

Independent Custody Visitor (ICV) Scheme

39. The PCC suspended the ICV scheme in March as a result of Coronavirus, following public health advice. All ICVs were informed of the decision and the move was supported by them. To provide ongoing assurance to the PCC on the treatment of detainees while the scheme is suspended, the ICV coordinator has been dip sampling custody records from across the custody suites, identifying any areas of concern and escalating these to the relevant custody inspector or head of custody as required.

40. Very recently the coordinator has held a meeting with the ICV panel chairs to discuss a possible recommencement of the scheme in some form. Feedback from this meeting will be used by the coordinator in consultation with the West Mercia Police Head of Custody to develop options, including the use of technology to enable virtual interaction between ICVs and detainees.

Performance and accountability

Holding to account

41. The Commissioner holds a regular scrutiny meeting with the Chief Constable as part of his role in holding the force to account. As part of the pre-election planning work a programme had been drafted for holding the force to account up until the previous May 2020 election. The election postponement provided an opportunity to review this and despite the new ways of working resulting from Coronavirus, the PCC has been able to maintain this function with a mix of meetings and virtual scrutiny.

42. The following areas have been addressed since the last report. Notes from thematic meetings are available to view on the PCC's website

Month	Type	Subject area
Feb	Virtual	Workforce management information and diversity relating to recruitment / representation within the workforce
April	Public Q & A	Policing response to Covid 19
May	Thematic	Performance

43. Key findings/outcomes from the virtual and thematic meetings include:

- A strategic workforce planning team is to be established with a clear objective to ensure that the organisation has an inclusive, resilient, skilled and agile workforce to meet demand and deliver the policing priorities.
- During the 1st April 2019 to 30th September 2019 the force has recruited 9 BAME officers (4.5% of new student officers at that time). The Positive Action Officer reviews this information regularly and has been in contact with applicants to further understand their journey. Monitoring and analysis of this data in the next 12 months will be used by the force to assess progress of the increase in BAME numbers and the success of interventions or initiatives used.
- As a result of additional analysis into the public confidence survey results, the force has committed to refreshing its confidence plan drawing in more evidence based work that is now available to drive consistency in confidence levels across the policing area.
- A recent review of the victim satisfaction survey highlighted where improvements can be made to better support command teams and help improve the service given to victims.
- Following concerns around Serious and Organised Crime during the Covid-19 restrictions, the Chief Constable provided reassurance that disruption activity has still been happening successfully.

HMICFRS inspection reports

44. In March HMICFRS contacted all PCCs and Chief Constables to notify them that the inspectorate would be suspending its inspection programme in response to Coronavirus. No date for the recommencement of its work was given. The force continues to address any outstanding recommendation arising from inspection reports. Oversight of this work is maintained by the PCC's staff.

45. The Force's Service Improvement Board (SIB) provides strategic governance to the force response to HMICFRS inspection reports and is attended by the PCC's Chief Executive. At the most recent meeting of SIB it was reported that HMICFRS has

confirmed that the force can rely on and refer to public engagement by others, including the PCC, where it has been used to form part of policing decision-making. This is a change in direction by HMICFRS and will strengthen the PCC's ability to use his engagement activity to influence changes in policing for the benefit of communities.

West Mercia perception survey

46. Two years ago as part of the Commissioner's commitment to ensure both he and the force are acting on community concerns locally, and that the service provided by the force leads to increased confidence in local policing, the PCC commissioned a confidence survey.

47. The company carrying out the work do so via a mixture of telephone interviews and field work (street interviews / focus groups etc). Despite the current lockdown they are able to continue with the survey work, with a move to 100% telephone interviews. The lockdown has actually assisted this work in some ways, as a far greater spread of communities have been at home during operating hours to assist in taking part in the survey.

48. The latest, quarter four 2019/20, survey results have been received and headline findings from the results are set out below:

- The majority of residents (85%) agreed that they had confidence in West Mercia Police and more than 8 in every 10 were confident that they would receive a good service from the force.
- Over two-thirds (69%) felt that West Mercia Police were doing a good or excellent job
- Around a quarter (26%) of residents report that they see an officer or PCSO at least once a week with half (51%) satisfied with the levels of policing in their local area.
- More than 8 out of every 10 were confident that they could access the police in an emergency with just over two-thirds (67%) confident they could do so in a non-emergency
- Over two-thirds (69%) of residents felt that West Mercia Police understand the issues in their community and a quarter (26%) reported that they thought that crime and ASB was a problem in their area.
- Two-thirds (68%) thought that crime and ASB had remained the same compared to 12 months ago with less than a fifth (18%) reporting an increase. Further to this, 8 in every 10 residents agreed that West Mercia Police are dealing with crime and ASB

49. The PCC has used the latest survey results to inform a virtual holding to account with the Chief Constable around improving confidence, including challenging how the force can better use the survey results.

Force performance reports

50. Led by the Deputy Chief Constable the force is undertaking a wholesale review of its approach to performance management. It is developing a force Performance Management Framework (PMF), in line with NPCC guidance, that seeks to measure operational performance as part of a wider performance framework that includes: objective setting, risk assessment, people issues, wellbeing, finance and ultimately decision making, prioritisation or choices. The PCC has been engaged and consulted as the framework develops, with support from his policy team.

51. A number of internal performance products are currently produced by the force to enable senior officers and the PCC to maintain strategic oversight of force performance. In particular the PCC scrutinises a weekly dashboard of performance along with monthly summary reports. These performance products are being reviewed and changed as part of the performance framework review. The PCC's staff are working with the force to ensure that there will be a public facing performance product which the PCC can share with the Panel.

52. The March performance report is attached at appendix 1. This report includes those metrics that were previously included in the quarterly performance report, but is in a slightly different format to previous reports seen by the Panel.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Headline consultation results on the draft Domestic Abuse and Road Safety Strategies

Appendix 2 – Draft Domestic Abuse and Road Safety Strategies

Appendix 3 - West Mercia Police Performance Summary [March 2020](#)

Contact Points for the Report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Interim Monitoring Officer) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

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

Headline Consultation Results on the Draft Domestic Abuse and Road Safety Strategies

Consultation on both strategies was via an online survey. Respondents were strongly encouraged to read the draft strategy before completing the survey.

Domestic Abuse

24 online responses were submitted and a further 3 received directly to the PCC's office via email.

Of those that responded to the online survey:

- 34.6% were either a member of the public or on behalf of a voluntary or community organisation.
- 30.8% of the respondents lived in Herefordshire, 19.2% from South Worcestershire, 7.7% from North Worcestershire 7.7% from Telford and Wrekin, 11.5% from Shropshire and 23.1% listed as other including; Force wide, Stratford, Worcestershire and unknown.
- 90.6% agreed with the PCC's vision for tackling domestic abuse is to focus on 4 priority areas, these are; Preventing violence and abuse Provision of service Partnership working Pursuing perpetrators.
- 74.2% agreed with the commitments and recommended actions the PCC set in the draft strategy.

The respondents were asked for feedback on the proposed approach, many of the respondents showed support for the vision set out by the PCC but a number of reoccurring concerns were also raised:

- More support needed for specialist domestic abuse organisations and tailored support for victims with protected characteristics such as BME, LGBTQ+.
- It is not clear if the priorities are all equal and what priority is being given to each area of domestic abuse including time scales.
- Domestic abuse training for magistrates and court staff.
- Lack of input from male survivors of domestic abuse and support available for them.

Roads Safety

137 online responses were submitted and a further 3 received directly to the PCC's office via email.

- 72% of responses were from a member of the public and 20% were on behalf of a local authority (including town and parish councils). The remaining responses were on behalf of community or voluntary organisation, a business or company or another public body.

- 45% of respondents lived in Shropshire, 26% from South Worcestershire, 14% from Herefordshire, 12% from North Worcestershire and 3% from Telford and Wrekin.
- 89% of respondents agree with the PCCs vision for road safety to focus on Reducing Casualties through Prevention, Effective Enforcement and Retraining Offenders and Supporting Victims.
- 80% agreed with the PCC's aspirations as set out on pages 7 and 8 of the strategy.

The respondents were asked for feedback on the proposed approach, many of the respondents showed support for the vision set out by the PCC but a number of reoccurring concerns were also raised:

- Issues surrounding rural roads;
- Speeding and dangerous driving;
- Poor road conditions; and
- Need for tougher enforcement and more visible policing.

Further analysis of both consultation exercises is ongoing.



Road Safety Strategy



Foreword

Too many people in West Mercia are being killed or seriously injured on our roads, lives being cut short and families torn apart. As Police and Crime Commissioner I am committed to see this number consistently reduce.

I will ensure the police have the right resources that they need and I will hold the force to account for the role they play in improving the safety of our roads. I have increased investment for roads policing to improve visibility and enforcement on the roads. This increase in funding and in police officer numbers will help to reduce the number of those killed or seriously injured in West Mercia.

Increased investment will be allocated to projects and interventions with the aim to reduce the risk of harm caused on our roads by targeting those who are most at risk. Road safety is a key priority for me and I will continue to ensure there are ways for everyone to work together to keep road users safe.

Whilst I acknowledge the extensive work West Mercia Police does around enforcement and raising awareness, to change driver attitude, there is always more that can be done. Communities have the opportunity to empower themselves to tackle road safety by engaging in initiative such as OP SNAP (submitting dash-cam footage) and improving their own driving skills through awareness raising and training. I have been holding free driver awareness sessions to allow communities to do that.

As well as reducing those killed or seriously injured, we must also focus on denying criminals the use of the roads in our area. I am committed to supporting West Mercia Police by ensuring they have the tools they need in order to tackle this.

I will also lobby where possible, campaigning for change and improvements around road safety. I will work with highway partners where the physical environment on our roads needs to be improved to reduce the harm caused on our roads. I am committed to using my influence and resources with partners and stakeholders to ensure that this can be achieved.

This strategy outlines my commitment to tackling road safety issues and sets out my vision for delivering a more effective response. It also sets out how I will deliver on my responsibilities as Commissioner in a policing context and how I will work with partners locally and nationally to embed a whole-system approach across West Mercia.

PCC John Campion

1) Introduction

- The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) Road Safety strategy sets out the policy context; the scale of road traffic collisions locally and nationally, and the PCC's vision for reducing the harm on roads in West Mercia.
- In West Mercia the total number of casualties has continued to decrease year on year. However, more recently data for those Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) has shown a slight increase
- Across the national Road Safety Statement (2019), the West Mercia Police Roads Policing Strategy and the Safer West Mercia Plan (2016-2021), three key themes have been identified:
 - Reducing Casualties through Prevention;
 - Effective Enforcement; and
 - Retraining offenders and supporting victims.
- Working in partnership is a key thread woven throughout all of these documents and is integral to reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on West Mercia's roads, whilst ensuring a consistent approach across all counties.
- It is acknowledged that prevention activity is important, with the main aim being to educate at the earliest opportunity to prevent young people and at risk groups from being involved in road traffic collisions. This education should continue throughout people's lives, to ensure their skills are refreshed and developed to prevent harm caused on our roads.
- Other agencies have key parts to play in road safety prevention. This strategy highlights the needs for partnership working to ensure joint campaigns to target those most at risk of being harmed or causing harm.
- The police are the main enforcement agency for motoring offences, the national strategy details its commitment to ensuring officers have the right training for effective and targeted enforcement. This is seen locally and West Mercia Police regard road safety as a priority.
- A number of recommendations have been made based on the policy and research outlined within the report (highlighted in bold). These recommendations are made

to support the delivery of the PCC's aspirations set out throughout this document. A summary of all recommendations can be found in Chapter 11.

2) Purpose of the Strategy

It is estimated that the economic cost of road traffic collisions (RTC) amounts to £36 billion per annum¹. Human error is reportedly a factor in 94% of all collisions².

This strategy has been produced to inform the Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) response to road safety. This strategy intends to;

- a) Highlight the scale of RTCs in West Mercia.
- b) Provide an overview of the key themes in national and local strategies.
- c) Show the extent to which national and force priorities correspond with priorities in the PCC's Safer West Mercia plan.
- d) Provide recommendations to the PCC to aid the response to road safety.

3) Impact on West Mercia

West Mercia is a large geographical area which is predominately rural, with some densely populated urban areas and market towns. The number of people killed on rural roads is more than 10 times higher than on motorways³. The strategic location and comprehensive transport networks within West Mercia enable relatively quick and unimpeded movement locally and nationally.

Nationally, total casualties across all three severities: fatal, serious and slight injury, have dropped by 6% compared to 2016, which is the lowest on record⁴. In West Mercia a larger 23% decrease has been seen since 2016. However, the number of people killed locally has increased by 32.5% in 2018 whilst individuals seriously or slightly injured have decreased.

Slight injury data should be interpreted with caution, as nationally slight injury casualties are assessed as being grossly under-reported. Hospital, survey and compensation claim data all indicate a higher number of casualties than police data suggests⁵. However, police data is the most detailed, complete and reliable single source of information⁶.

In total, during 2018 there were 2,427 RTCs in West Mercia resulting in casualties of which 53 were fatal and 461 were seriously injured. Collisions involving cars were most common and accounted for 72% of all RTCs in West Mercia. This is followed by goods vehicles under

3.5 tonnes (accounting for 6.7%) and pedal cycles (accounting for 6.6%). Around 23% of collisions involving cars and goods vehicles under 3.5 tonnes resulted in people being killed or seriously injured (KSI), compared to 25% of casualties involving pedal cycles.

Motorcyclists are a particularly vulnerable group of road users⁷, especially those on motorcycles over 500cc. Across West Mercia 55% of collisions involving motorcycles over 500cc resulted in people being KSI. Whilst motorcyclists only make up about 1% of the driving population they are heavily represented in KSI figures⁸, particularly in Shropshire. Here many of the collisions involving motorcycles involved people that were visiting and live outside of the force area.

There are four main factors which contribute to KSIs, known as the 'Fatal 4. During 2018 their impact in West Mercia was as follows:

Driving at speed- Speeding offences are detected in a number of ways: fixed speed cameras, mobile speed cameras and by officers. In 2018, 856 speeding offences were caught by officers.

Driving whilst distracted- Drivers can be distracted by a number of different things whilst driving. The most common offence detected by police officers is the use of mobile phones. In 2018 there were 1,118 detected offences of mobile phone use whilst driving.

Being under the influence of drink or drugs- Driving can be impaired by both drink and drugs. In 2015, the law was changed to make it easier for officers to catch and convict drug drivers. In 2018 there were 2,210 arrests for driving offences related to drink and drugs.

Not wearing a seatbelt - Although, the rates of seatbelt usage are generally high, some road users still flout the law. Currently, offenders receive a fine but the government are considering imposing penalty points. In 2018 there were 440 recorded offences of failing to wear a seatbelt.

A number of road safety campaigns were completed by West Mercia Police and supported by the PCC throughout 2018 to raise awareness about fatal 4 offences such as using mobile phones, not wearing a seatbelt.

Alongside these issues, our communities are also impacted by criminality on our roads, including offences related to Organised Crime Groups. Such offences include insurance fraud (where RTCs are manufactured to facilitate false claims⁹), uninsured drivers, and use of the road networks to transport drugs, stolen goods and traffic people.

Road safety is not only represented in statistics but is also a reoccurring concern raised in correspondence received both via the PCC's office and by the police force. This correspondence demonstrates that road safety is seen as a community priority and there are many circumstances in which people do not feel safe travelling on the local roads. It is important that communities feel confident that their concerns have been listened to and are being addressed.

Any future commissioning intentions must consider the scale and impact of RTCs in West Mercia.

4) National Policy Context

The Road Safety Statement published by the Department for Transport (DfT) in July 2019 aims to move the UK to an integrated approach to road safety, focusing on both collision prevention and post collision response¹⁰.

Its statement sets out the governments priorities for improving the safety of Britain's roads. It sets out the context of road safety in Britain today and the overarching scope of road safety activity for the Government. It acknowledges that safer roads and safer roads users not only save lives but also reduce pressure on the emergency services leading to reduced demand.

West Mercia Police's Chief Constable Anthony Bangham is the national lead for Roads Policing. The National Police Chiefs Council strategy (NPCC) 'Policing the Roads Together' has three main aims:

- Safe roads, free from harm;
- Secure roads free from the threat of serious crime and terrorism; and
- Efficient roads that promote public confidence and satisfaction.

The strategy stresses the importance of working together and emphasises that the aims can only be realised through partnership working¹³.

5) Local Policy Context

The PCC's Safer West Mercia Plan sets out the PCC's vision for creating an even Safer West Mercia. The plan has four key themes:

- Putting Victims and Survivors First;
- Building a More Secure West Mercia;
- Reforming West Mercia and
- Reassuring West Mercia's Communities.

As part of the former Safer Roads Partnership (SRP), West Mercia police and a number of other local partners such as Local Authorities, Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue service, Shropshire Fire and Rescue service, Highways England and the NHS had their own strategy with the aim of reducing road casualties and disrupting criminals use of the roads¹⁴.

The partnership placed an emphasis on local, regional and national agencies working together to achieve these shared aims with the aspiration of reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on the road.

Key areas identified in the strategy included effective patrolling of the roads to protect people from harm; ensure there is a high visibility presence to impact on road user behaviour; reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured; deny criminals the use of the road network; tackle the threat of terrorism and tackle anti-social use of the roads.

West Mercia Police have a number of key priorities of which safer roads is one, particularly relating to death and serious injury, the fatal 4 and travelling criminality. Alongside local operational policing, the force also has a Road Safety team, who continue the work of the former SRP but under the direction and control of the force. The team aims is to reduce collisions and casualties on the roads through speed enforcement, engineering, road safety education, training courses and awareness raising campaigns.

6) Key Themes

Across both the national and local strategy documents 3 key themes are identified which are also reflected in the PCC's Safer West Mercia Plan¹⁵. Working in partnership is an important thread found in all documents that is woven throughout.



7) The PCC's Vision for Tackling Road Safety

This strategy sets out how the PCC will work with West Mercia Police, partners and the community to reduce the numbers of those killed or seriously injured in West Mercia.

Reducing casualties through prevention

The PCC will:

- Reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured in West Mercia ensuring West Mercia Police and its partners work to protect those most vulnerable to harm on our roads.
- Allocate funding to commission effective prevention initiatives to reduce the number of young and vulnerable people killed and injured on our roads. Where possible this work will be with partners in a system wide approach.
- Effectively lobby through parliament, road safety groups and vehicle manufacturers to influence change around improving road safety.
- Collaborate with public and private sector partners to deliver a holistic approach to tackling road safety in West Mercia.

- Target resources and influence key stakeholders to ensure prior to leaving school young adults will have been through a road safety prevention activity.
- Give all motorists the opportunity to develop their driving skills and knowledge throughout their driving career.

Effective enforcement

The PCC will:

- Ensure West Mercia Police have the funding they need to keep the roads safe.
- Hold the Chief Constable to account to ensure West Mercia Police Safer Roads strategy and enforcement activity is reducing the level of harm and criminality on our roads.
- Work with communities and partners to understand the true picture of driving offences in West Mercia and the harm it causes to allow for effective tackling.
- Ensure technology is effectively used by communities and West Mercia Police to successfully enforce and target criminals, poor driving and anti-social behaviour on our roads.
- Ensure that community priorities are taken into account when tackling road safety issues, and that communities are empowered to tackle road safety issues by working collegiately. The PCC aspires to make Community Speedwatch available to any community who wants it and it is appropriate for.

Offender rehabilitation and victim support

The PCC will:

- Ensure victims, their families and witnesses have access to the support they need to cope and recover.
- Support ground-breaking interventions and re-education to target the drivers causing the most harm to break the cycle of poor driver behaviour.
- Jointly commission services, such as #MORSE for offenders wherever it is appropriate and in the best interests of local communities.

8) Reducing Casualties through Prevention

Over the last 10 years the number of road deaths nationally has been on a downward trend, however, more recently this has plateaued¹⁶. The national, local and PCC strategy documents acknowledge the importance of prevention activity with the main aim being to educate at the earliest opportunity to prevent young people and at risk groups from being unnecessarily involved in RTCs.

Research has shown that areas of the brain responsible for impulsivity and risk-taking do not fully develop until someone is in their mid-20s¹⁷. This means that younger drivers are more likely to take risks including speeding, overtaking blind, driving under the influence of drink or drugs and not wearing seatbelts¹⁸. For this reason younger drivers are generally more likely to be KSI compared with those aged 25 or over.

New drivers are at an increased risk of being involved in a collision, regardless of their age¹⁹. Data for 2018 shows that around 50% of those who passed their driving test nationally were aged 16-20²⁰. Locally, 23% of all collisions involved someone aged between 16 and 25 of which 19% resulted in a casualty being KSI.

The education that new drivers receive is a key part in helping to reduce the risks they may become victim to and preventing them being KSI. Research shows that attitudes are formed at a young age and are harder to change by the age of 14²¹. This highlights the need for earlier education, even pre-license, not later.

The Government's approach for educating school aged children involves building confidence and providing them with the skills to travel safely on the roads²². This involves developing resources for within the classroom and also outdoor practical sessions for both walking and cycling including reference to the smartphone generation and the need for targeted education.

The PCC funds a number of services related to road safety, including the Pathfinder Course. As part of the course young people aged 15-17 (accompanied by their guardians) can learn essential driving competence, attitudes and understanding to become safe drivers.

Prevention activity must also consider the ageing population as people are living longer healthier lives' resulting in more older drivers on the roads²³. Active travel has a huge potential impact on the positive health and wellbeing of older people and can help to keep them mobile. However, older drivers or passengers are generally more susceptible to injury and as a result are more likely to be KSI than younger drivers in a similar impact accident²⁴.

Information and education are just as important for older drivers as they are for young drivers. To support this the government has funded a number of organisations to provide support and develop research into what works best for older drivers, to enhance services already in place through mobility centres²⁵. Mobility centres aid both elderly and disabled motorists by advising them about their driving choices and finding ways to enable them to retain their mobility. Perceptions of safety are key to encourage people, especially older individuals, to take up more active forms of travel. **It is recommended that any future preventative interventions will include pre license drivers, new drivers and older drivers to target those most at risk on our roads.**

It is recognised that many other agencies have a part to play in road safety prevention. Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Road Traffic Act, 1988, Section 39 to promote road safety through information, advice and programmes, take measures to prevent accidents such as practical training and ensure maintenance and repair of the roads²⁶. This highlights the need for partnership working to ensure joint campaigns to target those most at risk.

The PCC has worked with local authorities on joint road safety campaigns that include a complimentary road safety course, coinciding with national road safety weeks. **To ensure a collaborative approach partner agencies will work together in commissioning, planning and delivering interventions and prevention activity.**

A wide range of physical improvements to road layouts such as, lighting, signing and signal control, junction improvements and calming features have all played a part in increasing road safety and reducing risk and casualties. **The PCC will work with highway partners, where appropriate, to ensure the physical environment on West Mercia's roads are improved.**

Supporting and promoting the use of safer vehicles and equipment can play a role in reducing road deaths²⁹. The national strategy recognises that automated vehicles have a huge potential to improve road safety. **The PCC will use his convening powers as a Police and Crime Commissioner to highlight the benefits of safer more secure vehicles at a local, regional and national level when opportunities arise.**

Employers have a major role to play in improving safety on the roads through ensuring that their staff are properly prepared and motivated to drive and ride safely and use safe vehicles. The government has committed to work with partners in the public sector and commercial fleets, employer organisations and drivers to identify and promote good practice in work related road safety including through the Highways England Driving for Better Business programme²⁷. Around 27% of collisions involving a van or goods vehicle resulted in someone being KSI in West Mercia. **Therefore, it is important that businesses**

are taken into consideration when bringing together key partners to tackle road safety issues.

All strategies are clear that partnership working must be in place to achieve safe, secure and efficient roads. Wider partnership intelligence sharing is encouraged in order to help identify vulnerable individuals at risk of being involved in RTCs²⁸.

9) Effective Enforcement

The police are the main enforcement agency for motoring offences. West Mercia Police have set their policing priorities, which include a focus on safer roads. This priority has a specific focus on disrupting travelling criminality and reducing death and injury on the roads³⁰. Enforcement is critical in putting education and engineering efforts into effect.

The PCC has a clear and established governance role in overseeing and scrutinising the local and regional response to road safety. These roles are implemented in a number of different ways including holding to account meetings with the Chief Constable and local and regional governance meetings. **The PCC will ensure he continues to scrutinise the local and regional response to ensure outcomes are being achieved in respect of local and regional road safety priorities.**

Although not included within the national strategy, criminality on the roads is a significant consideration for policing locally. The link between West Mercia's roads and serious forms of criminal behaviour is well established³³. The use of technology such as Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) aims to make the road networks hostile for criminals or reckless road users and to make it a safer place for communities. Locally, there has been recent investment in ANPR to help tackle Serious and Organised Crime. **The PCC will continue to invest in technology to ensure officers have the tools and skills to proactively target criminals on the roads.**

Uninsured driving has fallen by 50% in the last 10 years, however, around 100 uninsured motorists a month are prosecuted in West Mercia³⁴. Evidence suggests that uninsured vehicles are consistently used to conduct wider criminal activity and are more likely to be involved in a collision, so targeting these drivers can help to make the roads safer³⁵.

The Motor Insurance Bureau (MIB) are responsible for investigating and paying claims of victims of uninsured and untraced drivers³⁶. The government have committed to working with the insurance industry and MIB to tackle uninsured and untraced driving. Under the Safer Road Users strand of the NPCC strategy, it sets out a commitment to working with

partners as part of the safe system approach to protect the most vulnerable and encourage compliance to enhance safety for all.

It is acknowledged that there is a need to be proactive in targeting criminal behaviour more effectively. Active data sharing between key stakeholders such as the police, fire, health, local authorities, probation and the courts will help to create a fuller picture of local issues, as different authorities have a different operational response to road safety and therefore different data. Intelligence is vital in aiding the police to assure the safety, security and efficiency of the strategic road network. Joint planning and coordination is needed between agencies and organisations to ensure this³⁷. **The PCC will use his influence through various forums to encourage stakeholders and partners to further improve the information sharing arrangements.**

Enforcement involves not only ensuring resources are focussed on strategic priorities but also incorporate community concerns. Within local policing teams, operational activity takes place to address local issues but communities should also be given the platform to voice their concerns. **The PCC will support interested community groups, local leaders and concerned residents to develop forums to provide them with the opportunity to share their concerns, share good practice, and to work in partnership to tackle road safety issues together. These forums will involve other partners such as the police and local authorities to ensure a more holistic approach.**

There are some ways in which communities can be involved and empowered to tackle reckless driving behaviour. Community Speedwatch schemes are in place across West Mercia and enable local residents to take an active role in road safety and help make their communities safer. Currently in West Mercia there are 35 Speedwatch groups. **The PCC will continue to support Speedwatch groups and commit to increasing the number of groups in West Mercia.**

Also in place, with successful results is OP SNAP, a national campaign developed in response to requests from the public for police to deal with traffic offences. It allows members of the public to submit footage detected by dashcams, helmet cameras or personal videos that do not involve a collision but witness driving offences³⁸.

The government have highlighted that they are exploring the feasibility of having a Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) scheme which places restrictions on new drivers such as the number of passengers they can carry and they time of day they can drive³⁹. This scheme is in place in other countries as research has shown that increasing the amount of pre-test on-road experience can decrease the risk of collision post-test. However further research has shown that it can also restrict young people's access to education and employment. If

this was implemented further enforcement action would be required to ensure the restrictions imposed are being followed.

10) Retraining offenders and supporting victims.

The national roads safety strategy sets out the government's plans and highlights the importance of training and re-educating offenders to reduce offending behaviour.

As an alternative to penalty points and a fixed financial penalty, interventions known as the National Driver Offender Retraining Scheme (NDORS) are available, depending on the offence committed, and can only be attended if referred by the Police or Courts⁴⁰. The courses aim to re-educate drivers around the offence they have committed and are funded by the offenders who take them. In West Mercia, these courses are run by a third party company.

There is clear supporting evidence to link offender training to reductions in offending. For participants that took part in a National Speed Awareness Course only 5% reoffended after 6 months. Reoffending refers to subsequent speed related offences after the first offence recorded for the driver. This proportion rises as time goes on and after 36 months it is estimated that around 21% of participants will reoffend⁴¹. However, this is still a lower rate of reoffending compared to those that did not take up the offer of a course.

For up to 2 years after an initial conviction for drunk driving, those who did not attend a rehabilitation course were 2.6 times more likely to be convicted of another drink drive offence than those who did⁴².

Currently in the UK there is no offender rehabilitation scheme for those caught drug driving, they instead take part in the drink-drive scheme. The drink-drive scheme is currently under review. The findings will be used to consider a combined rehabilitation scheme that covers both drink and drugs⁴³. Similarly, a High-Risk Offenders scheme is also being proposed for drug drivers.

The government are investigating the feasibility of installing Alcolocks as part of rehabilitation programmes in the UK. Alcolocks measure the alcohol in a driver's breath and can prohibit the ignition activation if the alcohol is too high⁴⁴. Evidence suggests that when used in conjunction with other interventions, Alcolocks can reduce drink-driving reoffending.

As such, evidence suggests that increasing awareness and re-educating those that offend can help to make our roads safer for the communities that use them. **The PCC has the commissioning power to invest in evidence-based activity and will explore opportunities for ground breaking interventions where appropriate and in the best interest of local communities.**

Safety is not all about statistics, it is also about people's families and local communities. The PCC has recently invested in a new Victim Advice Line (VAL) in West Mercia to provide a clear pathway of support to victims. It is important that these services are made available to victims and witnesses to RTCs. Alongside VAL, the NPCC outline that Family Liaison Officers will continue to support families and work alongside victims of RTCs. **Awareness will be raised around support for victims, victims' families and witnesses post-crash, by ensuring:**

- **Officers and staff have the skills to properly support victims;**
- **There is a seamless pathway of support for victims, victim families and witness, including through VAL.**

11) Summary of Recommendations

- a) Any commissioning intentions must consider the scale and impact of RTC's in West Mercia.
- b) It is recommended that any future preventative interventions will include pre license drivers, new drivers and older drivers to target those most at risk on our roads.
- c) To ensure a collaborative approach partner agencies will work together in commissioning, planning and delivering interventions and prevention activity.
- d) The PCC will work with highway partners, where appropriate, to ensure the physical environment on West Mercia's roads are improved.
- e) The PCC will use his convening powers as a Police and Crime Commissioner to highlight the benefits of safer more secure vehicles at a local, regional and national level when opportunities arise.
- f) The PCC will consider businesses when bringing together key partners to tackle road safety issues.
- g) The PCC will ensure he continues to scrutinise the local and regional response to ensure outcomes are being achieved in respect of local and regional road safety priorities.

- h) The PCC will continue to invest in technology to ensure officers have the tools and skills to proactively target criminals on the roads.
- i) The PCC will use his influence through various forums to encourage stakeholders and partners to further improve the information sharing arrangements.
- j) The PCC will support interested community groups, local leaders and concerned residents to develop forums to provide them with the opportunity to share their concerns, share good practice, and to work in partnership to tackle road safety issues together. These forums will involve other partners such as the police and local authorities to ensure a more holistic approach.
- k) The PCC will continue to support Speedwatch groups and commit to increasing the number of groups in West Mercia.
- l) The PCC has the commissioning power to invest in evidence-based activity and will explore opportunities for ground breaking interventions where appropriate and in the best interest of local communities.
- m) Awareness will be raised around support for victims, victims' families and witnesses post-crash, by ensuring:
 - Officers and staff have the skills to properly support victims;
 - There is a seamless pathway of support for victims, victim families and witness, including through VAL.

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³⁵ Department for Transport, 'The Road Safety Statement 2019, A Lifetime Road Safety' (2019),
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John Campion
Police and Crime Commissioner
West Mercia



Domestic Abuse Strategy

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Foreword

- ▶ 15,409 domestic abuse crimes in West Mercia in 2018/19.
- ▶ Two women a week are killed nationally.
- ▶ Domestic violence related killings at a five year high nationally.
- ▶ 20 domestic violence related killings in West Mercia between April 2014 and March 2019.

These are just a snapshot of the statistics which show that domestic abuse is devastating - too many lives are experiencing this behaviour on a daily basis. We must remember that the statistics will only tell part of the story; many other people will have been living with the violence and fear day in day out for months and years.

In my Safer West Mercia plan 2016-21¹, I set out some key areas of focus, which included putting victims and survivors first and tackling those crimes which cause the most harm to our communities. This document sets out my long term plan to tackle domestic abuse. This is not something that we can fix on our own or overnight. It is a long and complex process but one which I am 100% committed to.

We, as a society, cannot continue to just accept this behaviour as a fact of life. Victims, survivors, their children and loved ones deserve better; better help at the time of crisis to be kept safe, better help to cope and recover from the trauma, better support from the criminal justice system to bring those responsible to justice and better action to drive this horrible crime from our society.

Domestic abuse takes many forms and is not just physical. For another person to have control over where you go, who you see, how much money you have, what you wear is not right. Everyone has a right to make their own choices and live freely. Survivors tell us that the highest proportion of abuse experienced is emotional. This often makes it difficult for people to recognise, even those who are the victim of it.

Domestic abuse is **never** acceptable or justified on any occasion.

Through national campaigns, the profile of domestic abuse has been raised across the country in the last few years. Many organisations have worked hard to ensure more people are aware of what domestic abuse is and how they can spot signs, and ultimately support those who are suffering. Successful government ministers have also increased the focus and heightened behaviour in this area. Whilst this work is great, **more needs to be done**. It is my commitment as Commissioner locally to transform the local response and to join up the state and the public.

To really tackle domestic abuse we have to look at the root cause and challenge perpetrator behaviour. If we don't, perpetrators will continue the abuse or make the decision to move onto another victim and cause further harm. The question often asked is "Why doesn't the victim just leave?". I want to change this focus and instead encourage people to consider "Why doesn't the perpetrator stop?".

The cycle of abuse **must** be broken and this will only happen by working together; professionally, personally, as a society, and as a community.

There are many improvements that I want to drive in relation to domestic abuse; I want to make sure that people recognise when it is happening. I want to challenge perceptions, and not only raise awareness of the issue itself, but raise awareness and highlight all forms of this behaviour. I don't want people to stand by when they see domestic abuse, I don't want people to feel like they have no other options and I don't want perpetrator behaviour to continue. I don't want people to have a stereotypical perception of domestic abuse - we know that it can and does, happen to anyone.

I want to see that any victim or survivor of domestic abuse gets equal access to services to help them to cope and recover. I want to see less children affected, I want to see improvements in the criminal justice process, and I want to see organisations understanding that the needs of the whole family must be identified and addressed. I am committed to investing in provisions to achieve this. I want to spend **more** money, **more** effectively, to achieve **better** results.

Part of my role is to hold West Mercia Police to account and I will continue to do this to ensure that their response to domestic abuse continues to develop, and equally, I will ensure that the police have multiple options available to them for which they can identify and challenge the perpetrator and provide support to victims and children. I want to ensure that those on the front line in policing have as much support and challenge to make sure that the first contact is the last contact.

My key focus areas will be around prevention, supporting recovery, working together and challenging perpetrator behaviour. Change will not happen overnight, nor will it happen easily. I am fully committed to ensuring that change does happen in West Mercia, and that victims and survivors remain at the heart. I will ensure that the voice of the survivors and children are at the forefront of any actions within the work that I or my team do.

Ultimately, I want people to have the freedom to choose how they live their life and for that life to be safe, healthy and happy. For this, we **must** work together and we **must** work smarter.



John Campion
West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

1. Introduction

Domestic Abuse is seen nationally as a widespread, under-reported, abhorrent issue which destroys lives and creates significant harm.

In terms of costs of domestic abuse, in the year ending 31 March 2017, domestic abuse was estimated to have cost over £66 billion in England and Wales.

£47b

The biggest component of the estimated cost is the physical and emotional harms incurred by victims (£47 billion)².

17%

In West Mercia for the 2018/19 year, domestic abuse offences accounted for 17% of all offences recorded.

As set out in my Safer West Mercia Plan 2016-21³, I am committed to reducing harm and protecting our most vulnerable people, putting victims and survivors first. Domestic Abuse is just one of the biggest crimes which affects our society day in, day out.

This strategy has been developed to set out my strategic approach to tackling Domestic Abuse in West Mercia. The strategy aims to:

- identify the scale and impact of domestic abuse both nationally and locally;
- review national strategies and legislation to inform my PCC priorities around domestic abuse and how these will be delivered locally;
- identify best practice when commissioning services to support victims and survivors of domestic abuse;
- provide recommendations to develop the response to domestic abuse in West Mercia.

2. The survivor voice

Victims and survivors should be at the heart of any domestic abuse strategy and this strategy is no different. My office recently conducted some consultation work with survivors in West Mercia and the results have been incorporated into my strategic vision set out in section 4. Some key points from the consultation can be found below^[4]:

- survivors stressed the need to be believed and taken seriously, particularly emphasised by the male survivors;
- 87% of the survivors had children and reported the impact of the abuse on their children included; fear, anxiety, attachment issues, low confidence/self-esteem, self-harm, isolation, sadness, anger, confusion, mental illness (including being sectioned) and nightmares;
- help was only sought when the situation was at crisis/emergency point, at the point at which they realised they were experiencing domestic abuse, the latter being particularly true for those not being physically abused;
- 25% of participants would have liked help for the abusive partner to change their behaviour;

- most survivors indicated that it would be effective to work with young people in schools to tackle attitudes early and that more resources were needed to safeguard children and young people;
- more training is required around the manipulative behaviours of perpetrators and the challenging of attitudes in the local community;
- more joint working and joint agency communication is required; both to service users as well as between the services;
- the whole systems family and agency approach that has begun to be rolled out across West Mercia should continue;
- there is a continued need for public awareness campaigns about domestic abuse and specialist services, as well as a need for training for local people, particularly important for rural areas.

“ ... 87% of the survivors had children and reported the impact of the abuse on their children included; fear, anxiety, attachment issues, low confidence/self-esteem, self-harm, isolation, sadness, anger, confusion, mental illness (including being sectioned) and nightmares ... ”

3. The PCC's vision for tackling domestic abuse

To contribute towards my aim of delivering a Safer West Mercia, protecting domestic abuse victims from harm and tackling offending behaviour, I will focus on four key areas:

Preventing violence and abuse

Provision of services

Partnership working

Pursuing perpetrators

Key areas of my strategy are set out below.

Preventing violence and abuse

I will:

- work to ensure that less lives are blighted by domestic abuse;
 - collaborate with a range of partners to identify earlier opportunities to support victims and children;
 - focus my work and investment around early intervention and prevention to stop the problem at source;
 - hold West Mercia Police to account for their service and performance around domestic abuse;
 - work with partners to challenge domestic abuse perpetrators and hold them to account for their behaviour;
 - increase and encourage awareness of reporting domestic abuse;
- work with communities to ensure that the public act when they identify domestic abuse and that it is seen as everyone's responsibility.

Recommended actions

- I will ensure that any PCC commissioned specialist domestic abuse services and the West Mercia Diversionary Network services are aligned to ensure a holistic package of support is offered to children and young people.
 - I will continue to have oversight of the implementation and evaluation of domestic violence risk assessments for children through the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and consider sharing across West Mercia, if the evidence base shows effectiveness, for local implementation.
 - I will work with the Early Help Partnerships and other partners across West Mercia to explore wider identification of children who are affected by domestic abuse, linking in with the Operation Encompass programme.
 - I will hold the force to account to ensure they have a robust data capturing system which allows clear identification of numbers of children in households where domestic abuse is present through the Operation Encompass programme.
 - I will work with local authority and other partners to understand if there is a need for specialist services which address young people's violence and abuse.
-

-
- I will conduct further research into effective prevention programmes working with young men and boys to inform future commissioning.
 - I will hold the force to account to proactively seek opportunities to trial the implementation of improved identification and intervention tools such as the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Harassment Risk Assessment tool (DASH).
 - I will work with the force and partners to develop a programme of domestic abuse awareness raising activity, to include specifically targeted areas of focus and adapting materials accordingly (males, BAME communities, older people, young people).
 - I will continue to work with local and national partners to explore implementation of multi-agency models which focus on domestic abuse and the needs of the whole family in West Mercia, sharing best practice and evidence bases accordingly.
 - I will work with partners in health to share best practice around the IRIS model and work with Public Health and CCG commissioners to explore joint commissioning opportunities where appropriate.
 - I will include perpetrator interventions (both adult and young perpetrators) in the domestic abuse commissioning plan.
 - I will ensure that recommendations from national strategies are taken into account when commissioning perpetrator interventions and where funding is allocated to a perpetrator programme, that they are only those who have been awarded Respect accreditation.
 - I will work with West Mercia Police, Youth Justice Service and other partners to consider the recording of adolescent to parent violence (APVA) on local systems to create an understanding of need.
 - I will work with Youth Justice Service and the Local Safeguarding Children's Boards, to explore opportunities for commissioning services for young people displaying perpetrator behaviour, as well as training for professionals.
 - I will work with Worcestershire Public Health and other partners to explore possible joint commissioning opportunities for the provision of holistic domestic abuse provision to be implemented from April 2021, linked to the Drive project.
 - I will ensure that my team see sight of the evaluation of the Shropshire perpetrator programme and work with the local CSPs to inform future perpetrator provision, recognising that local areas may have different demands.
-

Provision of services

I will:

- give victims a platform upon which they can share their views;
- commission high quality services which are aligned to national best practice;
- work together with partners to identify opportunities to jointly commission services for the whole family;
- challenge and expose fragmented approaches to funding for services;
- champion consistency and security of funding for domestic abuse services amongst partners and government;
- work with the Victim Advice Line and other partners and service providers to ensure a seamless pathway of service provision for victims of domestic abuse;
- challenge West Mercia Police to seek every opportunity to identify the right support services for victims.

Recommended actions

- I will work with partners to conduct consultation work specifically with children who have been affected by domestic abuse (both as a witness and a victim) to ensure their voice is heard and to inform service provision/need.

- I will ensure that the design principles endorsed by government for the provision of domestic abuse services are incorporated into the PCC's DA Commissioning Plan.
- I will ensure that the needs assessment identifies the demand for specialist services working with all domestic abuse victims and survivors, including those groups who are marginalised or hidden within services.
- I will use my convening powers to ensure that learning from specialised domestic abuse projects delivered in West Mercia is shared with partner agencies and that any PCC commissioned services have adequate plans to take into account the feedback from the project to develop service provision.
- I will use the evaluation of the 2015 hospital based Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) pilot and the performance and outcome reporting from the new 2019 service to develop an evidence based business case to support future cross-sector buy-in for commissioning.
- I will ensure that commissioned services have an adequate plan for engaging male victims and survivors and diverse groups and that oversight and scrutiny is provided through contract/review meetings.
- I will also consider specific funding envelopes designed to support marginalised groups, recognising that there may be a need to develop specialist capacity locally to deliver this provision.

-
- I will continue to actively engage with local authorities concerning domestic abuse service provision and if necessary, use powers to influence funding decisions.
 - I will ensure that CSPs allocate a proportionate amount of their PCC funding for domestic abuse provision in their area.
 - I will develop a primary, secondary and tertiary prevention commissioning model which will allow for longevity and security of service provision and centre around the national statement of expectations.
 - I will further develop my consultation work with victims and will work with police and partners to develop a victim led domestic abuse advisory group, linking into the Victims Board, and incorporate the learning from this group into commissioning activity.
 - I will ensure that there are clear and seamless referral pathways between commissioned domestic abuse and other specialist services and assess the requirement of specialist workers in each other's services, ensuring a holistic approach to service provision is provided.
 - I will work with partners to raise awareness of the national service which supports bereaved families of domestic homicide and ensure that victims' families are made aware of the offer through partners. I will also explore opportunities within VAL for provision of this service.

- I will ensure that specifications for domestic abuse services in West Mercia consider rurality and work with providers to ensure that delivery better reflects the need of these victims and survivors, ensuring consistent services are provided.
- I will ensure that I make contact and work with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner moving forward to ensure that the victim and survivors voice in West Mercia is heard.
- I will continue to ensure that a robust monitoring plan is implemented for West Mercia adherence to the Code of Practice for victims of crime and that particular scrutiny of the code is conducted for victims of domestic abuse to ensure that the enhanced services detailed in the code are being provided.

Partnership working

I will:

- encourage partners to work together to identify and address needs for the whole family where domestic abuse is present;
- challenge partners to keep the focus on domestic abuse and provide commitment of this through local strategies;
- educate partners that domestic abuse is not just an enforcement issue; a whole system approach must be developed;
- ensure that partners are fully aware of the rights of victims under the Victim Code of Practice;

-
- collaborate with partners to enrich the intelligence picture and true existence of domestic abuse and the harm caused across West Mercia;
 - encourage partners to work together to increase intelligence and identify those who may be more vulnerable to domestic abuse.

Recommended actions

- I will work with the force and partners to use the learning from pilot initiatives such as Drive to explore opportunities for expansion into West Mercia wide service provision.
- I will work with partners to explore opportunities for closer partnership working and joint commissioning opportunities to achieve shared outcomes through such national best practice multi-agency models.
- I will continue to have oversight of national evaluations of models which look at working with the whole family, to inform future commissioning intentions.
- I will use my convening powers through the Crime Reduction Board to ensure that the CSPs adopt a continuous improvement approach to implementation of the recommendations from any Domestic Homicide Reviews which occur.
- I will use the domestic abuse needs assessment to identify the level of need for those with no recourse to public funds in West Mercia and consider future funding for this provision.
- As domestic abuse is a priority for all CSPs, I will task the Partnership Analysts to create West Mercia domestic abuse profiles to truly understand the complete picture of all forms of domestic abuse in West Mercia.
- I will ensure that all commissioned and grant funded services have an employee domestic abuse policy and that this is written into the terms and conditions of the grant/contract.
- I will use my convening powers, with agencies who are represented at the strategic criminal justice, victims and crime reduction boards, to emphasise the importance of having a specific employee domestic abuse policy which includes a specific implementation plan around awareness raising and access to specialist services amongst all partners and staff. I will also ensure that the force policy includes victims as well as those who have been identified as perpetrators.
- I will create a PCC hosted, West Mercia, Domestic Abuse commissioners partnership to explore collaborative working and joint commissioning opportunities.
- I will continue to ensure that CSP funding is ring-fenced specifically for the provision of the sanctuary scheme.
- I will continue the joint working approach to the development of multi-agency offender management processes, ensuring that processes are aligned and have a domestic abuse focus.

-
- I will work with partners and stakeholders to explore innovative and creative ways in which digital technology can be used to tackle and disrupt domestic abuse behaviour alongside providing support to victims and survivors.

Pursuing perpetrators

I will:

- work with West Mercia Police and partners to adopt a co-ordinated approach to identifying and disrupting perpetrators;
- lobby government to develop a perpetrator strategy, supported by adequate funding;
- ensure that criminal justice agencies prosecute those who seek to control and harm others through domestic abuse;
- challenge and hold West Mercia Police to account to deliver an effective investigative response to the whole family which is the right response; the first time and every time;
- expose behaviour within the criminal justice system which does not focus on tackle, disrupt or support;
- ensure a tailored approach is provided when offenders are identified as domestic abuse victims;
- collaborate with partners to ensure that victims are at the heart of the criminal justice system and drive improvements to the services that they receive;

- champion the rights of victims and scrutinise partner agencies adherence to the Victims Code through the multi-agency Victims Board.

Recommended actions

- I will use my holding to account process to expose and scrutinise the force approach to domestic abuse.
- I will work with the Local Criminal Justice Boards and Crime Reduction Boards to ensure that the findings and recommendations from the review of Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs) in West Mercia are implemented, as well as the 12 key components as set out by the National SDVC steering group.
- I will work with partners to explore feasibility of setting up SDVCs in other areas of West Mercia.
- I will consider domestic abuse provision in the context of female offenders and explore diversionary pathway links for female offenders who have also been victims, ensuring equal and consistent access to services.
- I will ensure through the Criminal Justice Board, that there is a designated local response to female offenders who have been affected by domestic abuse, taking into account recommendations from the strategy.

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- I will, through VAL, ensure that the victim care co-ordinators are working closely with the police to ensure that victims are being offered and provided with their support options through the criminal justice process and that regular dip-sampling of cases is conducted by VAL to check progress.
 - I will use my holding to account process to scrutinise the force approach to domestic abuse, ensuring that it is robust, tailored to need, heavily victim/survivor focused and has a strong emphasis on early identification and intervention and partnership working.
 - I will hold the force to account to explore the viability and suitability of using a range of criminal justice options in West Mercia to inform a tailored approach to domestic abuse perpetrators
 - I will invite a representative from the family courts into the Victims Board to improve partnership working and support for victims.
 - I will use my convening powers through the Criminal Justice Board to challenge criminal justice partners to have a robust local response to domestic abuse perpetrators and provision of safeguarding arrangements for victims/survivors and children.
 - I will continue to have oversight of the implementation of the SARA v3 model and if successful, work with criminal justice partners to share best practice and explore roll-out across West Mercia.



... survivors stressed the need to be believed and taken seriously, particularly emphasised by the male survivors ...



4. Policy context

The Home Office defines Domestic Abuse as:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass but is not limited to the following types of abuse:

- psychological;
- physical;
- sexual;
- financial;
- emotional.

Controlling behaviour is: a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour.

Coercive behaviour is: an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

This definition, which is not a legal definition, includes so called **honour** based violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage, and is clear that victims are not confined to one gender or ethnic group^[5].

This definition was amended in 2012 to include those aged 16 and 17 years.

Most recent research by SafeLivesⁱ suggests that “in real terms, if you feel afraid of someone in your life who is supposed to care about you, it may be that you are experiencing domestic abuse. It does not have to be a spouse, it does not have to be physical and it can happen in any relationship. It can happen to anyone of any background, and it can include a range of behaviour”^[6].

ⁱ SafeLives are a UK-wide charity, dedicated to ending domestic abuse for good. They combine insight from services, survivors and statistics to support people to become safe, well and rebuild their lives.

5. Scale and impact of domestic abuse

We know that Domestic Abuse is hugely under-reported. The majority of cases do not come to the attention of the police and for those that do, do not always result in a conviction for the perpetrator of the abuse^[7].

This makes it a challenge to truly understand and tackle this violent and abusive behaviour.

The estimated cost for a single victim of domestic abuse is £34,015. While this represents an average, there are a range of different types of violent and sexual offences that victims of domestic abuse can experience. Most extreme is the cost of domestic homicide, which has an estimated unit cost of £2.2 million arising from the cost of harms, health services and lost output^[8].

Domestic abuse is seen as a 'widespread public health issue' by inspectorates such as HMICFRSⁱⁱ, Ofstedⁱⁱⁱ, HMIP^{iv}, and CQC^v. It is felt that the pattern of practice has served its time. Domestic abuse may be endemic, but it is not inevitable and it is possible for prevalence to decline^[9].

National

In order to fully understand the demand upon the Police that relates to domestic abuse, it is important to consider domestic abuse "crimes" as well as domestic abuse 'incidents'^{vi}.

► In the year ending March 2018, an estimated 2.0 million adults aged 16 to 59 years experienced domestic abuse in England and Wales. This is broken down into 1.3 million women (65%) and 695,000 men (35%)^[10].

► For the same year, police recorded 599,549 domestic abuse-related crimes and 598,545 domestic abuse-related incidents. The % of crimes vs incidents is a 50/50 split. When comparing these figures to the year ending March 2017, the % of domestic abuse related crimes was 43%, showing a 7% increase^[11].

The increase in crimes being reported can be attributed to better recording practices as well as an increase in the overall volume of offences coming to the attention of Police and increased confidence in victims and survivors to come forward and report. It is important in the context of these figures, to understand that there has been little change in the prevalence of domestic abuse experienced in the year ending March 2018, compared with the year ending March 2017^[12].

In fact, when comparing data from the year ending March 2012 to March 2018, there has actually been a small decline in the prevalence (from 7% to 6.1%) indicating a gradual, longer-term downward trend^{[13] vii}.

Nationally, the HMICFRS 2019 report **The police response to domestic abuse**, recognises that demand upon Police forces for domestic abuse has increased dramatically since their first report back in 2013. Some reasons for the increase in demand are positive and are seen by professionals working in the domestic abuse as encouraging. However, the report also comments that "the reality is that some forces still can't yet fully explain why demand has increased so much, and this is an area in which they need to improve. To plan for the future and protect victims, forces need to understand this complex picture better"^[14]

ii Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services

iii The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills

iv Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons

v Care Quality Commission

vi A crime is where a crime (as defined by home office counting rules) has taken place, a crimed incident is where an incident has been reported to the Police but has not been defined as a crime.

vii Individuals staying in refuges, halls of residence and custodial settings are not covered by the survey

Research conducted by SafeLives^[15] has identified that the following characteristics of victims and survivors mean that they are more likely to have experienced domestic abuse:

- **Gender** - women are much more likely than men to be the victims of high risk or severe abuse;
- **Low Income** - women in households with an income of less than £10,000 were 3.5 times more at risk than those in households with an income of over £20,000;
- **Age** - younger people are more likely to be subject to interpersonal violence. The majority of high risk victims are in their 20s or 30s. Those under 25 are more likely to suffer interpersonal violence;
- **Pregnancy** - nearly one in three women who suffer from domestic abuse during their lifetime report that the first incident happened when they were pregnant;
- **Separation** - domestic violence is higher amongst those who have separated, followed by those who are divorced or single;
- **Previous criminality of the perpetrator** - domestic abuse is more likely where the perpetrator has a previous conviction (whether or not it is related to domestic abuse);
- **Drug and alcohol abuse** - victims of abuse have a higher rate of drug and/or alcohol misuse (whether it starts before or after the abuse): at least 20% of high-risk victims of abuse report using drugs and/or alcohol;

- **Mental health issues** - 40% of high-risk victims of abuse report mental health difficulties.

West Mercia

For the period April 2018 - March 2019, West Mercia Police recorded 26,105 domestic abuse crimes and incidents. Of these, 15,409 were identified as crimes and a further 10,696 were incidents where a crime was not committed^{viii}.

A summary of how this compares to previous years can be found on page 17.

The percentage of domestic abuse crimes being recorded is increasing year on year. In comparison to the national increases for the 2016/17 to 2017/18 year, West Mercia had an increase of 17% compared to the national average of 7% for the same year. The data also shows a higher than national average recording of DA crimes which is seen as positive and can be attributed to the work going on locally around awareness of domestic abuse as well as increased confidence to report to police.

In relation to the 2018/19 year, some other key points are listed below:

- 68% of victims were female, compared to 25% for males - the % of males has increased by 2% compared to the previous two years;
- 23% of suspects were female and 77% were male - the % of male suspects has slightly dropped compared to previous years.

viii Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

	2016/17	2017/18	16/17 to 17/18 comparison	2018/19	17/18 to 18/19 comparison
Crimes	10,790	12,611	> of 17%	15,409	> of 22%
Crimed Incidents	10,491	10,530	> of 0.3%	10,696	> of 1.5%
Totals	21,281	23,141		26,105	
Split of crimes/ incidents	51%/49%	54%/46%		59%/41%	

In this context it is important to consider that these are only the domestic abuse incidents and crimes which are reported to the Police and will not be an accurate reflection of true prevalence.

Some consultation work^[16] with survivors highlighted that in West Mercia:

- 89% of participants had experienced multiple forms of abuse concurrently;
- the duration of abuse was between one and 32 years;
- 57.8% of the survivors were aged 30-49 years, older than the national average but is a reflection of the overall West Mercia population, which is older than the national average;
- few participants were aged 60+ which reflects a lack of disclosure and knowledge of domestic abuse in this older age group, a concern for West Mercia;
- 61.7% of participants had a disability or serious illness, of which 65.5% stated this was mental health related;
- 73% had experienced domestic abuse within the last five years;
- on average, older victims/survivors (50+) had stayed in abusive relationships longer than those who were younger;
- the duration of abusive relationships was between one and 32 years;
- the most prevalent type of abuse experienced was emotional abuse, followed by psychological and coercive control;
- 47.5% of participants were still experiencing abuse post-separation - an important risk factor for homicide;
- all participants talked about the impact on their ability to function in society and form/maintain relationships as well as a range of physical, emotional, mental health, financial and behavioural effects on them directly.

Criminal Justice

HMICFRS have previously shown concerns that the arrest rates for domestic abuse is falling nationally^[17].

In West Mercia, the arrest rate for DA offences in West Mercia for 18/19 was 26%^[18]. For the same year nationally, this figure was 38%^[19].

Nationally, for the year ending March 2018, there was a total of 89,091 prosecutions for domestic abuse-related offences, which accounted for around 17% of all prosecutions in England and Wales. This figure shows a volume decrease in the number of domestic abuse-related prosecutions compared with the previous year (93,590)^[20]. Of these prosecutions, 76% of were successful in securing a conviction - the highest level since the year ending March 2010 (72%)^[21].

For West Mercia, for the year ending March 2018, there were 1,753 prosecutions for domestic abuse offences, accounting for 14.92% of all prosecutions^{ix}. The conviction rate for West Mercia for the year ending March 2019 was 82.5%.

Repeat victims

Victims of domestic abuse are more likely to be repeat victims than victims of any other crime type. The 2019 report by HMICFRS, **The police response to domestic abuse**, stated that forces need to identify repeat victims as early as possible. Out of the 43 forces inspected as part of the report, 15 of them reported that they now use flags on their call-handling system to help call handlers identify repeat victims of domestic abuse. However, 28 forces still don't use repeated domestic abuse flags on their systems^[22].

		Number of DA repeat victims - WMP			
Financial year	Force	Repeat victim (2+ DA offences)	Single DA offence victim	Grand total	WMP DA repeat rate (victims)
2016/17	WMP	1,567	7,147	8,804	18.8%
2017/18	WMP	1,804	7,684	9,488	19.0%
2018/19	WMP	2,471	7,889	10,360	23.9%

For West Mercia, the % of repeat domestic abuse victims has risen by over 5% in the last three years. Whilst this could be attributed towards an increased confidence in reporting, it also shows that more needs to be done to tackle the root cause of the behaviour, the perpetrators. Work also needs to be done in relation to how domestic abuse victims are supported by the police and other agencies, particularly those who are repeat victims^x.

ix Based on data provided directly from the Crown Prosecution Service

x Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

Domestic homicide

In some domestic abuse cases, victims are killed. These cases are identified as **domestic homicide**. A domestic homicide is the “death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom he or she was related, or with whom he or she was or had been in an intimate personal relationship; or, a member of the same household as himself or herself”^[23].

Between April 2014 and March 2017^{xi}, there were a total of 400 domestic homicides recorded by the police in England and Wales; this represents 25% of all homicides where the victim was aged 16 or over during this time period^[24]. In West Mercia, between April 2014 and March 2019, there have been 20 domestic homicides committed. 50% of these occurred in Worcestershire alone. Compared to all homicides in West Mercia for the same period, domestic related ones accounted for over 30% (33%), higher than the national average^{xii}.

Recent research conducted by a criminologist of domestic homicides in the UK^[25] suggested that killers followed an eight stage pattern.

1. A pre-relationship **history** of stalking or abuse by the perpetrator.
2. The romance **developing quickly** into a serious relationship.
3. The relationship becoming dominated by **coercive control**.
4. A **trigger** to threaten the perpetrator's control - for example, the relationship ends or the perpetrator gets into financial difficulty.

5. Escalation - an increase in the intensity or frequency of the partner's control tactics, such as by stalking or threatening suicide.
6. The perpetrator has a **change in thinking** - choosing to move on, either through revenge or by homicide.
7. **Planning** - the perpetrator might buy weapons or seek opportunities to get the victim alone.
8. **Homicide** - the perpetrator kills his or her partner, and possibly hurts others such as the victim's children.

Stalking and harassment

Stalking and harassment occurs not only in a domestic abuse setting - people can be stalked by strangers or acquaintances too.

Stalking is defined as “a specific type of harassment, often described as a pattern of unwanted, fixated or obsessive behaviour which is intrusive, and causes fear of violence or serious alarm and distress. For example, a person following, watching or spying on someone else, or forcing contact with them through social media, might be considered as stalking”.

Harassment offences involve a “course of conduct, or repeated actions, which could be expected to cause distress or fear in any reasonable person. This will often include repeated attempts to impose unwanted contact or communication on someone”^[26].

xi The 3 year comparison was used due to the fluctuating numbers across the different years.

xii Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

There are differences between stalking and harassment and coercive and controlling behaviour and it's important for the police to consider these differences when determining if a crime has been committed.

Victims of harassment and stalking crimes are often vulnerable and have frequently suffered the actions of perpetrators over a long period of time. Many victims who are survivors of domestic abuse leave coercive and controlling relationships only to become the victims of an extension of this behaviour by way of harassment and stalking^[27].

- Nationally, the police recorded 106,905 domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment crimes in England and Wales in the year ending March 2018, accounting for just under one-fifth (18%) of all domestic abuse-related crimes. Over half of these crimes were harassment (54%, 57,840) and 40% were malicious communications^[28].

There has been no significant change in the level of stalking by a partner or ex-partner nationally, or stalking by a family member in the year ending March 2018 compared with the year ending March 2005^[29].

- For West Mercia, in the year ending March 2018, domestic abuse-related stalking and harassment offences accounted for 2,694 (21%) of all domestic abuse crimes. Compared to the national levels, this was a 3% increase in volume. The breakdown of these crimes between stalking and harassment was 55% and for malicious communications was 45%. For the year ending March 2019, this figure rose to 25%^{xiii}.

Coercive control

In 2015, the Serious Crime Act was updated to create a new crime of “controlling or coercive behaviour in intimate or familial relationship”. Controlling or coercive behaviour does not relate to a single incident, it is **a purposeful pattern of behaviour** which takes place over time in order for one individual **to exert power, control or coercion over another**^[30].

This type of behaviour has been recognised in the professional field for a number of years as a non-physical act of domestic abuse and the creation of the offence in 2015 was welcomed by many.

Examples of controlling and coercive behaviour might include; isolation, deprivation of basic needs, repeatedly putting someone down telling them they are worthless, threats to hurt or kill, controlling aspects of everyday life such as who they can see, if they have access to money, whether they can go out^[31].

- For the year ending March 2018, 9,053 offences of coercive control were recorded by police in England and Wales which was an increase on the previous year. This represented 1.5% of all domestic abuse related crimes^[32].
- For the same timescale, West Mercia recorded 241 offences of coercive control, equating to 2% of all DA crimes. For 2018/19, the number of offences increased to 287 but the % remained the same at 2%^{xiv}. This suggests that although higher than the national average, as the national average is recognised a low, improvements need to be made in terms of correctly identifying and recording this.

xiii Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

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‘Honour’ based violence (HBV)

The Home Office and Crown Prosecution Service define HBV as “a crime or incident which may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family and/or community”. There is no statutory definition of HBV^[33].

Honour based violence is in evidence across countries, cultures and religions. Circumstances which may lead to the abuse are wide ranging and not culturally specific^[34].

Research shows that HBV affects people of all ages, but often begins early, in the family home. This can lead to a deeply embedded form of coercive control, built on expectations about behaviour that are made clear at a young age. Often the control is established without obvious violence against the victim, for instance through family members threatening to kill themselves because of the victim’s behaviour^[35].

Perpetrators of HBV often extend beyond the circle of partners and family members who would be considered perpetrators of domestic abuse. Findings from SafeLives’ Insights research shows that:

- Over half (54%) of domestic abuse victims at risk of HBV were abused by multiple people, compared to only 7% of those not identified as at risk of HBV. However, this wider network of abusers is often centred around partners or family members, and as such most victims of HBV are also victims of domestic abuse^[36].

When HBV victims accessed support from domestic abuse services, they had experienced the full range of abuse seen by other domestic abuse victims, and were on average considered to be at higher risk of serious harm or murder compared to those not identified as at risk of HBV^[37].

Beyond the abuse itself, there are circumstances commonly found in cases of HBV that can lead to additional risks. Many victims of HBV are recent migrants to the UK, who may need an interpreter, or who are reliant on the perpetrator for a visa.

- A quarter (23%) of HBV victims accessing services had no recourse to public funds (NRPF) and a quarter (26%) required an interpreter^[38]. Those who have NRPF are not entitled to support from Housing Services or access to Housing Benefits, which causes barriers in accessing safe accommodation and support services^[39].
- The average length of abuse before seeking support was five years for those at risk of HBV. This is far longer than the three year average for those not identified as at risk of HBV. In addition, it found that 57% of the victims in the research had visited their GP in the last 12 months and 19% had attended A&E as a direct result of the abuse. Despite this, only 6% of these were then referred onto specialist domestic abuse services^[40].
- In 2017/18, nationally, 145 HBV offences were recorded by Police. This was a 27% reduction from the 200 in 2016/17^[41].

-
- For 2017/18, West Mercia recorded 7 HBV offences which was a 14% increase than 2016/17. This figure further increased to 15 reported crimes for 2018/19^{xv}.

Although the increase in recording is positive, we still have work to do with partner agencies in ensuring that these victims and survivors are identified earlier and access support available to them.

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

The Home Office defines FGM as ‘all procedures involving the partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or any other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons’^[42].

FGM is practised across the world and is found in the UK amongst members of migrant communities. UK communities that are most at risk of FGM include Kenyan, Somali, Sudanese, Sierra Leonean, Egyptian, Nigerian and Eritrean. Non-African communities that practise FGM include Yemeni, Afghani, Kurdish, Indonesian and Pakistani^[43].

- An estimated 137,000 women and girls with FGM, born in countries where FGM is practised, were permanently resident in England and Wales in 2011, a prevalence rate of 4.8 per 1,000 population.
- London had the highest prevalence by location^[44].

FGM is a complex issue as it is often associated with culture leading communities to believe that it is normal. However, the enactment of FGM is illegal.

- In West Mercia, between April 2016 and March 2019, there was one offence of FGM recorded^{xvi}.

Although national rates of FGM offences are low, research tells us there are likely to be affected women and girls living in every local authority^[45]. As West Mercia is made up of three upper tier local authorities, one unitary authority and six district authorities, it can be suggested that FGM is under-reported in West Mercia.

Forced marriage

A forced marriage is where “one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities or reduced capacity, cannot) consent to the marriage as they are pressurised, or abuse is used, to force them to do so. It is recognised in the UK as a form of domestic or child abuse and a serious abuse of human rights. Pressure could be physical, emotional or psychological”^[46].

In 2014, forced marriage became illegal in England and Wales. The Home Office and Foreign Commonwealth Office have set up a Forced Marriage Unit which leads on the government’s policy, outreach and casework. It also operates a public helpline to provide advice and support to victims of forced marriage as well as to professionals dealing with cases. They also undertake an extensive training and awareness programme targeting both professionals and potential victims^[47].

xv Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

xvi Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

Due to the links to culture, victims of HBV and forced marriage often remain hidden and are reluctant to come forward and access support services. When they do come forward and access support services and the Police, there are additional complexities around pursuing prosecutions due to the cultural links to the family. Victims are often in fear of being socially isolated and 'shaming the family'^[48].

National data relating to numbers of forced marriage crimes committed is limited. The national helpline run by the FMU provided advice or support to 1,764 cases, an increase of 47% compared to the previous year. The majority of these cases (33%) were aged under 18^[49].

- ▶ Although the FMU is worldwide, 119 of these cases (7%) were from the UK which is a decrease compared to previous years. Of these 7%, the majority of cases were from the London area (18%), however, 11.6% were from the West Midlands^[50].
- ▶ In West Mercia, between April 2016 and March 2019, there have been 13 forced marriage offences recorded^{xvii}.

“ ... help was only sought when the situation was at crisis/emergency point, at the point at which they realised they were experiencing domestic abuse, the latter being particularly true for those not being physically abused ... ”

Children

For a child, witnessing domestic abuse is child abuse, according to the NPSCO^[51].

It is difficult to truly understand the numbers or experiences of children who have been affected by domestic abuse for many reasons; we know that domestic abuse in adults is significantly under-reported, that the recording of children affected by domestic abuse and their experiences can only be conducted if they come to the attention of key agencies such as health, children's social care or police; and the Office for National Statistics only collect data around adults affected.

However, SafeLives research tells us that “two in five children (41%) in families where there is domestic abuse have been living with that abuse since they were born”. Combined with information on the percentage of all children who have been exposed to domestic abuse in their homes, they estimate that at least one child in every reception school class has been living with abuse for their whole life^[52].

Where there is domestic violence and abuse (DVA) in the home, research indicates a strong link between this type of behaviour and all types of child abuse and neglect. Prolonged or regular exposure to DVA can have a serious impact on a child's development and emotional well-being, despite the best efforts of the victim's parent to protect the child^[53].

xvii Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

Research (WHO, 2010) suggests that children who are exposed to violence in childhood are between three and four times more likely to perpetrate violence in adulthood. The same research found that women who witnessed DVA in their childhood may be up to three times more at risk of DVA.

The inference is that exposure to violence in childhood may increase acceptance of violence, either as a perpetrator or victim in adulthood^[54].

Our consultation work with survivors^[55] told us that in West Mercia, 87% of those who participated had children and impacts of the abuse on their children included fear, anxiety, attachment issues, low confidence/self-esteem, self-harm, isolation, sadness, anger, confusion, mental illness (including being sectioned) and nightmares.

Data in West Mercia Police is scarce for numbers of children who are linked to domestic abuse crimes and crimed incidents. However, we know from our commissioned services (working with high risk domestic abuse cases), that for 2017/18, 1,434 children were linked to a parent in service. There are approximately 199,596 school aged^{xviii} children in West Mercia according to national statistics^[56].

In 2018, West Mercia Police conducted analysis which looked at identifying the numbers of children who were exposed to domestic abuse. For the 2017/18 year, for Worcestershire only, the number of children affected was 6,247. For the period April 2018 to end of October 2018, this figure was 4,661^[57].

To truly tackle and prevent this horrific crime, it is important to recognise and understand that domestic abuse has an impact on the whole family.

Adolescent to parent violence and abuse

Adolescent to parent violence and abuse (APVA) may be referred to as 'adolescent to parent violence (APV)' 'adolescent violence in the home (AVITH)', 'parent abuse', 'child to parent abuse', 'child to parent violence (CPV)', or 'battered parent syndrome'. There is currently no legal definition of APVA^[58]. APVA is like other forms of abuse between people in close relationships, in that there are differing levels of harm and a complex map of individual and social factors in play, and that drive this behaviour^[59].

APVA is widely recognised by practitioners who work with families across a range of support services. However, APVA is not specifically flagged on police or health and social care databases and so it is difficult to count the number of reported cases on a national level.

Evidence of the extent of the problem is therefore piecemeal and developing incrementally. It is important to recognise that incidents of APVA reported to the police are likely to represent only a small percentage of actual incidents and actual levels are likely to be much higher^[60].

However, SafeLives conducted some research^{xix} which showed that nearly a quarter (23%) of 13 to 17 year olds accessing specialist young people's domestic abuse services were demonstrating harmful behaviour and that 61% of these people were demonstrating harmful behaviour towards their mother^[61].

xviii For the purposes of this data, school aged children are aged between 4-17 years

xix SafeLives data cannot be classified as "official statistics"

Many parents worry that their victimisation will not be taken seriously or, if they are taken seriously, that they will be held to account and that their child may be taken away from them and/or criminalised. In addition to this, adolescents may also choose not to disclose due to guilt or fear of the social care and justice system. Young people may not understand the impact of their actions and be concerned about the consequences so they may not seek help, allowing the situation to escalate to crisis^[62].

These young people will often lack an understanding of healthy relationships, or need help to control behaviour that they know is wrong. Changing the attitude and response of these young people is as important as holding them accountable for their behaviour^[63].

Older people

On average, older victims experience abuse for twice as long before seeking help as those aged under 61 and nearly half have a disability. Yet older clients are hugely under-represented among domestic abuse services^[64]. SafeLives research^[65] also found that older people (over 60) experienced:

- systematic invisibility;
- long term abuse and dependency issues;
- general attitudes about domestic abuse making it hard to identify;
- increased risk of adult family abuse;
- services are not effectively targeted at older victims, and do not always meet their needs;

- a need for more coordination between services.

In addition to this, HMICFRS conducted a joint inspection^[66] into crimes affecting older people, particularly looking at the police and Crown Prosecution Service response and identified that:

- crime against older people isn't well understood, despite the vulnerability of older people and the importance that society attaches to looking after people in their old age;
- there has been little police analysis of the problem of crimes against older people, including the links to disability, hate crime and domestic abuse;
- over a quarter of domestic homicides in the UK involve a victim aged 60 or over, even though this age group accounts for 18% of the population;
- domestic abuse referrals by the police to the CPS have also decreased over previous years, suggesting more work needs to take place to understand why;
- the use of flags is important but found that forces didn't always flag cases which involved financial abuse in domestic circumstances.

HMICFRS are developing a strategy to outline what steps Police need to take to address some of the current challenges and understand the links with older people and domestic abuse better, to ensure that the response to vulnerable older victims of crime is improved^[67].

Homelessness

Domestic abuse accounts for at least 1 in 10 people who require local authority support for homelessness. These figures are likely to be much higher, especially for women, who are both disproportionately affected by domestic abuse and often **hidden** from official homelessness statistics. In addition, women with extensive experience of physical and sexual violence are far more likely to experience disadvantage in many other areas of their lives; homelessness is one area of disadvantage, but others include disability and ill health, substance dependence, poverty, debt and discrimination. All of these can be a further barrier to gaining secure accommodation and ending the cycle^[68].

Economic abuse

Economic abuse is a form of domestic abuse. It goes beyond financial abuse and can involve behaviours that control a person's ability to acquire, use and maintain economic resources. This may include money, food, transport and housing - for example, restricting the use of a car or ruining credit ratings. The government is seeking to include economic abuse in the new statutory definition of domestic abuse^[69].

“ ... most survivors indicated that it would be effective to work with young people in schools to tackle attitudes early and that more resources were needed to safeguard children and young people ... ”

6. Prioritisation of domestic abuse

Tackling domestic abuse and the harm that it causes has been identified as a priority both nationally and locally.



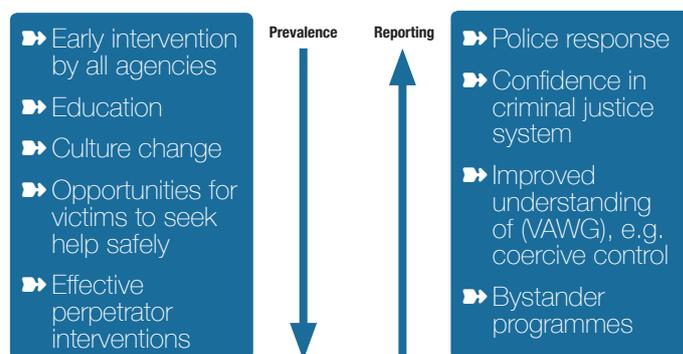
National

At national level there is a current focus and work around domestic abuse. In January 2019, the government conducted a consultation on a draft Domestic Abuse Bill, something which emphasises the commitment nationally to tackling this issue^[70]. The bill has yet to become legislation. Government has also recently developed a Victims' Strategy (2018) which outlines its vision for victims of crime, to ensure that they receive the support they need throughout the criminal justice system^[71].

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls' Strategy (2016-20)

The government's Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Strategy (2016-20) identifies four key priority areas in terms of tackling VAWG. These areas are; preventing violence and abuse, provision of services, partnership working and pursuing perpetrators^[72].

The outcomes that government are seeking to achieve in this strategy can be seen below:



In 2019, the government refreshed its Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy (2016-2020)^[73].

Local

West Mercia Police have developed a 4 Ps plan, using the national 4 Ps framework (Pursue, Prepare, Protect and Prevent) as a basis for their strategic approach to tackling domestic abuse. The plan focuses on achieving the following outcomes:

- ▶▶ **PURSUE** - prosecute and disrupt perpetrators of domestic abuse;
- ▶▶ **PREVENT** - prevent people from being victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse;
- ▶▶ **PROTECT** - strengthen safeguards against domestic abuse;
- ▶▶ **PREPARE** - reduce the impact of domestic abuse. The table on the next page illustrates the comparisons between the national VAWG strategy, the PCC strategy and West Mercia's strategic approach to domestic abuse.

The tables below illustrate the comparisons between the national VAWG strategy, the PCC strategy and West Mercia's strategic approach to domestic abuse.

<h3>HM Government Ending VAWG Strategy (2016-20)</h3>	<h3>Safer West Mercia Plan (2016-21)</h3>	<h3>West Mercia Police 4 P's Plan</h3> <p>Improved outcomes for victims Effective management of risk Improve victim satisfaction Increase public confidence</p>
<p>Preventing violence and abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continued increases in the overall prevalence of domestic and sexual violence as measured by the CSEW and reduction in the prevalence of FGM in line with our aim to end FGM within a generation. More victims are helped to long term independence and freedom from violence and abuse by breaking the generational cycle, strengthening the focus on prevention and early intervention and addressing underlying issues driving perpetrators More victims and offenders are identified at the earliest possible opportunity, with effective interventions in place to prevent violence and abuse from escalating to a crisis point, with a reduction in high-rates of re-victimisation Increased awareness across all sections of society that VAWG is unacceptable in all circumstances with individuals, communities and frontline agencies empowered to confidently challenge negative attitudes to VAWG Increased awareness in children and young people of the importance of respect and consent in relationships and that abusive behaviour is always wrong - including abuse taking place online Social norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours and practices tolerating VAWG amongst communities in a range of developing countries continue to shift in recognition of its unacceptability Stronger global evidence base and high quality data on primary prevention is available which helps to inform policies and programmes at home and overseas. 	<p>Building a more secure West Mercia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use early intervention to prevent victimisation. Work with partner agencies to reduce harm and prevent victimisation. Proactively finding the causes of crime so threats are identified and targeted before they escalate. Working effectively with partners and local communities to prevent, resolve and reduce crime. Delivery a reduction in harm and increased feeling of safety as a result of few repeat victims and offenders. <p>Reassuring West Mercia's communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working with partners to improve intervention. 	<p>PREVENT</p> <p>Prevent people from being victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase awareness and appropriate use of DVDS; particularly 'right to know'. Increase the use of proactive DVPNs and robust enforcement of prohibitions. Identification and robust management of Domestic Abuse Serial Perpetrators. Raise awareness of the reality and consequences of domestic abuse. <p>PREPARE</p> <p>Reduce the impact of domestic abuse</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of children affected by DA and utilisation of Op Encompass.

HM Government Ending VAWG Strategy (2016-20)

Provision of services

- Local partners assess the needs of victims and survivors and their families, have local strategies to ensure they can access the right support at the right time.
- No victim is turned away from accessing critical support services delivered by refuges, rape support centres and FGM and forced marriage units.
- Services are transformed to provide support at an earlier stage so that fewer victims will reach crisis point and need refuge, or other secure accommodation.
- Better access to integrated pathways of support to meet the needs of victims experiencing multiple disadvantages.
- A robust global evidence base in place to support interventions that work and to inform commission decisions domestically and abroad.
- More survivors of violence are supported through overseas programmes, including in conflict and humanitarian settings, through charitable trusts, for example, the Bit Lottery Fund.

Safer West Mercia Plan (2016-21)

Putting victims and survivors first

- Work hard to put victims and survivors first.
- Develop a new Victims Charter, clarifying what services victims can expect, and what services must be delivered.
- Complete a victim needs assessment.
- Make sure victims and survivors get effective services, enabling them to cope and recover and reduce their chances of re-victimisation.
- Work with government to further enhance the services for victims, survivors and witnesses locally.
- Deliver an inclusive approach to commissioned services where all victims, survivors and witnesses are kept informed and receive tailored support.
- Champion enhanced support for the most vulnerable.

Building a more secure West Mercia

- Make sure public funding is allocated responsibly, is outcome focused and based on proven need.

West Mercia Police 4 P's Plan

Improved outcomes for victims
Effective management of risk
Improve victim satisfaction
Increase public confidence

PROTECT

Strengthen safeguards against domestic abuse

- Encourage and support continuous improvement and learning.
- Ensure individuals and teams take ownership of service delivery to victims.
- Seek opportunities for community engagement to raise awareness of domestic abuse.
- Be forward thinking in terms of the national direction for policy, process, CPD and innovation.
- Effective signposting and referral to partner agencies and support services.

HM Government Ending VAWG Strategy (2016-20)

Partnership working

- Multi-agency working in local areas is transformed with improved links to other areas of safeguarding, improved risk mitigation and needs-led interventions for victims, children and perpetrators, supported by the framework set out in the NSE.
- Areas routinely have a VAWG partnership, rigorous needs assessment and local strategy with VAWG considered in line with drug and alcohol services, homelessness services and children's services to ensure wrap-around support for victims and their families.
- More children are safeguarded and more families supported through the collection and appropriate multi-agency sharing of information (for example on FGM).
- Consideration of violence and abuse is mainstreamed across businesses with more employers introducing policies to support staff who may be victims of domestic abuse or stalking.
- There is a greater focus on changing the behaviour of perpetrators through disruption, based on strong evidence of what works, and centred on victim safety.
- The global community will collaborate to build political will and institutional capacity to prevent VAWG and implement Global Goal 5 on gender equality, including the specific targets on violence against women and girls.

Safer West Mercia Plan (2016-21)

Building a more secure West Mercia

- Ensure partners work together to provide efficient and effective support to victims.
- Develop strong partnerships which deliver shared outcomes, particularly with community safety partnerships, local authorities, fire and rescue services, health and wellbeing boards, safeguarding children's and adult's boards.

Putting victims and survivors first

- Bring together and help lead a new Victims Board to ensure better results and consistency.
- Deliver a seamless pathway of commissioned activity, dovetailing where possible into existing provision from partner agencies increasing victim confidence.

Reforming West Mercia

- Join up services and commissioning with partners where there are operational and financial benefits.
- Deliver a network of partner, public and third sector agencies working alongside the police to deliver a safer West Mercia.

West Mercia Police 4 P's Plan

Improved outcomes for victims
Effective management of risk
Improve victim satisfaction
Increase public confidence

PREPARE

Reduce the impact of domestic abuse

- Improve identification of risk factors associated with domestic abuse and quality of DASH.
- Appropriate use of RMPs to identify and mitigate ongoing risks.
- Drive improvements in performance by sharing best practice, addressing learning and appropriate use of those with relevant experience and skills.
- Understand early intervention strategies and provision of support services.

PREVENT

Prevent people from being victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse

- Encourage the effective use of information sharing and risk management between partners.

HM Government Ending VAWG Strategy (2016-20)

Pursuing perpetrators

- Increased victim confidence in, and access to, the criminal justice system for all victims of VAWG, demonstrated by increased reporting of police recorded crime and continued increases in prosecutions.
- Improved victim satisfaction within the criminal justice system, including getting the first response right first time using Victim Satisfaction Surveys to assess impact of our work.
- An embedded robust approach to tackling perpetrators through greater scrutiny of their motives and behaviour with a reduction in re-offending.
- Improved use of new technology and rehabilitation directed with a measurable reduction in re-offending for these crimes - this is linked to the prevention work to break the abuse cycle (chapter 1).
- Greater transparency and accountability of the criminal justice system through improved data provision.

Safer West Mercia Plan (2016-21)

Putting victims and survivors first

- Achieving the right outcome for the victim and supporting more cases through the criminal justice system.
- Ensure victims are at the heart of the criminal justice system.
- Act on recurring concerns about victims in the criminal justice system.

Building a more secure West Mercia

- Deliver an increase in reporting of offences to the police from both victims and witnesses.

Reassuring West Mercia's communities

- Increased confidence in local policing.

West Mercia Police 4 P's Plan

Improved outcomes for victims
Effective management of risk
Improve victim satisfaction
Increase public confidence

PURSUE

Prosecute and disrupt perpetrators of domestic abuse

- Strict adherence to deployment policy and timely response to victims.
- Evidence led investigators, including robust use of BWV and powers of arrest.
- Ongoing effective and robust management of risk using full range of policing and partner agency powers.
- Regular scrutiny to inform best practice and individual/organisational learning.
- Use and apply a multi-agency approach to disrupt perpetrators of domestic abuse.

Draft Domestic Abuse Bill (2019)

The government commitment to tackling domestic abuse is outlined in the draft Domestic Abuse Bill, which sets out their legislative proposals as well as a practical course of action^[74]. The objectives of the draft bill are to:

- **Promote awareness** - to put domestic abuse at the top of everyone's agenda, and raise public and professional awareness;
- **Protect and support** - to enhance the safety of victims and the support that they receive;
- **Transform the justice process** - to prioritise victim safety in the criminal and family courts, and review the perpetrator journey from identification to rehabilitation;
- **Improve performance** - to drive consistency and better performance in the response to domestic abuse across all areas, agencies and sectors.

SafeLives - 'The Whole Picture'

SafeLives has developed a national strategy entitled **The Whole Picture** which aims to end domestic abuse for good^[75]. The outcomes of this strategy are:

- act before someone is harmed;
- identify and stop harmful behaviours;
- increase safety of those at risk;
- support people to live the lives they want after harm occurs.

These outcomes are over-arched by having a focus on the:

- whole person;
- whole family;
- whole community;
- whole society.

NHS England - 'Strategic Direction for Sexual Assault and Abuse Services' (2018 - 2023)

Sexual abuse can and does occur within domestic abuse relationships. Many of those victims within domestic abuse services have also been a victim of sexual assault or abuse and vice versa. In April 2018 NHS England published their five year Strategic Direction for Sexual Assault and Abuse Services, which seeks to radically improve access to services for victims and survivors of sexual assault and abuse and support them to recover, heal and rebuild their lives^[76]. The strategy focuses on the following core priorities:

- strengthening the approach to prevention;
- driving collaboration and reducing fragmentation;
- ensuring an appropriately trained workforce;
- introducing consistent quality standards;
- involving victims and survivors in the development and improvement of services;
- promoting safeguarding and the safety, protection and welfare of victims and survivors.

The PCC is currently undertaking a programme of work designed to implement the recommendations from the NHS strategy in West Mercia. It is important that when considering any actions from this domestic abuse strategy, that they are aligned to this programme of work.

These national and local strategies all echo that domestic abuse must be considered as everyone's business, that partner agencies need to work together to tackle domestic abuse, and that the impact of domestic abuse upon the whole family needs to be considered.

It is also important that the actions which are developed alongside this strategy are considered in line with other strategies which have been developed by the PCC, including the Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) strategy and the Rural Crime strategy.



... more training is required around the manipulative behaviours of perpetrators and the challenging of attitudes in the local community ...



7. Preventing violence and abuse

Prevention and early intervention remains the foundation of the government's approach to tackling VAWG. Once patterns of violence are entrenched, the harder it is to break the cycle of abuse, to support victims and to deter perpetrators^[77].

This is why prevention and early intervention is key to this Domestic Abuse strategy. The approach adopted by government is in three ways: primary prevention, which is to prevent harm from happening in the first place, secondary prevention, to intervene earlier with individuals at risk and to prevent escalation of harm; and tertiary prevention, to prevent re-offending and re-victimisation^[78].

Much has been commented on nationally about the impact that domestic abuse has on a child and how it can shape their future behaviour and beliefs. The Department for Education have completed some research work around this and found that domestic abuse was the most common factor in situations where children are at risk of serious harm in this country^[79].

Significant work has also been undertaken by Public Health Wales around the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs^{xx}) on children.

16% of adults had been exposed to domestic violence (one ACE) as a child from the Welsh study, and 14% of adults surveyed had experienced more than 4 ACEs as a child. The study indicated that adults with 4+ ACEs were identified as 14 times more likely to have been a victim of violence over the last 12 months and 15 times more likely to have committed violence against another person within the last 12 months compared to those who hadn't experienced any ACEs at all^[80].

It is important to consider the wider impact of ACES and the links to child criminal exploitation/serious and organised crime/county lines activity^{xxi}. Research tells us that the key characteristics of county lines involves the exploitation of a vulnerability - usually drug dependency, attachment/emotional issues, poverty or mental health. It also tells us that exposure to or experience of violence and domestic abuse are factors which could increase a child's vulnerability to exploitation^[81].

The recognition and impact of ACEs, and factors which influence how children can be criminally exploited, are being considered across the PCCs work. The PCC is in the process of developing a West Mercia Diversionary Network (WMDN), which will seek to develop a holistic partnership approach to working with children and young people who have experienced trauma in their lives. The WMDN will seek to reduce vulnerabilities, improve health outcomes and divert CYP away from the criminal justice system. **The PCC will ensure that any PCC commissioned specialist domestic abuse services and the WMDN services are aligned to ensure a holistic package of support is offered to children and young people.**

Barnardo's have recently developed a Domestic Violence Risk Assessment for Children (DVRAC), designed to help practitioners; (where there is male perpetrated domestic abuse) identify risks to children from domestic violence; decide whether a case needs safeguarding support or family support; and identify appropriate interventions for the children, the non-abusing parents and the abusive parent^[82].

xx ACEs are stressful experiences occurring during childhood that directly harm a child (e.g. sexual or physical abuse) or affect the environment in which they live (e.g. growing up in a house with domestic violence)

xxi County lines is a term used for the practice of trafficking drugs into rural areas

In West Mercia, the PCC has provided match funding to the Shropshire Community Safety Partnership to implement the DVRAC and provide training for practitioners to use this. **The PCC will continue to have oversight of this implementation and evaluation through the CSP and consider sharing across West Mercia, if the evidence base shows effectiveness, for local implementation.**

It's clear that working with partner agencies such as Education and schools is key to developing a long term, sustainable and effective plan to try and reduce the impact of domestic abuse on adults as well as children. Schools have the capability to see a child's behaviour day in day out and notice any changes.

In early 2019, the government has made Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education in schools^{xxii} mandatory and produced draft statutory guidance for delivery of this work. Whilst schools are encouraged to adopt the guidance from September 2019, it will become mandatory from September 2020⁷⁹.

West Mercia have adopted the roll-out of Operation Encompass, a national programme which enables Police to work with Education and schools to share details of a domestic abuse incident which has occurred in the home. By notifying the school by 9am the following day, enables them to provide a swift responding to ensuring that the appropriate support is provided^[84]. **The PCC will work with the Early Help Partnerships and other partners across West Mercia to explore wider identification of children who are affected by domestic abuse, linking in with the Operation Encompass programme.**

The PCC will hold the Force to account to ensure that they have a robust data capturing system which allows clear identification of numbers of children in households where domestic abuse is present through the Operation Encompass programme.

The PCC commissions the Independent Domestic Violence Adviser (IDVA) service, a service which addresses the safety of victims who are at high risk of harm from intimate partners, ex-partners or family members to secure their safety and the safety of their children. The IDVAs work closely with victims and multi-agency partners to reduce the risk of harm and provide advice and support, as well as a voice for the victim. The IDVA service works with victims aged 16 or over^[85].

The PCC also commissions a Children and Young People's service to work with children and young people whose parents are within the IDVA service. The service is commissioned to provide a variety of support, tailored to individual need. We know that from the data around how many children have parents in the IDVA service, the current provision is not enough.

As well as being impacted by witnessing or experiencing domestic abuse in the home, we know that younger people are more likely to directly experience inter-personal violence in their own relationships^[86]. Research conducted by SafeLives showed that the likelihood of young people^{xxiii} experiencing high severity abuse is no different to adults. It also concluded that for victims younger than 16, who must rely on limited specialist services for young people, the visibility of victims is likely to be even lower.

xxii Unless otherwise specified, 'school' means all schools, whether maintained, non-maintained or independent schools, including academies and free schools, non-maintained special schools, maintained special schools and alternative provision, including pupil referral units.

xxiii SafeLives research covered ages from 13-17 years

Young people who experience domestic abuse do so at a particularly vulnerable point in their lives and the evidence suggests that young people need a different response to adults. The abuse that young people experience may also look different to the abuse that adults experience. Young people commonly experience abuse through new technologies and social media, which can be used as a monitoring or harassment tool by the perpetrator^[87].

One of the approaches piloted previously by SafeLives is the development of a Young Persons Violence Adviser (YPVA). The YPVA model was developed following the 2012 change to include 16 and 17 year olds in the definition of domestic abuse. The Young People's Programme aims to make young people experiencing domestic abuse safer by offering training, support and data collection to a named Young People's Violence Advisor, in each local authority area. The aim is that each local MARAC and Safeguarding Children service will work together to embed an appropriate local practice response to teenage domestic violence and abuse^[88]. **The PCC will work with local authority and other partners to understand if there is a need for such a service in West Mercia.**

The national VAWG strategy, recognising that domestic abuse is a gender base crime, advocates that men can be a powerful force in challenging negative behaviours and are considered an integral part of approaches to prevention. It also suggests that engaging boys in challenging VAWG is key^[89]. White Ribbon Campaigns are one of the approaches supported which is supported by government to engage men to tackle the issue^[90].

The PCC provides funding to the five Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) across West Mercia. As part of this funding, some of the funding is provided to some of the CSPs for a White Ribbon campaign. It is not clear exactly how far each of the CSPs go in terms of rolling out the White Ribbon model which includes creating volunteer ambassadors to engage with other men and boys to call out and challenge abusive behaviour and applying for accreditation. **The PCC will conduct further research into effective prevention programmes working with young men and boys to inform future commissioning.**

The national VAWG strategy has a clear approach for identifying victims and offenders at their earliest opportunity, to intervene effectively to prevent violence and abuse from escalating and tackle high rates of re-victimisation. The Domestic Violence Disclosure Scheme (DVDS)^{xxiv} and the Domestic Abuse, Stalking and Honour Based Violence (DASH)^{xxv} are two tools which have been developed to support earlier identification and intervention^[91].

The DVDS scheme is fully active and promoted in West Mercia. In the 2018/19 year, 381 applications were made and of those, 168 had previous offending history disclosed. In the HMICFRS PEEL^{xxvi} inspection report 2018/19, it was suggested that West Mercia needs to continue its efforts to improve the workforce's understanding of the importance of thoroughly risk-assessing reports of domestic abuse. The lack of a force-wide analysis of DASH quality and completion rates was also noted^[92].

xxiv A DVDS allows anyone with a concern about a relationship to obtain information from the police about a partners' previous offending

xxv A proactive risk based approach used by police and professionals to keep victims safe

xxvi Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy

It is suggested that the use of the DASH is being inconsistently applied across all police forces, not just West Mercia, and as a result, the College of Policing have piloted a revised risk assessment tool in three police forces. Early evaluation of the new DASH, which has been identified as simpler to use and with more emphasis on coercive and controlling behaviour, has found that the new tool encourages victims to disclose more coercive and controlling behaviour and also increases the accuracy of risk assessments^[93]. **The PCC will hold the force to account to proactively seek opportunities to trial the implementation of such models in West Mercia.**

In 2018, the PCC conducted some consultation work with victims and survivors of domestic abuse who had engaged with the PCC commissioned IDVA service. Several findings from this piece of work confirm the need for earlier intervention and prevention^[94]. Victims felt that:

- ▶ they didn't feel that support services were well advertised, and that greater awareness could be raised through advertising campaigns on bus stops, toilets, trains and other public places;
- ▶ promotion of services available and earlier referrals by GPs, psychologists, social services and other NHS services could be available;
- ▶ if people knew more about when relationships became abusive and where to seek help, there would be less need to get help with police involvement when circumstances became more serious;

- ▶ they want to feel listened to; they want the police to take more notice when a crime is reported; they don't want to keep repeating their story over and over again and they want to be aware of domestic violence within diversity groups.

In addition to this, SafeLives have conducted some research with survivors and concluded that local commissioners should sponsor public awareness campaigns which draw attention to the dynamics and risks of psychological violence; and challenge the normalisation of psychologically abusive behaviours with a focus on those who perpetrate the abuse^[95].

The PCC will work with the Force and partners to develop a programme of domestic abuse awareness raising activity, to include specifically targeted areas of focus and adapting materials accordingly (males, BAME communities, older people, young people).

Integrated family model of support

To prevent violence from escalating and reduce the harm caused, it is imperative to recognise how domestic abuse impacts upon family members and consider approaches which identify the needs of the whole family. Examples of approaches endorsed and funded by the government in the National VAWG strategy include the SafeLives One Front Door model^[96]. The One Front Door model helps to make the link between the risks faced by the victims, child safeguarding needs and the risks posed by the perpetrators of abuse^[97].

The PCC has been involved in several discussions both nationally and locally which look at early intervention and safeguarding multi-agency models for the whole family, including the SafeLives One Front Door model. **The PCC will continue to work with local and national partners to explore implementation of such models in West Mercia, sharing best practice and evidence bases accordingly.**

The 2017 JTAI report suggests that 'More thought needs to be given to how local areas can collectively supply the emotional, psychological and practical support that is needed to help children and victims - or families that have stayed together - get safe, stay safe and move on to reach their full potential.' The report also calls for a national public service initiative to raise awareness of domestic abuse and violence as well as a greater focus on perpetrators and better prevention strategies^[98].

In the context of Adolescent to Parent Violence, a varied and proportionate range of responses is needed to create change and increase safety for the young person and their family. Before any intervention is attempted by practitioners, there needs to be a considered approach reflecting the whole family's dynamics. Practitioners need to consider the family as a system and how its members operate together and consider the use of whole family approaches. Adolescent violence and abuse should not be seen as independent of these dynamics^[99].

It is important to consider the role of health based service provision when understanding how domestic abuse can be challenged and tackled.

We know that pregnancy increases the risk of domestic abuse and that many victims have been in contact with several health services before accessing support or seeking help^[100]. Within the £66bn cost of domestic abuse for 2016/17, £2.6billion was at a cost to the health service^{xxvii}, lower than the £1.3 billion to police^[101].

The Identification and Referral to Improve Safety (IRIS) model, is a GP based domestic violence and abuse (DVA) training support and referral programme which has been evaluated by randomised controlled trial. The model is a collaboration between primary care and third sector organisations specialising in DVA. It involves GP practices having an advocate educator who is based in a specialist domestic abuse service working in partnership with a local clinical lead to co-deliver training and education across practices supported by the programme. The evaluation concluded that women attending intervention practices were 22 times more likely than those attending control practices to have a discussion with their clinician about a referral to an advocate. This resulted in them being six times more likely to be referred to an advocate^[102].

Currently, there are no IRIS programmes operating in West Mercia. **The PCC will work with partners in health to share best practice around the IRIS model and work with Public Health and CCG commissioners to explore joint commissioning opportunities where appropriate.**

xxvii The estimates included may be an under or over estimation of the cost of health services depending on whether domestic abuse victims follow the trends for medical assistance for all crime.

Perpetrators

The best long-term outcome for any child (and victim) is that the abusive parent/perpetrator changes their behaviour. An abuser who stops abusing can have a safe relationship with that child, but also no longer poses a threat in any other future relationship^[103]. We know that less than 1% of domestic abuse perpetrators receive a specialist intervention and as a result of this, there is a high level of repeat perpetration, often with multiple victims^[104]. **The PCC will include perpetrator interventions (both adult and young perpetrators) in the domestic abuse commissioning plan.**

However, there is a significant gap nationally in the provision of evidence based programmes which are designed to tackle and disrupt perpetrator behaviour. Any effective perpetrator intervention needs to be of a high quality and conform to set standards. The government support the work of Respect, who have designed a set of accredited standards for any perpetrator intervention^[105]. **The PCC will ensure that where funding is allocated to a perpetrator programme, that they are only those who have been awarded Respect accreditation.**

Effective perpetrator programmes should also be flexible, trauma informed and adapted to accommodate people's individual needs and circumstances^[106]. The Government is seeking to produce guidance which promotes such principles. Perpetrator programmes should also assess the housing needs of service users and consider whether support with housing for the perpetrator would disrupt the abusive behaviour.

This should be carefully managed alongside safeguarding processes for the victim, and child protection procedures if children are involved in the case^[107]. **The PCC will ensure that these recommendations are taken into account when commissioning perpetrator interventions.**

For a long time, youth justice professionals have reported high occurrences of family violence, and in many cases adolescent to parent violence and abuse^[108]. However, nationally and for West Mercia, evidence of prevalence is piecemeal. APVA is not specifically recorded on police systems. **The PCC will work with the force, Youth Justice Service and other partners to consider the recording of APVA on local systems to create an understanding of need.**

The Home Office has recommended several intervention programmes for young people displaying APVA, which have an emerging evidence base. One of these programmes include the Respect Young Peoples Programme, a programme which focusses on interventions with young people who use violence and abuse in close relationships. This includes relationship abuse, adolescent to parent violence or abusive behaviour within the family such as sibling abuse or young parent abuse^[109]. Consultation from survivors in West Mercia recommends training to be provided on abuse towards parents as they feel that this a gap in service provision. **The PCC will work with Youth Justice Service and the Local Safeguarding Children's boards, to explore opportunities for commissioning such services and training, depending upon need.**

SafeLives, Respect and Social Finance have formed a partnership to create 'Drive', an intensive intervention that works with high-harm and serial perpetrators to challenge behaviour and prevent abuse, whilst providing support to the victim. Drive employs a whole system approach using an intensive case management system alongside a coordinated multi-agency response^[110].

The Drive model has been piloted in three areas of the Country and is being independently evaluated by University of Bristol over a three year period. Findings from the Year 2 report show that the number of Drive service users using each type of DVA behaviour reduced substantially with^[111]:

- physical abuse reduced by over 60%;
- sexual abuse reduced by over 75%;
- controlling behaviour reduced by over 50%;
- harassment and stalking reduced by over 50%;
- IDVA also reported risk to the victim reduced in 75% of the cases.

The government recognises the Drive programme as an innovative model, focused on early intervention, tackling re-victimisation, taking a whole family approach and a long term goal of independence based on victims' needs and choices and is supportive of such approaches^[112].

The PCC has developed closed working relationships with representatives of the Drive project and in 2018, the Drive project was launched in Worcestershire, in partnership with Worcestershire County Council.

Funding was provided by both PCC and WCC alongside the Police Transformation Fund to deliver the 21 month pilot. This pilot was originally due to end in June 2020 but has now been extended until 31 March 2021, with funding provided from both the PCC and Worcestershire Public Health.

The PCC will work with Worcestershire Public Health and other partners to explore possible joint commissioning opportunities for the provision of holistic domestic abuse provision to be implemented from April 2021, linked to the Drive project.

Through the Shropshire Community Safety Partnership (CSP), the PCC has provided funding for the provision of a domestic violence perpetrator programme (DVPP) in Shropshire. The DVPP, entitled **Becoming Respectful** has been developed with the Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company and Sea Change^[113]. It is a group based programme and the pilot in Shropshire is being evaluated by Chester University. The final report is due late summer 2019. **The PCC will ensure that they see sight of the evaluation and work with the local CSPs to inform future perpetrator provision, recognising that local areas may have different demands.**

Global work is underway by the government to understand what works in early intervention and tackling perpetrators. In West Mercia, we are working closely with the local universities to evidence the impact of commissioned activity which targets perpetrators. Programmes which are targeted at domestic abuse perpetrators need to be delivered safely and effectively to ensure further harm to the victim is not caused.

The government have supported the use of various protection orders to tackle perpetrators, such as the Domestic Violence Protection Notices and Orders (DVPNs, DVPOs) and encourage wide use of these orders to support victims. For West Mercia, in the year ending March 2019, 177 DVPNs were issued and 145 DVPOs were granted^[114]. When comparing these to the numbers of crimes for the same year, this figure is low.

The new draft Domestic Abuse Bill also proposes to introduce the use of a new Domestic Abuse Protection Notice and Order (DAPN and DAPO) which will allow criminal sanctions to be implemented for breaches of the orders, replacing the DVPN and DVPO^[115].

Female Genital Mutilation Protection Orders are another example of orders to protect victims. The FGM orders were introduced in 2015 and aim to “protect a girl at risk of FGM or one against whom an FGM offence has been committed”^[116].

We know that early intervention in stalking cases is important to break the cycle of obsession and fixation. By recognising stalking behaviours and enforcing prohibitive measures to stop them, front-line officers can protect victims at the earliest possible stage. In 2019, a new Stalking Protection Order (SPO) was developed. The SPO is designed to improve the safety of all stalking victims by giving police the authority to address the danger that perpetrators pose while they gather more evidence. SPOs will allow police to apply to restrict perpetrators actions, for example stopping them from contacting or getting to close to their victim. They could even require stalkers to be psychologically assessed or to attend rehabilitation programmes to help prevent reoffending^[117].

The government want to see increases in the range of domestic abuse related protection orders being used across the country^[118].

“ ... more joint working and joint agency communication is required; both to service users as well as between the services ... ”

8. Provision of services

Since 2014, PCCs have had devolved responsibility of the provision of support services to victims of crime on a local level from the Ministry of Justice^[119], recognising that local areas are better placed to assess need and design good quality, effective service provision^[120].

Details of the funding provided specifically for domestic abuse by the PCC in West Mercia in 2019/20 can be seen in the table on page 40.

There is no generic approach to providing services for victims of violence or abuse and the provision provided should meet the needs of the diverse range of victims whether long term residents of that area or victims who have moved in more recently^[121].

When thinking about how children who have been affected by domestic abuse can best be supported, it is important not to assume that the level of impact is greater if they have directly witnessed or experienced it. We also need to consider how we support those children who aren't coming to the attention of any agency and are suffering in silence. **The PCC will work with partners to conduct consultation work specifically with children who have been affected by domestic abuse (both as a witness and a victim) to ensure their voice is heard and to inform service provision/ need.**

When commissioning services to tackle and disrupt domestic abuse, best practice has been identified by government as local areas who take a strategic approach to this responsibility and wish to see the following replicated across the country^[122]:

- carry out evidence-based assessments of need, drawing on the best available data, and taking into account the particular needs of BME women and those with complex needs;
- base commissioning on their local needs assessment and the best available evidence of what works, innovating where necessary to meet new or complex challenges;
- pool budgets across different agencies to make best use of available resources;
- design coherent pathways of support and incorporating innovative approaches to early intervention, including support for all family members, including children;
- involve local third sector organisations in commissioning, recognising that they have important insight into victims' needs, including those from BME backgrounds;
- show strong leadership and prioritisation of VAWG, supported by clear local accountability for service provision;
- know that victims may travel far from home when fleeing violence, so ensure their provision is open to all (recognising that some women from their own area are likely to seek support elsewhere);

Service - 2019/20 funding	Description	PCC Funding	Area
IDVA - Independent Domestic Violence Advisor	Provision of community and hospital based IDVAs	£558,260	West Mercia
Children and Young People's service	Deliver interventions designed to support children and young people who have been affected by domestic abuse	£39,570	West Mercia
Domestic Abuse resource - VAL	To provide a specialist domestic abuse resource to co-locate within the VAL, providing specialist support and advice	£45,000	West Mercia
Drive	To provide a team of Service and Case Managers, working with high risk domestic abuse perpetrators	£114,121 (contribution to a larger pot)	Worcestershire
Sanctuary Provision	Provision of security equipment designed to keep victims safer in home	£10,000	Telford & Wrekin (CSP)
		£3,000	Shropshire (CSP)
Inspiring Families	A programme which works with families where	£7,550	Herefordshire (CSP)
White Ribbon		£2,500	Telford & Wrekin (CSP)
Domestic Abuse training	Training & awareness for professionals	£1,530	Shropshire (CSP)
Domestic Abuse Helpline	Contribute towards provision of a 24 hour domestic abuse helpline for West Mercia	£5,000	Shropshire (CSP)
Domestic Abuse Risk Assessment for Children (DARAC)	Contribute towards training for the implementation of an evidence based assessment tool to be used with children affected by domestic abuse	£3,000	Shropshire (CSP)
Totals		£789,531	

-
- ▶ collaborate across local authority and service boundaries, recognising that provision must be flexible to meet victim's needs.

The PCC will ensure that the above design principles are incorporated into the PCC's DA Commissioning Plan.

The PCC has commissioned several victim and offender needs assessments including domestic abuse. These needs assessments are due to be completed in 2019 and will inform future service provision. **The PCC will ensure that the needs assessment identifies the demand for specialist services working with all domestic abuse victims and survivors, including those groups who are marginalised or hidden within services.**

The PCC is also working with Worcestershire County Council to understand and implement the learning from their recently completed (2019) pilot project which provided support to BAME communities who have been affected by domestic abuse. The feedback gave a real insight into how service users accessed services, what their support needs were and how they viewed current service provision.

One of the main points of feedback from this report was that language was a barrier to accessing services and that communication, publicity and support materials should be available in various languages to encourage support. Social media and the internet were suggested as common areas where services could be promoted. There were also suggestions that support services needed to adapt to ensure that they had an understanding of various cultures and how they can tailor their service offer accordingly^[123].

The PCC will use his convening powers to ensure that learning from the project is shared with partner agencies and that any PCC commissioned services have adequate plans to take into account the feedback from the project to develop service provision.

In 2019, the IDVA service was re-commissioned and along with a significant uplift in funding, the service now provides IDVA's in hospital based setting. Previous research conducted by SafeLives found that hospital based IDVAs were; more likely to engage with those groups of victims who may be less visible to services (including those with high levels of complex or multiple needs), more likely to reach very vulnerable victims and more likely to identify victims earlier^[124].

Previously, the PCC trialled hospital IDVA's (HIDVA) in Worcestershire in 2015 and the evaluation confirmed that the specialist support offered could unpick more risk factors than was possible for health professionals. This is most likely due to the level of experience and knowledge the specialist had in relation to domestic violence and abuse and also because the HIDVA is dedicated solely to this type of work. Using a survivor's case study, the evaluation concluded that the cost of a HIDVA supported case was approximately £13,700 compared to £259,000 for a non HIDVA supported case^[125]. **The PCC will use this evaluation and the performance and outcome reporting from the new service to develop an evidence based business case to support future cross-sector buy-in for commissioning.**

Feedback from the PCC consultation work with victims and survivors who had used the IDVA service in West Mercia showed that men felt that they were poorly represented in the field as they felt 'there is a gender bias and that services need to focus on engaging men and other diverse groups'^[126]. **The PCC will ensure that commissioned services have an adequate plan for engaging male victims and survivors and diverse groups and that oversight and scrutiny is provided through contract/review meetings.**

The PCC will consider specific funding envelopes designed to support marginalised groups, recognising that there may be a need to develop specialist capacity locally to deliver this provision.

Currently in West Mercia, several of the local authorities provide funding for domestic abuse support services, although there is no current statutory requirement placed on them for this provision^[127]. Although the IDVAs work with high risk victims, the PCC works closely with the local authorities in West Mercia to ensure that support services for all victims of domestic abuse are easily accessible and that pathways of support are coherent, particularly as the IDVA role is intended to be a short-term, high-intensity level of support. Often, referrals from IDVA are made to onward support services so it is important for the PCC to have oversight of funding and service provision.

The government is currently conducting a consultation on a new statutory duty which would be placed on local authorities to provide support that meets the diverse needs of victims of domestic abuse and their children (in accommodation based services), ensuring they have access to provision that is right for them^[128].

The PCC will continue to actively engage with local authorities around domestic abuse service provision and if necessary, use powers to influence funding decisions.

Funding is provided by the PCC to Community Safety Partnerships in West Mercia to support their statutory requirements and priorities. As we have seen earlier in this document, the CSPs across West Mercia have all identified domestic abuse as a priority. **The PCC will ensure that CSPs allocate a proportionate amount of their PCC funding for domestic abuse provision in their area.**

Due to the increase in reporting of domestic abuse, additional pressure has been placed on victims' services and quite often, those services focus on high risk victims and crisis interventions. We know from analysing PCC commissioned services as well as police reports that demand is ever increasing. The government is clear that more must be done to reform services to support earlier models of intervention with victims, perpetrators and their families, at the same time as maintaining crisis provision. The national landscape for funding for domestic abuse is also fragmented. Many areas struggle with disparate local funding streams, short-term funding and disjointed local commissioning practices. This can make it difficult for victims to access services and for those who can access services, provision can be sporadic and unequal^[129].

The Home Office have produced a National Statement of Expectations (NSE) which sets out what local areas need to put in place to ensure their response to VAWG issues is as collaborative, robust and effective as it can be so that all victims and survivors can get the help they need^[130].

The expectation is that services:

- ▶ put the victim at the centre of service delivery;
- ▶ have a clear focus on perpetrators in order to keep victims safe;
- ▶ take a strategic, system-wide approach to commissioning acknowledging the gendered nature of VAWG;
- ▶ are locally led and safeguard individuals at every point;
- ▶ raise local awareness of the issues and involve, engage and empower communities to seek, design and deliver solutions to prevent VAWG.

The PCC will develop a primary, secondary and tertiary prevention commissioning model which will allow for longevity and security of service provision and centre around the national statement of expectations.

In 2019, the PCC decided to conduct further consultation work with domestic abuse victims and survivors and has commissioned a further piece of consultation work with domestic abuse victims across West Mercia. The purpose of this work is to understand the landscape better and seek the views and thoughts of victims and survivors.

The PCC will further develop consultation work with victims and will work with Police and partners to develop a victim led domestic abuse advisory group, linking into the Victims Board, and incorporate the learning from this group into commissioning activity.

Homelessness

Under the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002, a person has a priority need for housing provision if they are vulnerable as a result of having to leave accommodation because of violence from another person, or threats of violence from another person that are likely to be carried out^[131].

For victims at risk from highly dangerous perpetrators, refuges will usually be the most appropriate choice. Refuges provide key short term, intensive support for those who flee from abuse. Given the intensity of the support and the vulnerability of the victims, attention should be paid to the length of time they spend in a refuge^[132].

In 2019, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) issued a consultation on the government's proposals for a new approach to support victims of domestic abuse and their children in accommodation-based services in England. The consultation proposed the introduction of a statutory duty on local authorities to provide support that meets the diverse needs of victims of domestic abuse and their children, ensuring they have access to provision that is right for them^[133].

The consultation also suggested the development of Local Partnership Boards, multi-agency partnership boards whose focus is on the needs of victims of domestic abuse and their children. These LPBs would include PCC representation^[134].

Substance misuse

We know that there is an increased prevalence of substance misuse where domestic abuse is present. Research by SafeLives shows that at least 1 in 10 victims of domestic abuse have substance misuse issues themselves although this figure is expected to be below the true reflection^[135]. Victims may use substances as a coping mechanism and perpetrators may use them as a form of coercion and control. Domestic abuse perpetration can arise from withdrawal from substances and disputes about buying substances^[136].

Responses from the draft domestic abuse consultation suggested that women experiencing domestic abuse are more likely to require multi-agency support and that staff in substance misuse services should be better trained in how to use referral pathways to each other's services effectively^[137].

In 2019, the PCC and the Force launched the new Victim Advice Line (VAL), a free and confidential service to anyone who has been impacted by crime. This transformational project was led by the PCC with the aim of enabling victims and survivors to have a coordinated, single point of contact for whom they can talk to and get advice and support without having to keep re-telling their story over and over again.

VAL is working closely with specialist services, including local domestic abuse support services to ensure that victims and survivors of domestic abuse can access the specialist support that they need in a timely way. The PCC has also provided funding for specialist domestic abuse resource to be co-located within VAL.

As part of the PCC led transformation programme, a new role of Head of Victim Services was created and appointed to. **The PCC will ensure that there are clear referral pathways between commissioned domestic abuse and other specialist services and assess the requirement of specialist workers in each other's services, ensuring a holistic approach to service provision is provided.**

The government have committed to providing support not just for victims, but for their families and have provided extra funding to the Ministry of Justice's national Homicide Service as well as the organisation Advocacy After Fatal Domestic Abuse to increase awareness of provision of advocacy for bereaved families and ensure that they are supported to contribute towards Domestic Homicide Reviews (explored later in this document)^[138]. **The PCC will ensure that partners are aware that this is a national service and ensure that victims' families are made aware of the offer through partners. The PCC will explore opportunities within the VAL for provision of this service.**

Isolation is one of the key factors experienced by victims in an abusive relationship. In West Mercia, our victims told us that they felt they had lost their voice and felt isolated in their abusive relationships. Isolation and lack of support were also key findings from the recent National Rural Crime Network (NRCN) report into domestic abuse in rural areas^[139].

Other findings from the report indicated several key concerning factors which are:

- abuse lasts, on average, 25% longer in the most rural areas;
- the policing response is largely inadequate;
- the more rural the setting, the higher the risk of harm;
- rurality and isolation are deliberately used as weapons by abusers;
- close-knit rural communities facilitate abuse;
- traditional, patriarchal communities control and subjugate women;
- support services are scarce - less available, less visible and less effective;
- retreating rural resources make help and escape harder;
- the short-term, often hand-to-mouth funding model has created competing and fragmented service provision;
- an endemic bias against rural communities leads to serious gaps in response and support.

West Mercia has a diverse geographical area which includes rurality. Herefordshire and Shropshire are both classified as **rural** as defined by the Office of National Statistics^[140]. It is important to consider the findings from the above NRCN report when understanding how to support domestic abuse victims and disrupt perpetrator behaviour in West Mercia.

The PCC will ensure that specifications for domestic abuse and victim services in West Mercia consider rurality and work with providers to ensure that delivery better reflects the need of these victims and survivors, ensuring consistent services are provided.

The government have also committed to appointing a Domestic Abuse Commissioner, Nicole Jacobs, whose role will be to provide public leadership on domestic abuse issues and play a key role in overseeing and monitoring provision of domestic abuse services in England and Wales. Nicole's role will be critical in ensuring consistency and shining a light on both effective and poor practice, holding those delivering such services to account^[141]. **The PCC will ensure that they make contact and work with the Domestic Abuse Commissioner moving forward to ensure that the victim and survivors voice in West Mercia is heard.**

The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime is a statutory government document which sets out the services which must be provided to victims of crime by organisations in England and Wales. It forms a key part of the wider government strategy to transform the criminal justice system by putting victims first. Under the code, victims of domestic violence are entitled to receive 'enhanced services' when reporting a crime. Enhanced services for these victims include more timely updates about their case, access to special measure in court and referrals to specialist organisations^[142]. Putting victims first is a key priority set out in the West Mercia PCC Safer West Mercia Plan. **The PCC will continue to ensure that a robust monitoring plan is implemented and that particular scrutiny of the code is conducted for victims of domestic abuse to ensure that these enhanced services are being provided.**

In 2018, the government developed the first Victims Strategy, a cross government strategy which sets out a criminal justice system wide response to improving the support offered to victims of crime and incorporates actions from all criminal justice agencies, including the Police, Crown Prosecution Service and courts^[143].

The Victims' Strategy sets out that victims need:

- ▶ timely and accurate information and communication;
- ▶ fair treatment during the justice process;
- ▶ effective multi-agency working;
- ▶ professional, targeted victims' services.

One of the objectives from the strategy is to roll out a new framework to improve the criminal justice response and support for domestic abuse cases. This has been developed and the West Midlands Crown Prosecution Service have co-ordinated a multi-agency forum designed to ensure the framework is implemented in the West Midlands area, of which West Mercia is included. Through the Victims Board, the PCC has adopted the governance for the implementation of the best practice framework and has regular oversight of the implementation through this board.

Many victims of crime experience a lack of consistent information, along with an uncoordinated approach which can make the whole process of seeking support frustrating, reducing the positive impact upon commissioned services. Providing PCCs with commissioning responsibilities has enabled services to adapt to local victim needs^[144].

The government suggest that there are some really positive interactions between police and victims, but recognise that there is no consistent training across forces dealing with victims, particularly where specialist skills are required, such as domestic abuse^[145]. Domestic Abuse Matters is an innovative training programme which has been developed by the College of Policing with SafeLives and includes evaluation of local delivery^[146].

In 2018, West Mercia commenced the roll out of DA Matters training to all officers, with a target achievement rate of 75%. This is a rolling programme of training. The Force Learning and Development team have been trained in delivering this programme to ensure sustainability. Responses from the domestic abuse bill consultation advised that effectiveness of training should be monitored or assessed and that any training should incorporate an understanding of how domestic abuse affects groups of people differently^[147]. West Mercia have also developed DA Matters 'champions' with the aim of having one on every shift, providing specialist expertise to colleagues in domestic abuse cases. This will be scrutinised as part of the PCC holding to account process.

“ ... 25% of participants would have liked help for the abusive partner to change their behaviour ... ”

9. Partnership working

No single agency can tackle domestic abuse alone.

Multi-agency working has had a positive impact on tackling domestic abuse and it is a model which the government wish to see developed. Tackling domestic abuse requires a number of organisations in both the statutory services and voluntary and community sector services to work together^[148]. The NSE also sets out guidelines to ensure that local commissioners work in partnership to provide services.

It is becoming more and more important that we look at a 'whole family approach' - no single agency can tackle domestic abuse on their own and domestic abuse needs to be seen as **everyone's business**^[149]. We need to consider how we can work with agencies better to ensure that we are supporting victims and children as well as challenging and disrupting perpetrator behaviour. Many agencies themselves have adopted their own domestic abuse policies and conduct regular domestic abuse awareness training.

Although there are some predictive factors which can be linked with a higher risk of becoming a victim as explained previously in this strategy, we must continue to increase opportunities for victims to come forward and to work alongside local agencies and organisations to share information and best practice on VAWG issues^[150].

In West Mercia, a number of multi-agency information sharing arrangements are in place such as MARAC^{xxviii} and MASH^{xxix}. In addition to this, some local areas in West Mercia have adopted daily domestic abuse meetings where key agencies discuss domestic abuse incidents which

have occurred overnight and put plans of action into place to disrupt behaviour and support victims and children.

However, a recent HIMCFRS PEEL inspection report for West Mercia identified that the force should review the MARAC referral process and consider the need for greater partner involvement in the decision making process to ensure high risk victims of domestic abuse victims are not being placed at further risk as a result^[151].

As part of the delivery of Drive in Worcestershire, the PCC has worked with partners in West Mercia to develop a Worcestershire Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Panel. The panel is multi-agency with partners from police, health, housing, children's services, probation and adult safeguarding amongst others in attendance. The panel meet and discuss suitability of cases to be referred to Drive, but for those who are not suitable, robust disruption plans are in place for perpetrators.

The PCC has also commissioned University of Worcester to provide an evaluation of the local impact of Drive and the setup of the DAPPs. The evaluation will provide valuable information around the impact that the setup of DAPP has on partners and also the impact upon Police demand. Some of the findings from the first draft of the evaluation report have demonstrated more joined up working between partner agencies, earlier identification of victims who have not previously engaged with support services and partners identifying it as providing a **whole family approach**^[152]. Final evaluation is due in 2020. **The PCC will work with the force and partners to use the learning from pilot initiatives such as Drive to explore opportunities for expansion into West Mercia wide service provision.**

xxviii Multi Agency Risk Assessment Conference - <http://www.safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/MARAC%20FAQs%20General%20FINAL.pdf>

xxix Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub - <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/working-together-to-safeguard-children-multi-agency-safeguarding-hubs>

In 2018 in Shropshire, a pilot was conducted in partnership between the Police and West Mercia Women's Aid, to trial an IDVA attending high risk domestic abuse cases along with a police offer as part of an initial response package of support. An evaluation report from this pilot has been completed and out of the numbers of victim/survivors who engaged in the service, 59% of them had not previously engaged with specialist domestic abuse services, evidencing that the pilot assisted with earlier intervention by specialist agencies. 44% of the victim/survivors were assessed as **medium risk** and following the intervention from the IDVA, could have been prevented from the risk escalating^[153].

Local areas should develop more integrated approaches to multi-agency working which looks at victims, their families and perpetrators in the round, according to the government^[154]. In West Mercia, the PCC has been working with several of the local authorities to explore feasibility of implementing the Hertfordshire Family Safeguarding model. The FSM is a whole-system reform of Children's services which aims to improve the quality of work undertaken with families, and thereby outcomes for children and parents. It brings together many specialist workers including domestic abuse along with training and an improved practice framework for staff. The model has been evaluated and initial findings from the implementation of the model suggested an annual 58% reduction in repeat incidents reported to police^[155]. **The PCC will work with partners to explore opportunities for closer partnership working and joint commissioning opportunities to achieve shared outcomes through such national best practice multi-agency models.**

In addition to the Drive service provider, who are working with the perpetrator, and the IDVA service who are working with the victim, the PCC has also commissioned West Mercia Women's Aid to deliver a Children and Young Person's programme for children whose parents are part of the Drive and IDVA services. The introduction of this service enables multiple partner agencies to work together to provide a **whole family response**. The impact of the CYP service is being evaluated by the central Drive team. **The PCC will continue to have oversight of this evaluation to inform future commissioning intentions.**

A Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) is another example of multi-agency working. A DHR is a multi-agency review of the circumstances in which the death of a person aged 16 or over has, or appears to have, resulted from violence, abuse or neglect by a person to whom they were related or with who they were, or had been, in an intimate personal relationship, or a member of the same household as themselves. Since 13 April 2011 there has been a statutory requirement for local areas to conduct a DHR following a domestic homicide that meets the criteria^[156]. The completion of a DHR is the responsibility of the Community Safety Partnerships, of which there are five in West Mercia. **The PCC will use his convening powers through the Crime Reduction Board to ensure that CSPs adopt a continuous improvement approach to implementation of the recommendations from any DHRs which occur.**

The government has emphasised their commitment to tackling FGM by updating their 2016 multi-agency guidance to make it statutory guidance for those who have a responsibility to promote the welfare of children and vulnerable adults^[157]. The guidance places several duties and responsibilities upon the police. West Mercia have developed a policy around FGM and have appointed FGM specialist single points of contact (SPOCs) in the area. The under-reporting of it is potentially a concern though.

We have already seen previously that victims of HBV are likely to have no recourse to public funds and that those who have no recourse face additional barriers to access services. In 2015, the PCC funded £50,000 to West Mercia Women's Aid for the specific provision of services to support these victims. The PCC is continuously monitoring the spend relating to this. **The PCC will use the aforementioned needs assessment to identify the level of need for those with NRPF in West Mercia and consider future funding for this provision.**

The PCC funds each of the CSPs an amount of funding to contribute towards analytical provision for each partnership. In 2018, the PCC worked with the CSPs and the force to direct this funding towards a newly created team of Partnership Analysts, hosted by West Mercia Police within the Analysis & Service Improvement team. The role of the partnership analysts is to collate and analyse data from a wide variety of partners to support and inform evidence based decision making within the CSPs.

The recent consultation response from the government's draft domestic abuse bill stressed the importance of using data from across a number of sources including data from third sector organisations and ensuring the best possible use is made of existing evidence and analysis^[158]. **As domestic abuse is a priority for all CSPs, the PCC will task the Partnership Analysts to create West Mercia domestic abuse profiles to truly understand the complete picture of all forms of domestic abuse in West Mercia.**

Employers have a critical role in both identifying abuse and developing robust workplace policies to support employees who may be victims of domestic abuse^[159]. Public Health England have published a domestic abuse toolkit that will help raise awareness of the issue with employers and provide guidance on how they can support those affected by it. The toolkit recognises that employers are in a unique position to create a supportive workplace culture that encourages the identification of health and wellbeing needs and to help break the silence around this issue^[160]. **The PCC will ensure that all commissioned and grant funded services have an employee domestic abuse policy and that this is written into the terms and conditions of the grant/contract.**

West Mercia Police currently employs 4,200 officers and staff and is working on the development of an employee domestic abuse policy. The PCC chairs several multi-agency partnership boards such as the West Mercia Criminal Justice Board, Crime Reduction Board and Victims Boards.

The PCC will use his convening powers, via these strategic groups, to emphasise the importance of all agencies to have a specific employee domestic abuse policy and to ensure that each policy has a specific implementation plan around awareness raising and access to specialist services amongst all partners and staff. The PCC will ensure that the force policy includes victims as well as those who have been identified as perpetrators.

The PCC has worked with each of the local authorities in West Mercia to participate in the development of their individual domestic abuse strategies. When looking at service provision for victims and survivors of domestic abuse, the government see PCCs as ideally placed to bring all local commissioners together, including those from health and local authorities, to develop collaborative and joined up commissioning^[161]. **The PCC will create a PCC hosted, West Mercia, Domestic Abuse commissioners partnership to explore collaborative working and joint commissioning opportunities.**

Sanctuary schemes are a multi-agency victim centred initiative set up by government in 2010 which aims to enable households at risk of violence to remain in their own homes and reduce repeat victimisation through the provision of enhanced security measures and support. The provision of **sanctuary** within a property means that security measures have been installed in order that households at risk of domestic violence are able to remain safely in their own accommodation and where the perpetrator does not live in the property, if they choose to do so^[162].

Research provided to government suggest that Sanctuary Schemes have a number of benefits both for service users and local agencies. Benefits for agencies include a reduction in homelessness caused by domestic violence and a potential reduction in repeat victimisation for Sanctuary Scheme users which have the potential to produce significant cost savings for housing providers and the criminal justice system^[163].

The PCC currently ring-fences a proportion of funding allocated to Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) for sanctuary provision, proving support to victims and survivors of domestic abuse. Many of the sanctuary schemes are linked in with police teams such as the Design Out Crime Officers (DOCOs). **The PCC will continue to ensure that CSP funding is ring-fenced specifically for the provision of the sanctuary scheme.**

Integrated Offender Management (IOM), is an existing model which brings a cross-agency response to the crime and re-offending threats faced by local communities. The most persistent and problematic offenders are identified and managed jointly by partner agencies working together.

IOM helps to improve the quality of life in communities by:

- reducing the negative impact of crime and re-offending;
- reducing the number of people who become victims of crime;
- helping to improve the public's confidence in the criminal justice system^[164].

The model was developed back in 2015 and is implemented in West Mercia. Partners meet once a month and meetings are held before the DAPPs meetings. Funding has also previously been provided to the IOM team in West Mercia for provision of services which meet the core objectives of the model. Some of the IOM cohort are domestic abuse perpetrators.

In addition to IOM, there is also MAPPA (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements) which is the process through which various agencies such as the police, the Prison Service and Probation work together to protect the public by managing the risks posed by violent and sexual offenders living in the community^[165]. Some of these violent offenders will also be domestic abuse offenders and some of these will cross over into one or more of the following groups; MARAC, DAPP, IOM or MAPPA, often being discussed at multiple meetings by the same agencies. **The PCC is currently working with the Force to undertake a review of the current IOM process. The PCC will continue this joint working approach to the development of multi-agency offender management processes, ensuring that processes are aligned and have a domestic abuse focus.**

In terms of working in partnership to protect older and vulnerable people from domestic abuse, it's important to consider statutory safeguarding policies and procedures. The recent HMCPSI and HMICFRS inspection report into crimes against older people found that adult safeguarding was described to them as the **poor relation** of safeguarding arrangements, with inconsistent local partnership work to consider what protections or support might need to be put in place for vulnerable adults.

Forces told of a focus on children over adults, and the inspection found a lack of understanding of what their duties were under the Care Act 2014 regarding adults at risk^[166].

This is compounded by the SafeLives research which tells us that a common barrier for older domestic abuse victims is instances where the perpetrator is their carer which can present difficulties which raises a wealth of additional challenges and forms of abuse. In addition to this, in cases where the cared for ends up being the perpetrator due to medical conditions which exacerbate aggression such as dementia. In these situations, victims may feel guilt connected to any disclosure. Complexities also arise around police making decisions to remove people from houses or relationships where there is a diagnosis of Alzheimer's or dementia.

The use of digital technology is something which the PCC is very keen on supporting and developing to enhance service provision to the public. However, it is also important to recognise that perpetrators can use technology as a form of abuse, further enhancing their level of control over the victim. 87% of all adults used the internet daily or almost every day in 2019, as reported by the Office for National Statistics^[167].

It is also something which has been drawn to the attention of others in a 2019 report produced by Think Social Tech, Snook and SafeLives. The research conducted as part of the report discovered new priorities working in the domestic abuse field, particularly in terms of the need for more recovery support^[168].

As the technology landscape is growing and developing, there is a growing need to make better use of technology to deliver services, whilst mitigating the risks. The report concluded as we have seen previously in this document that many people face additional barriers to seeking support and that online tools and anonymous support could offer an invaluable support approach. It overwhelmingly concluded that there is a joint responsibility to ensure victims, survivors, and the services supporting them, can make best use of technology^[169]. **The PCC will work with partners and stakeholders to explore innovative and creative ways in which digital technology can be used to tackle and disrupt domestic abuse behaviour alongside providing support to victims and survivors.**

“ ... the whole systems family and agency approach that has begun to be rolled out across West Mercia should continue ... ”

10. Pursuing perpetrators

Although early intervention and prevention is key to tackling domestic abuse, we must continue to improve the pursuing of perpetrators and the criminal justice response. The criminal justice response to perpetrators needs to be improved through better multi-agency working with other statutory partners, better use of risk assessment to identify perpetrators, and clearer pathways for managing, monitoring and mitigating the risk that perpetrators pose according to the government^[170].

Improving the police response

We know that on average, a victim of domestic abuse has experienced the abuse on average 50 times before getting effective help^[171]. This makes it critical that when victims make the call to police, that they get the right service at the right time, every time.

In 2019, HMICFRS assessed the national police response to domestic abuse. Pleasingly, the report confirmed that police forces continue to prioritise tackling domestic abuse within the wider context of supporting vulnerable people and keeping them safe. It also identified improvements in control room responses, quality of investigations and the increase in numbers of investigations where victims don't support an investigation. However, a number of issues were raised about the national police response to DA suggesting that; delays in sending officers are exposing victims to risk, the understanding of controlling and coercive behaviour needs to improve and the police need to do more to seek feedback from victims of domestic abuse^[172].

In the 2019 HMICFRS PEEL Inspection report, specific to West Mercia, the force were reported to have a good understanding of vulnerability, which includes the important of identifying and safeguarding vulnerable people. However, the report did state that West Mercia needs to improve the way in which it protects vulnerable people, and is missing opportunities to make arrests in some domestic abuse cases. It needs to be sure it is producing thorough DASH risk assessments and that it could use pre-charge bail more effectively^[173].

Response officers were found not have the training to investigate some of the crimes that are allocated to them. During the inspection, there were examples of officers investigating complex fraud and high-risk, serious domestic assault cases without the skills or support to do so. However, the force has been encouraging positive action by response officers who attend reports of domestic abuse. Effective working between departments, and a proactive approach to promptly identify and arrest suspects, is also evident^[174].

In relation to harassment and stalking specifically, in 2017, HMICFRS and HMCPSP^{xxx} produced a report into the police and CPS response. The report found that stalking in particular was misunderstood by the police and CPS and as a result, often went unrecognised. The report also found that the absence of a single accepted, consistent definition of stalking is a very significant contributory factor to the unacceptably low number of recorded crimes and prosecutions. It is also one of the main reasons that police officers, staff and prosecutors gave varying interpretations of stalking^[175].

Summary of findings from the report are that:

- ▶ crimes of harassment and stalking reported by victims were sometimes not recorded at all;
- ▶ when crimes were recorded, they were sometimes not recorded correctly;
- ▶ cases of stalking were sometimes recorded as harassment.

There is not an exhaustive definition of stalking in legislation. This is one of the main reasons why there is a lack of common understanding about which actions can be counted as stalking. At present, identifying stalking is frequently a matter of subjectivity, which can lead to error and/or omission, as found in the case file review^[176].

HMICFRS also found that due to the variations between forces in the way that stalking offences were recorded, they could not be confident in the accuracy of the recorded crime figures in any of the forces visited. There were a number of recommendations which came from the report. The College of Policing is currently developing a suite of new guidance on stalking and harassment to give officers clear advice on what they should seek to achieve in each case and how to understand the nature of the behaviour with which they are dealing. This new guidance will be published in early 2019^[177].

The recording of domestic abuse crimes within West Mercia was identified as an area for improvement in a recent HMICFRS Crime Data Integrity report and suggested that the force needs to improve how it records violent crimes, particularly harassment, stalking, coercive and controlling behaviour, and domestic abuse-related crimes^[178].

The report also commented on the force's diary appointment system for low-risk domestic abuse incidents, where officers should attend within 48 hours and found that in many cases, this timeframe is not being met, depriving some victims of the support they need and deserve.

The PCC will use his holding to account process to expose and scrutinise the Force approach to domestic abuse.

The CPS response

The government want to see increases in prosecutions in VAWG related offences, where appropriate. The Crown Prosecution Services is committed to seeing perpetrators brought to justice and providing the best possible protection for victims from re-offending and in doing so, are focusing on working as collaboratively as possible across the criminal justice system^[179]. We have already seen that for West Mercia, prosecution rates for domestic abuse related offences are low.

A vital element of an effective response to domestic abuse, is through Specialist Domestic Violence Courts (SDVCs). These specialist courts were first set up in 2005 across the country and the National SDVC steering group have identified 12 key components to operating successful SDVCs which gain better outcomes for domestic violence. West Mercia has only one SDVC, in Redditch, which was relaunched in 2016 at the Magistrates Court^[180].

The PCC is currently working with the West Midlands, Staffordshire and Warwickshire PCC areas to conduct an independent review into the SDVCs across West Mercia.

The PCC will work with the Local Criminal Justice Boards and Crime Reduction Boards to ensure that the findings and recommendations from this review are implemented, as well as the 12 key components as set out by the National SDVC steering group.

The PCC will work with partners to explore feasibility of setting up SDVCs in other areas of West Mercia.

“ ... there is a continued need for public awareness campaigns about domestic abuse and specialist services, as well as a need for training for local people, particularly important for rural areas ... ”

Female offenders

The MOJ have completed work around female offenders and their research found that almost 60% of the women in custody and supervised in the community had experienced domestic violence^[181].

In their 2018 Female Offender Strategy, the MOJ conclude that being a victim of domestic abuse is a predictor of violent re-offending amongst women. The strategy also highlights the critical need to identify female offenders who have been victims of domestic abuse at the earliest possible opportunity to break the cycle of offending and victimisation^[182]. In order to support the work with female perpetrators, in 2018, the government announced an investment of £2million of funding explicitly for female offenders who have been victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

The PCC will consider domestic abuse provision in the context of female offenders and explore diversionary pathway links for female offenders who have also been victims, ensuring equal and consistent access to services.

This goes to further evidence the impact of domestic abuse not only on the victim, but on criminal justice agencies, as well as highlighting the need for a multi-agency, holistic approach to tackling and addressing the needs of these female offenders. The PCC chairs a West Mercia Criminal Justice Board, which is designed to bring partners together to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice system. **The PCC will ensure through the Criminal Justice Board, that there is a designated local response to female offenders who have been affected by domestic abuse, taking into account recommendations from the strategy.**

Supporting victims through the criminal justice system

For any victim of crime, proceeding through the criminal justice system can be a traumatic experience. Due to the complexities of domestic abuse, this experience can be particularly difficult.

- Nationally, for the year ending March 2018, 24% of domestic abuse-related prosecutions were unsuccessful in securing a conviction. Of these unsuccessful convictions, around one-quarter (26%) were due to victim retraction, where the evidence of the victim supports the prosecution case, but the victim refuses to be called as a witness, or retracts or withdraws a complaint^[183].

► Just over one-quarter (26%) of unsuccessful prosecutions were due to victim non-attendance, where the victim is called as a witness in a trial, but fails to attend court. The proportion of unsuccessful prosecutions that resulted in victim non-attendance has increased every year, with the exception of the latest year, which saw a slight fall compared with the previous year^[184].

As you can see, a significant proportion of unsuccessful prosecutions related to victim retraction. The Crown Prosecution Service recognises that in domestic abuse cases, the starting point should be to build cases in which the prosecution does not need to rely on the victim. However, prosecutors should ensure that the views of the complainant are balanced with this approach, and the complainant is not overlooked during proceedings. Victims should be offered practical and emotional support at the earliest opportunity and should have access to any specialist support where needed. Victims receiving speedier attention and respect for their specific needs by the criminal justice system may feel more confident or encouraged to continue support for a prosecution^[185]. **The PCC will, through the VAL, ensure that the victim care co-ordinators are working closely with the Police to ensure that victims are being offered and provided with these support options and that regular dip-sampling of cases is conducted by the VAL to check progress.**

An important factor from a HMICFRS recent PEEL inspection report is that more victims decline to support police action in West Mercia than most other forces^[186].

Joint working by police and prosecutors is required to build a case which could be brought without the complainant's active participation, by seeking out other evidence, where available, which does not focus solely on the complainant's statement^[187].

The same report concluded that the Force has less understanding about suspects who are under investigation but who have not yet been arrested or circulated as wanted on the PNC^{xxxii}. It also identified there is no force-wide collation of wanted suspect information which could show how they are managing higher risk domestic abuse suspects effectively in all areas. The absence of such data means that the force does not pursue these suspects as effectively as it should.

Other areas for improvement were identified in how the force protects vulnerable people. Although the workforce has a good understanding of vulnerability, the inspection found that there was a **drift** in the culture of positive action at domestic abuse incidents within the force. It also concluded that West Mercia creates a greater proportion of domestic abuse reports as emergency or priority responses than the England and Wales rate, which does demonstrate that these cases are appropriately flagged, and is positive. However according to the review undertaken within the inspection, the force does not always give these incidents an appropriate and timely response, potentially putting victims at risk^[188]. **The PCC will use his holding to account process to scrutinise the force approach to domestic abuse, ensuring that it is robust, tailored to need, heavily victim/survivor focused and has a strong emphasis on early identification and intervention and partnership working.**

xxxi Police National Computer

xxxii Based on offences recorded on West Mercia Police systems. Domestic Abuse offences are identified by way of a marker, and therefore caution should be taken when interpreting this data

Body worn video (BWW) is one of the ways in which the PCC in West Mercia has made improvements to this process. BWW was launched by the PCC in 2017 with a number of objectives, one of which was to increase the potential for a victimless prosecution. In West Mercia for the 2018/19 year, the percentage of domestic abuse crimes where the victim did not support prosecution was 64%^{xxxii}.

Restorative Justice (RJ) is the process of bringing together victims with those responsible for the harm, to find a positive way forward. It's a voluntary process which both parties must agree to. The Victims code sets out that all victims have the right to be provided with information about RJ. In determining whether it is appropriate or not, particular consideration needs to be taken to the sensitivities of the case and the vulnerabilities of the victim, such as domestic violence cases^[189].

Views on the use of restorative justice in domestic abuse cases is mixed nationally. Many say that it is completely not appropriate and in 2016, the MOJ issued a government response to the use of RJ. Their position is that adult perpetrators of domestic abuse should, wherever possible, be prosecuted but recognise that all victims have a right to access restorative justice processes to help them address their needs. They are clear though, that police should not use level one (known as **street**) restorative justice in cases of intimate partner domestic abuse^[190].

In cases involving young people, the principal aim of the youth justice system is to prevent re-offending. A range of statutory obligations emphasise the importance of considering young people's welfare and avoiding **criminalisation** of young people. Responses should be individualistic and proportionate and restorative justice may form part of this response^[191].

Community resolution is an informal police disposal that enables the police to deal more proportionately with low-level crime and anti-social behaviour, outside the formal justice system. They are normally aimed at first time offenders where genuine remorse has been expressed, and where the victim has agreed that they do not want police to take more formal action^[192].

Currently, it is police policy not to use restorative justice or community resolution in domestic abuse cases. The use of such options within a domestic abuse setting needs to be considered carefully. The Crown Prosecution Service advises that restorative justice processes should only take place after cautious consideration and advice from supervisors or experts^[193].

The CPS suggest that it will rarely be appropriate to deal with a domestic abuse case by way of simple caution. However, where a positive action policy has been adhered to, the complainant does not support a prosecution, and the available evidence (including any additional evidence adduced) would only disclose a very minor offence, the police will consider a simple caution in preference to a decision to take no further action. The guidance is clear though that conditional cautions should not be used for domestic abuse cases^[194].

However, in a bid to encourage early intervention and prevent escalation of risk for the victim, a trial project, called Project CARA, gave permission for conditional cautions to be issued for lower risk, normally first time reported, domestic abuse incidents. The evaluation for the project showed that the combination of a conditional caution and a workshop had a positive effect on re-offending rates. As a result of this project, the Director of Public Prosecutions has agreed for some police forces to pilot this approach and the Crown Prosecution Service is working with the National Police Chiefs' Council to agree robust minimum standards^[195].

In the context of Adolescent to Parent Violence and Abuse (APVA), it is important that a young person takes responsibility for their behaviour. While the use of out of court disposals in the context of domestic violence and abuse need to be approached with caution, in the context of cases of APVA out of court disposals or a wrap-around safeguarding response should be considered alongside a criminal justice response as most parents wish to build and maintain their parent-child relationship and do not want their child criminalised. This means that typical domestic violence and abuse responses holding perpetrators to account may not always be appropriate^[196]. **The PCC will hold the force to account to explore the viability and suitability of using a range of criminal justice options in West Mercia to inform a tailored approach to domestic abuse perpetrators.**

The provision of an understanding, respectful and professional first response is vital in determining the future resolution of this family crisis. Parents say that one of the most important factors in their help is to be listened to and believed. It is important for Police to be aware that the young person may have complex needs, such as mental health issues and that there may be a requirement to work with health and social care professionals to support the young person. It is also important that officers recognise the seriousness of this type of abuse. It can be difficult to identify in families where there are other problems and violence is more generalised, but it is a distinct form of domestic abuse, which generally requires a different approach^[197].

In some cases, arrest or temporary removal may be the appropriate response. In others, parents may want someone in authority to speak with the child, but not want them prosecuted or criminalised. They are more likely to engage with other services than the police, because contacting the police is often viewed as a punishment rather than a source of help.

In 2018, it was agreed that PCCs could oversee a new monitoring process which measured criminal justice partners' compliance with the Victims' Code, reporting up to the National Criminal Justice Board. This process was developed by government to assess whether victims receive all necessary information at crucial points in their journey, within the time limits set out by the code, and to a quality standard. In West Mercia, the Victims Board is overseeing this scrutiny. The Victims Board, is a multi-agency group which consists of key partner agencies such as police, courts, Crown Prosecution Service and PCC.

In the response to the government's consultation on the new draft domestic abuse bill, concerns were raised around the family courts' response to potential harm to children and victims, with calls for better protections for children and claims domestic abusers were using the court system to re-traumatise their victims. Responses from the draft bill also identified that due to lack of information sharing across jurisdictions, sometimes sanctions imposed by the family court contravene those issued by a criminal court suggesting better information sharing between these agencies is needed^[198]. This is echoed from the consultation work undertaken in West Mercia^[199] where survivors reported continued abuse from the perpetrator through the court and child contact systems.

As a result, the government made a number of recommendations for improved actions within the bill and in July 2019, launched a call for evidence, which is part of a three-month project overseen by a panel of experts, aimed at throwing a spotlight on how the family courts manage the safety and well-being of children when there is a risk of domestic abuse. The review will also consider the use of **barring orders**- court orders which can prevent abusive parents from making further court applications that often serve to simply re-traumatise their victims. On top of this, new legislation has been introduced which bans abusers from cross-examining their victims in a family court^[200].

It is important, especially from the evidence shown, that the victims experience through family court needs to be monitored. The government are keen to work with stakeholders to understand what more can be done to support victims of domestic abuse in the family court. **The PCC will invite a representative from the family courts in the Victims Board to improve partnership working and support for victims.**

Perpetrator provision

The government is committed to transforming the response to perpetrators of domestic abuse at all points in the criminal justice system, from pre-conviction to custody and through to post-conviction in the community. We cannot simply arrest our way out of domestic abuse. Through supporting interventions that lead to sustainable behaviour change in perpetrators themselves, it is suggested that this will drive an overall reduction in prevalence of VAWG crimes and reduced rates of re-offending^[201].

For perpetrators who have been convicted of domestic abuse offences, the National Probation Service and the Prison service use various perpetrator programmes; Building Better Relationships (BBR) and Kaizen. In 2019, the government is conducting an evaluation of these models which will seek to understand the challenges and complexities facing domestic abuse programme evaluations and how these can be overcome^[202].

In West Mercia, information provided locally indicates that there are long waiting lists or waiting times for perpetrators to attend those programmes which are sanctioned through the National Probation Service or Community Rehabilitation Company, which poses further risk to victims and children.

This is echoed by a report issued by the HM Inspectorate of Probation in 2018 which assessed work undertaken by Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRCs) in relation to domestic abuse. The report found that there were too few referrals to the programme and that many individuals experienced extensive delays before joining a course, and too many did not complete one^[203].

The report also found a lack of strategic approach with no overall strategy from the Ministry of Justice or HMPPS to drive the quality of CRCs' domestic abuse practice. CRCs manage cases assessed (at sentence) as posing a low or medium risk of harm to others, irrespective of the complexity of these. Most of the perpetrators of domestic abuse who have been convicted of offences such as public order or criminal damage, and many who are serving sentences for assault, will have been assessed as posing a low or medium risk of harm.

As such, they will be managed by CRCs and constitute a substantial part of their business^[204].

In addition to the above, the report stated contractual targets have led to CRCs prioritising process deadlines above good quality and safe practice.

HMPPS has worked hard to provide interventions for use with domestic abuse perpetrators, and to support CRCs in their delivery of these, but needs to take a more strategic and coordinated approach to this work. HMPPS issued an action plan following production of this report, which is reviewed on an annual basis. Other issues in the report noted that some of the CRCs' work to protect victims (and especially children) was of grave concern. There was little correlation between the vision CRCs had for victims and the quality of practice. Many probation workers did not fully understand the effect of domestic abuse on families or the relevance of an integrated approach to managing risk of harm. As such, they focused their work solely on the individual^[205].

The PCC will use his convening powers through the Criminal Justice Board to challenge criminal justice partners to have a robust local response to domestic abuse perpetrators and provision of safeguarding arrangements for victims/survivors and children.

In terms of identifying and assessing the risk of domestic abuse perpetrators, HMPPS^{gg} has developed the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA) tool for criminal justice professionals to use to predict the likelihood of domestic violence. The tool is a quality-control checklist that determines the extent to which a professional has assessed risk factors of crucial predictive importance according to clinical and empirical literature and can be used to help determine the degree to which an individual poses a threat to his/her spouse, children, another family member, or another person involved^[206].

Currently in West Mercia, V2 of the tool is being used by the National Probation Service (NPS) and the Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company (WWMCRC). The Drive Case and Service Managers are due to attend training in November 2019 for V3 of the model, suggested to be an improvement on previous versions, with the inclusion of factors which allow a more dynamic and accurate measure of risk. The Drive team (Worcestershire only) will then pilot the use of V3 with the Drive cohort which will be closely monitored by the central Drive team. **The PCC will continue to have oversight of the implementation of the SARA V3 model and if successful, work with criminal justice partners to share best practice and explore roll-out across West Mercia.**

Domestic Abuse **must** be seen as everyone's business and we **must** work together to support victims and children and disrupt perpetrator behaviour.

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