

WEST MERCIA POLICE AND CRIME PANEL 4 FEBRUARY 2021

POLICE & CRIME PLAN OVERVIEW OF COMMISSIONING ACTIVITY REPORT (2020- 2021)

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 West Mercia Police and Crime Panel (PCP) with an overview of the commissioning activity undertaken by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) in support of his Safer West Mercia Plan since the start of 2020/21 and the Coronavirus pandemic.

3. 2020/21 has seen a lot of development and change in the commissioning of services, particularly those relating to victim service provision. Much of this change has been assisted by successful funding applications exceeding £1.6m for the year, which is encouraging given the circumstances and challenges, which have been faced by many.

4. Victim service providers in particular have experienced multiple challenges as a result of the pandemic and have had to be resilient and flexible to adapt to them, whilst ensuring that they continue to provide services to support victims. All providers have reported increases in the complexity of the support required for victims as a direct result of the pandemic, and victims themselves have had to adapt to receiving remote services. The provision of face to face support was continuously reviewed throughout the year though and where safe and essential, some face to face work has been carried out.

5. The determination and dedication of these organisations to continue to provide this essential service provision has been exemplary and something the PCC personally commended them for in December 2020.

Putting victims and survivors first

Ministry of Justice (MoJ) COVID funding

6. In early 2020, the PCC secured £341,363.39 from MoJ to support those organisations working with victims of domestic abuse and sexual abuse and violence who had been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of this funding went towards increases of staff/resource to cope with additional demand, along with provision of equipment, software to support remote working and improvements to the digital services to support victims. This funding went to a total of 14 organisations, helping to strengthen these charities and make sure that the vital support victims need continued.

7. In the later part of 2020, the PCC was awarded a further £180,545.78 from the same fund, to extend the previous support provided. This additional funding went to all of the 10 organisations who requested it. This funding contributed towards extending staffing contracts and resource, providing online domestic abuse sessions and additional counselling support amongst other areas.

8. During the period April to September 2020, the PCC-commissioned victim services and Covid-funded organisations supported 10,865 victims of crime to cope and recover.

MoJ ISVA funding

9. The PCC was successful in being awarded over £394,523 over the next 2 years (2021/22-2022/23) from MoJ for commissioned sexual violence and abuse services. This has enabled providers to recruit 7 additional specialist staff supporting victims. Some of these specialist roles have included those supporting victims with additional needs, as well as increasing the support for children, providing engagement staff to connect with and target hard to reach communities and supporting male victims.

Domestic Abuse (DA)

DRIVE Programme

10. The PCC has extended the funding commitment for the DRIVE project in Worcestershire until 31 March 2022. This a hugely successful project, co-commissioned with Worcestershire Public Health.

11. Since its commencement in 2018 up to the end of September 2020, the programme has worked with 209 high harm perpetrators, and has achieved reductions in high levels of physical abuse (55%), sexual abuse (50%), stalking and harassment (46%) and jealous, controlling and coercive behaviour (48%).

12. Originally funded with Police Transformation funding, this is now an equally split arrangement with Worcestershire County Council Public Health. Independent cost vs benefit analysis has been conducted, which demonstrates significant savings for criminal justice, public health and local authority agencies. Further details of this analysis can be provided upon request.

13. The PCC has recently been successful in securing a further £178,863 from the Home Office to extend the DRIVE project into Herefordshire. The PCC has been working with colleagues in Worcestershire and Herefordshire Councils to facilitate further joint commissioning and working arrangements and DRIVE Herefordshire is on target to go live in early 2021. Recruitment processes for additional staff are well under way. The project is aiming to target 125 high harm perpetrators per year.

Respect Young People's Programme (RYPP)

14. The PCC was awarded £207,163 from the Home Office to roll out the RYPP. The programme includes a variety of training packages designed to support those professionals working with young people who are displaying domestic abuse perpetrator behaviour and will see over 400 staff trained from a variety of agencies including Police, Local Authority and Youth Justice Service across West Mercia. Part of this funding will also provide an evaluation of the success of the project and is due later in 2021.

15. Covid has impacted how this programme is delivered. Some of the material has had to be adapted to be taught remotely but the booking of these sessions is well underway.

Local Domestic Abuse Provision

16. The PCC has extended the contract for the IDVA service up to 31 March 2022. The IDVA's are performing a vital role in safeguarding victims where there is a high risk of immediate significant harm or homicide.

17. Alongside this, the PCC has had discussions with all of the Local Authorities in West Mercia regarding their own local domestic abuse provision and will be working in partnership with Worcestershire County Council to look at jointly commissioning all future DA provision, including IDVA and DRIVE.

18. In addition to this, the PCC has been involved in lobbying the government to develop a perpetrator strategy, acting on feedback from victims and the sector which emphasises the importance of tackling the root cause of domestic abuse.

Sexual Abuse, Violence and Exploitation

19. The PCC has formally commissioned both the Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE) and Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) services, providing a 3 year contract, reinforcing the commitment to supporting victims. A competitive tender process was conducted, and in December 2020, the contract for both services was awarded to West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre.

20. The new service model will be working towards achieving the objectives of the National Sexual Assault and Abuse Strategy, alongside the commitments in the Safer West Mercia Plan. The new services will be able to provide increased flexibility and resilience within their provision, as well as streamlining processes to remove any variations in service depending upon the victim's location.

21. Due to the current circumstances surrounding the pandemic, the PCC has worked with regional partners including NHS England to extend the contract for the provision of the Young People's Sexual Assault and Referral Centre service. The service was due to be re-commissioned in 2020 but the existing contract has now been extended to February 2022, ensuring continuity of service provision. The procurement of this service will now re-commence from 2021.

Victim Advice Line and Victim Support

22. The Victim and Advice Line has grown in size, with the additional provision of specialist staff focusing specifically on victims of domestic and sexual abuse and violence. Some of this was facilitated by additional funding from NHS England and some from the MoJ COVID funding. In 2020, the PCC was successful in being awarded £50,000 from NHS England to fund a specialist sexual abuse and violence co-ordinator, whose role is to work with victims of sexual abuse and violence to navigate the complex pathways into support, ensuring the access is seamless. The role is also to work with the Force and partners to increase knowledge and awareness of support options available to these victims.

23. So far, between April and December 2020, the VAL have contacted 39,289 victims to offer support, and have provided that support to 4,844 who requested it.

24. Victim Support were one of the commissioned organisations who received additional MoJ funding to provide specialist domestic abuse workers, one of whom was co-located within the Victim Advice Line. This pilot project worked very successfully and improved the quality of service provision provided to victims, as well as further demonstrating the PCC commitment to

provide a coherent and coordinated multi-agency response to victims. Despite funding for this role ceasing, the value of it was recognised as such that the VAL have incorporated it into their service model to ensure sustainability and continuity of service provision.

25. Victim Support have also worked very hard to continue to promote the Restorative Justice service throughout the pandemic and have adapted their service to provide online training sessions for partners. These training sessions have resulted in the creation of 13 RJ “champions” across a range of organisations such as the Magistracy, Youth Justice and Housing. These champions will be responsible for raising awareness of RJ approaches within their respective organisations and contributing towards increases in referrals.

Victims Voice

26. The PCC has worked with all providers throughout the year to ensure that they have robust mechanisms in place for capturing the victim’s voice and ensuring that the victim voice is at the heart of service delivery in line with his commitments. This has resulted in the development of service user focus groups, along with online meetings and changes to surveys. Improvements have also been made to the ways in which services are delivered, particularly the development of online group support sessions.

27. As part of the PCC’s national work, feedback from victim service providers of the impact of COVID-19 was obtained and provided to the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC), with a summary of the key findings below:

- Victims feeling isolated, especially amongst DA victims
- Increased levels of anxiety
- Increase to time that DA victims need to spend in the same house as perpetrators
- People struggling with financial issues, impacting upon their feelings of safety
- Increased anxiety due to delays in court hearings.

28. There were some positive comments though in that some victims felt that the restrictions helped where they didn’t live with perpetrator, increasing their resilience.

29. The PCC is currently in discussions regarding future work with victims, to actively engage them to inform the commissioning of services for 2022 onwards.

Identifying need

30. As part of the commissioning process, the PCC worked with external consultants to procure some needs assessments in 2020. These assessments cut across a variety of the PCC priority areas and, as well as identifying areas for development and gaps in service provision, highlighted the positive work of commissioned services in enabling victims to cope and recover. These needs assessments also included consultation with victims, reinforcing the PCC’s commitment to engage with victims to develop service provision.

31. The PCC has already started to make some adaptations to existing services from 2021, such as those supporting children and young people affected by domestic abuse, to ensure that funding is targeted to areas of most need.

32. The PCC is in the process of reviewing these needs assessments to determine which recommendations will be taken forward in 2021. The progress of this activity will be monitored in line with existing governance arrangements.

33. The PCC has also worked with all victim service providers to improve their performance reporting to specifically track and monitor repeat victims, ensuring that these providers work

with multiple agencies to support victims and reduce their chances of re-victimisation. In addition to this, the PCC has also improved service provider reporting to specifically include references to support provided to BAME victims, feeding this information directly back to MoJ.

34. The PCC has worked with various departments within MoJ during the last year, to provide essential feedback about local service provision and funding to further enhance services for victims and witnesses locally. This feedback has resulted in changes and improvements to the MoJ performance reporting requirements.

Building a more Secure West Mercia

Child Criminal Exploitation

35. 2020 saw the launch of the new CLIMB service, a unique early intervention programme providing positive activities to young people who may otherwise be drawn into criminal activity. CLIMB is delivered by The Children's Society and works with children and young people aged 13-17 who may be at risk of being criminally exploited.

36. CLIMB has been well embedded into local referral pathways within West Mercia exploitation groups as well as amongst partner agencies. Up to end of December 2020, the service had received 185 appropriate referrals, with 39 of those currently receiving a service. This is a considerable achievement in the first months of a new service, particularly during the pandemic.

37. The PCC has also funded £96,875 to provide West Mercia Exploitation and Vulnerability trainers. These trainers are employed within the Force and between April and December 2020 have conducted 128 sessions across 119 organisations, to 2905 recipients. Of these recipients, an average of 97% said that as a result of the training they had an increased awareness of vulnerability factors and felt confident that they could recognise and report concerns of exploitation. These trainers work extremely hard with partners to ensure that crimes which are often hidden from public view are recognised and reported.

38. Protecting communities, particularly our most vulnerable, is an integral part of creating a safer West Mercia and will always be at the heart of the Commissioner's work. Everything possible should be done to understand how people are drawn into criminality and prevent it from happening in the first place. The work of the dedicated vulnerability and exploitation trainers, especially during a time when vulnerabilities are being further targeted, is vital in reducing harm and creating communities that are safer and more secure.

Safer Streets Project

39. The PCC was successful in being awarded £550,000 additional funding from the Home Office to implement a Safer Streets project in Brookside, Telford. The funding is being utilised for a range of equipment and target hardening measures, designed to reduce criminal activity in some of the most deprived areas of Telford & Wrekin, enabling people feel safe, and not fear where they live or that they will become a victim of crime. So far, several members of the team have been recruited, including a Project Co-ordinator, Housing Officer and Communications Officer.

40. A total of 14 sites within Brookside have been identified so far for alley-gating and fencing works. Public Space Protection Orders are also being carried out for the site. A lighting survey has been completed and the local street lighting team are in the process of procuring the relevant equipment to be installed.

CCTV

41. In addition to the £1.25m committed by the PCC for CCTV during the current PCC term, in 20/21, a further £325,000 was made available to local Community Safety Partnerships, for the provision of CCTV in accordance with the CCTV Policy. So far, £78,277 has been claimed and the PCC is in discussions with those areas who have not yet allocated the funds available to them.

42. Part of the £1.25m funding has seen state of the art improvements and upgrades to CCTV in North Worcestershire and Telford & Wrekin, the latter having moved to a volunteer-led monitoring model, bringing community cohesion to the local area as well as improving community safety. The North Worcestershire project was completed in 2020, and the Telford & Wrekin project is due to be completed in 2021.

Offenders

43. During recent months, the PCC has been in discussions with regional PCC colleagues, the National Probation Service and Criminal Justice leads within the Force to implement a regional commissioning pilot for Anger & Anxiety Management courses. These courses will be accessible as a pilot initially, to support the PCC-led approach to early intervention and prevention for low-level, often first time offending. The PCC is putting in match funding of £21,400 to provide these courses for use as an Out of Court Disposal. This service is likely to commence in March or April 2021.

Safer Roads

44. In the Safer West Mercia Plan, the PCC made a commitment to work with partners and the local community to reduce the number of deaths and serious injuries on West Mercia roads. One of the ways in which this is tackled is through the MORSE project. MORSE was originally a pilot project set up in 2019, designed to reduce the number of road traffic collisions and is a partnership between YSS, West Mercia Police, Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service and the Warwickshire and West Mercia Community Rehabilitation Company. Between April and December 2020, MORSE had 152 referrals for the 1-2-1 case management support, with 49 active cases at the end of the latest quarter. The PCC continues to fund this innovative project in 20/21, committing a total of £291,281.

45. The MORSE project also funds Operation Snap, a West Mercia Police-led project, which encourages members of the public to submit digital footage showing potential traffic offences. Again, between April and December 2020, the team have sent out 977 advice letters, and started 373 prosecutions. These figures will have been impacted by the reduction in road traffic due to local and national lockdowns and would be expected to be higher in normal circumstances.

46. In late 2020, the PCC hosted a Safer Roads Grant round, with a funding pot available of up to £300,000. A range of applications were received and the following projects were funded:

- Road Peace – £38,244
- Stretton Grandison – £10,235
- Great Ness & Little Ness Parish Council – £18,500
- Alexander Ford sustainable travel – £5,000
- Almeley Parish Council – £5,000
- Great Dawley Town Council - £3,800

47. The Road Peace project is a joint project with the Victim Advice Line (VAL). The funding awarded will provide a Road Peace victim advocate, located within the VAL to provide support and advice to victims of serious injury collisions, piloting in Shropshire initially. A West Mercia support group for families affected will also be set up, along with the provision of some information guides and online resilience programmes.

48. The other projects have funded a range of other services such as traffic calming measures, a bike checking service, high visibility kit for cyclists and supporting schools to educate young people.

We Don't Buy Crime

49. We Don't Buy Crime is part of West Mercia Police's response to tackling acquisitive crime, such as burglary and theft, and the harm these crimes cause.

50. Between April and September 2020, the We Don't Buy Crime team have continued to SmartWater - protect residential areas throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. A total of **15,151** kits have been registered between 1/4/2020 and 18/9/2020. There are registered SmartWater in **99** Parishes, with a further **36** currently going through the roll-out process.

51. The launch of farm packs in May 2020 has shown very successful results, with **192** rural premises now protected with SmartWater along with supporting signage/stickers.

52. In addition to residential and rural areas, other pockets of our community have received SmartWater kits. A total of **27** allotments have registered SmartWater kits. A total of **376** bike kits have been issued to cyclists at a number of events in each LPA.

53. The business community continues to be supported by the WDBC team, having distributed SmartWater kits and signage to **6** business areas and **10** industrial estates since March of this year.

Coronavirus Response Fund

54. During 2020, the PCC created a coronavirus response fund. The fund was designed to support local Town/Parish Council community groups who used volunteers to provide assistance to local vulnerable people. The PCC received a number of applications for this fund and has provided grants totalling £47,279.94.

Contact Points for the Report

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

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