



Annual Report 2020-2021

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Foreword

As a result of the Covid19 pandemic, all Police and Crime Commissioners saw an extension to their term.

While the pandemic has undoubtedly impacted my work as Commissioner, my team and I have sought to minimise this impact as much as possible. I commend my office for adapting and adjusting, and being relentless in doing the best for communities. We have seen this additional year as the opportunity to further build on the progress that has been made in a number of areas.

This report captures the significant amount of work and progress that has been achieved during my additional year in office. In response to an extra year in office I have also reviewed my Safer West Mercia Plan to ensure it remains fit for purpose for my extended period in office.

There is no doubt that the last year has been one of the most challenging in recent history, and it brought with it exceptional challenges for policing, with the force needing to change and adapt to meet the changing demands of the national health emergency. West Mercia Police officers and staff have risen to the challenge, adapted and ensure they have continued to look out for the public they serve. Communities should be proud of their police service's contribution to tackling Covid19. Communities should also be proud with how they have handled these unprecedented times. In this past year I have seen people really come together to support one another and find ways of adapting to life as we know it.

During this past year I have continued to stand up for what our communities need to be kept safe, and that includes the policing response to the pandemic and how we have started to transition out of it.

I have ensured that people still have access to the help and support they need. This has included securing £1.87m in funding for victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. With services needing to adapt the way they work, and with an increased demand on them, this funding ensured that the much needed help was still there.



In this past year, I have been proud to work with partners to shine the spotlight on domestic abuse and raise awareness about it during a time when it was even more prevalent. This also included supporting the Domestic Abuse Bill, and the key amendments, which has since become law.

To ensure there is a defined focus on other key crimes types, I produced and published strategies on road safety, serious organised crime and domestic abuse.

I also recognised the importance of making sure the public still had access to myself and their local policing teams, despite not being able to in person. Several online meetings were held in order to allow the public to put questions to a panel and seek reassurance around the pandemic and other key issues.






Despite this additional year, there is always more to be done – particularly as we come out of lockdown and see a transition to a new normal. With this easing, it is inevitable we will see crime increasing and potentially new issues that the force will need to tackle. However, this is why it's vital the force is ready and has the resources it needs. I have aimed to ensure the communities of West Mercia still receive a level of service they deserve and, despite the pandemic, this should always be the case.



John Campion
West Mercia Police and Crime Commissioner

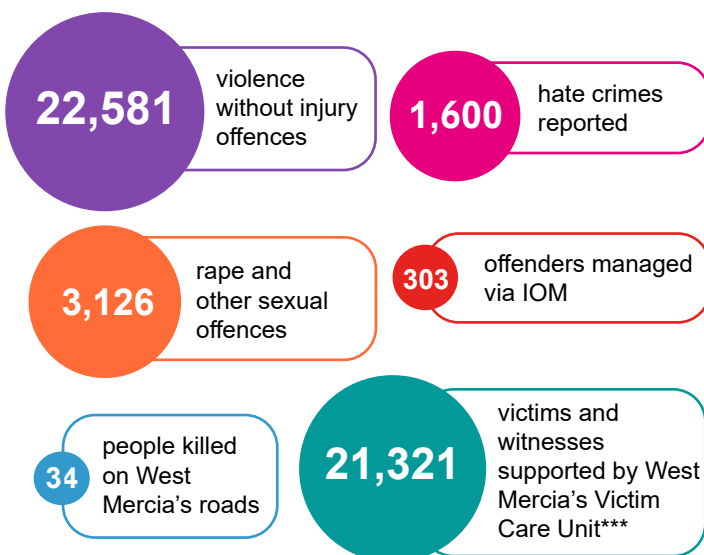
The year in numbers 2020/21[#]

Putting victims and survivors first







-  51,470 victims contacted by the VAL and offered support.
-  1,289 new referrals to Women's Aid IDVA service in the first 9 months.
-  86% of victims were satisfied with the overall service provided by West Mercia Police.
-  79% 79% conviction rate for domestic abuse cases at court.
-  88% of witnesses attended court.

Building a more secure West Mercia

72,807 offences were recorded:



Reforming West Mercia

-  £234.890m.
-  140,395 999 calls received.
-  87% of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds
-  90% of residents are confident they could access the police in an emergency*
-  52% 52% of 101 calls answered within 30 seconds
-  15,822 reports made online to the public contact centre

Reassuring West Mercia's communities

-  86% of residents have confidence in West Mercia Police*
-  61% satisfied with levels of local policing*
-  74% 74% feel crime and ASB are either not much of a problem, or not a problem at all in their local area*
-  35.2% of stop and searches resulted in a police action being taken
-  100 independent custody visits
-  14%** increase in recorded police complaints

[#]For comparison purposes the year in numbers for 2019/20 is included as an appendix.

*West Mercia Public Confidence and Perceptions Survey 2020/21.

**In February 2020 new Complaints and Misconduct changed the definition of a complaint to include any expression of dissatisfaction with a police force.

***No. receiving support as at 31 March 2021.

Putting victims and survivors first

The ongoing pandemic that has affected us all has brought multiple challenges to victim service providers. They have had to be resilient and flexible to adapt to these challenges, 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. I commend the determination and dedication these services have shown during these times.

During the pandemic, I have taken full advantage of the funding opportunities that have been made available to West Mercia from the government and details of the funding awarded is outlined in this part of my report. I am pleased to report that the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) has recently confirmed we have been successful in securing a further £241,711 for 2021/22 as part of a national uplift for domestic abuse and sexual violence services. A public announcement of successful providers will be made post the PCC elections.

As part of my ongoing commitment to support victims, within my budget for 2021/22 I have outlined the need to improve the effectiveness of West Mercia Police's approach to domestic abuse. This not only includes ensuring officers are referring victims and those affected to appropriate support, but also making sure that frontline officers receive training in domestic abuse. During the year I have pushed the force to improve the referral rates of officers to West Mercia Victim Advice Line (VAL) and this rate is now just over 24%.



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 and receive the level and type of support they need tailored to their individual needs.

During 2020/21 the VAL has contacted 51,470 victims and offered support to 8,546 who requested it. 97.5% of victims leaving the VAL service in the same period left with a positive outcome.



“I think the support from the VAL has been very good, they issued us with window and door alarms and provided us with emotional support. I think they know how it feels to be a victim, they are understanding. We were very scared and anxious that our home had been burgled when we were inside”.

West Mercia Police Victim Satisfaction respondent

Assisted by additional funding from NHS England and the MoJ Covid fund, the VAL has grown in size. The £50,000 successfully secured from NHS England has funded a specialist sexual abuse and violence co-ordinator (SVN), 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. Since the start of the role in November, the SVN has triaged and needs-assessed 212 individuals. This has included one person disclosing child sexual abuse from over 40 years ago, for who the SVN was able to support a referral to WMRSASC.

Victim Support were one of the organisations I commissioned and who received additional MoJ funding to provide specialist domestic abuse workers, one of whom was co-located within the Victim Advice Line. While the pilot was successful in improving the quality of services

to victims, the funding ended. However, the value of the role was recognised and the VAL has incorporated it into its service model to ensure sustainability and continuity of service provision.

I have also continued to commission services from Victim Support around an effective restorative justice (RJ) service for West Mercia. Throughout the pandemic Victim Support have worked hard to adapt 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.

“RJ made me feel very ashamed of what I did and I hope the victim is able to move on with her life. It helped me to move on with my life. I am also going to a counsellor as a result of this process.”

Feedback from participant in an RJ conference

Specialist support services

Domestic abuse should never be tolerated. The effect it has, not only on victims and survivors but also the wider community, is devastating and tackling it remains a key priority for me. In November I launched my domestic abuse strategy which reaffirms my commitment to tackling this crime and to ensure I, along with the police service and the services I have invested in, do all we can to tackle it in all its forms.

In early 2020, I was successful in securing just over £341,000 from the MoJ to support those organisations working with victims of domestic abuse and sexual abuse and violence who had been adversely impacted by the Covid 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, including a number I have not worked with previously.

In the later part of 2020, a further £180,000 was secured 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.

During the first six months of 20/21 the victim service providers I commission, and Covid-funded organisations, supported 10,865 victims of crime to cope and recover.

Across West Mercia, I commission Women's Aid to provide an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Service. In addition, they also provide a hospital based IDVA service in all five main hospitals in our area. 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 pandemic, with all IDVAs providing a support service while homeworking. In the first nine months of 2020/21 there have been 1,289 referrals to the IDVA service, 174 to the hospital IDVA and 70 through the Drive programme. 91% of service users are satisfied with the support they have received.

“Women’s aid is the best team/people I have ever come across! There is no limit to any kind of support they can give you. The emotional support and how they treat you is over whelming and outstanding”.

Feedback from a DA survivor on securing a non-molestation order

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. I am also committed to addressing the behaviour of those carrying out domestic abuse and my approach to tackling perpetrator behaviour is outlined in the Secure section of this report.

Over the last year I have continued to provide significant financial support to AXIS and the West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC) to provide Independent Sexual Violence Advisor (ISVA) services across West Mercia.

In April 2020 I was successful in securing an additional £176,065 of Government funding to further enhance these services. The funding has provided for 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 2020/21, AXIS has received 419 new referrals for victims seeking its specialist support and is now able to offer a choice of gender of ISVA to all clients aged 11+, who are referred in to the service. Its Family ISVA post has enabled them to offer support, not only to parents of survivors, but also siblings, grandparent, partners and other loved ones.

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

During the last year 648 victims have been referred into its support services, including 181 referrals into the CHISVA and FISVA services.

“Thank you so much for all your help and support, it really is appreciated. Keep doing the amazing work you do! It really does make a difference to people lives! I shall be forever grateful”

ISVA MISVA client

Thank you for all the confidence you gave me going forward from everything that was happening, it was honestly the worst time of my life, and I have said to everyone you were my favourite part about it!”

ChISVA client

These existing ISVA services are currently delivered via an annual grant. My commissioning team has recently concluded the recommissioning of both the child sexual exploitation (CSE) and ISVA services, providing a three year contract, which was awarded to WMRSASC. The new service model will provide increased flexibility and resilience as well as streamlining processes to remove any variations in service in-line with my commitment to ensure all victims have access to the same level of service irrespective of where they live. The new contract goes live on the 1 April 2021.

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. As a result of the pandemic I have worked closely with regional partners including NHS England and Improvement, to extend the contract for the provision of this valuable service for an additional two years. This has been done to ensure continuity of service provision for some of the most vulnerable victims in our communities.

Victims and witnesses of crimes are some of the most vulnerable people within our society, so it is imperative they are supported and given the help they need to cope and recover. Integral to this is understanding their needs. My commissioning team has worked with all providers, throughout the year, to ensure that they have robust mechanisms in place for capturing the victim's voice. They are also ensuring that the victim's voice is at the heart of service delivery in-line with my 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.

I have long been fighting for victims, and early in 2021 I launched my victims' strategy for consultation, which puts their voice at the very heart of the process to deliver and review services and drive improvement. It also involves holding to account partners and organisations on the service delivered.

My Victims' Board provides me with the oversight and focus to identify and drive forward improvements in services to victims. Most recently it has reviewed the planned implementation of the revised Victims' Code coming into effect from the 1 April 2021, and throughout the year has worked to ensure support is in place for victims and witnesses attending court.

Even with the impact of Covid, West Mercia still has the best witness attendance rates in the region, standing at 88%. This is testament to the hard work and dedication of our Witness Care Units, who have been placed under extreme pressure during the pandemic.

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

This year has been one of the most challenging years in recent history, and it has brought with it exceptional challenges for policing, with the force needing to change and adapt to meet the changing demands of the national health emergency. West Mercia Police officers, staff and volunteers have risen to the challenge, and the community should be proud of their police service's contribution to tackling Covid.

Police demand transformed during the pandemic, driven by complex changes in the behaviour of society and the necessity to police in new and unforeseen ways. With fewer people wishing to engage face-to-face or invite officers into their homes to undertake enquiries, working practices had to be adapted to cope.

Covid enforcement has also been complex and subject to rapid changes throughout the year. Officers have had to adopt different policing styles dependent upon changes in legislation and focus. Initially, in-line with NPCC guidance, West Mercia Police adopted a four E's approach around enforcement. The four E's being Engage, Explain, Encourage and Enforce, with enforcement being the last option.

In September legislative changes led to a new phase of the 4Es approach, with a changed emphasis towards enforcement. This change in emphasis resulted in an uplift in the number of fixed penalty notices (FPNs) issued and I have sought reassurance from the force on the volume and appropriateness of the FPNs through my holding to account processes to ensure that they are being issued in a consistent and proportionate way across our communities.

A new form of demand created by the Covid legislation was the reporting of Covid lockdown breaches. This resulted in an unprecedented number of reports of Covid breaches during the warm summer months of the first lockdown. From March 2020 the force's online reporting system was adapted to support the reporting of Covid 19 breaches, with a 71% increase in online reporting during July and August. From the start of the first lockdown to the end of August the force received approximately 8,500 reports of Covid breaches relating to business, licensed premises and gatherings.

In the last year the overall volume of 999 calls has remained almost static however, during July and August, the force saw a 60% surge in emergency 999 calls, increasing from an average of 10,000 calls a month to 16,000. This increase in demand was reflected nationally, following the relaxation of lockdown restrictions and led to longer call waiting times for the 101. As part of my public contact holding to account I discussed the waiting times for calls with the Chief Constable as it was a point of concern. This is no reflection on the efforts

of West Mercia's call centre staff who have worked tremendously hard to deliver a huge organisational change during a global pandemic and it is reassuring that 90% of residents taking part in the West Mercia confidence and perceptions survey are confident that they could access the police in an emergency, compared to 79% in 2019/20.

I want to assure our communities that despite the ongoing health crisis, West Mercia remains focused on other priorities. In the last year my budget has supported the recruitment of an additional 93 police officers, promised by Government, and more recently my latest budget includes provision for the recruitment of an additional 91 officers through the same national uplift programme. 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 these improvements can and should now be delivered for our communities.

The uplift in officer numbers has enabled the force to redesign how it investigates crimes, which was one area for improvement identified in the last HMICFRS PEEL inspection report. The new model has seen an additional 88 investigative posts phased in across the organisation and will support the provision of consistent high quality investigations, ensuring better outcomes for the most vulnerable in our communities.

The pandemic has had a considerable impact on crime trends since the end of March 2020 when the first lockdown period began. Significant reductions in crime have been seen across the majority of crime types and there has been a 16% reduction on total recorded crime when comparing 2020/21 to the 2019/20. Crime reporting and recording volumes reduced most significantly during periods of national lockdown (1st lockdown March 2020; 2nd lockdown November 2020; 3rd lockdown January 2021). Patterns and volumes of offending subsequently increase each time national restrictions have been eased.

During the year the increase in officer numbers and the reduction in volume crime has enabled the force to reduce the number of open cases. In addition, closer working with partners has led to stronger working relationships forming. It is important that these benefits are not lost and as part of my drive for the force to plan for covid recovery I have used my holding to account powers to challenge the force to learn from the opportunities that have arisen to ensure that levels of crime and harm do not return to pre covid levels.

Of all crime types, high volume low harm acquisitive offences have seen the steepest decline in recording during the year. Theft from person offences declined by 57%, shoplifting offences declined by 35%; vehicle offences declined by 35%, and 'other' theft offences declined by 30%.

Notable reductions in recording have also been seen for high harm offences which impact on communities including a 49% reduction in business robbery, a 31% reduction in residential burglaries and a 20% reduction in violence with injury.

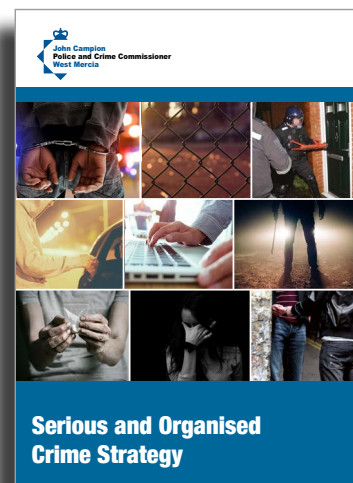
The exceptions to falling crime volumes in 2020/21 include vulnerable adult offences, drug offences, cyber-crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB). Analysis also suggests an increase in stalking and harassment offences during this period; much of which was committed online. Cyber enabled stalking offences have increased by almost 600% this year (an additional 412 offences) compared to the previous year.

Whilst volumes remain relatively low, there has been an increase in homicide offences (21 offences in 2020/21 compared to an average of 13 homicides for the last three years). These major and complex crimes have a significant impact on the organisation in terms of capacity, demand and resources.

Initially the volume of domestic abuse crimes reduced followed by a steady increase back to more typical and there has been a 4% increase comparing the first seven months of 2020/21 to the same period in the previous year. Overall there has been a 3% reduction. Many victims of domestic abuse will have undoubtedly faced a deeply traumatic experience during lockdown. The additional funding I have secured during the pandemic is making sure that we're doing the very best we can for victims and survivors during these times.

Tackling crime and reducing harm

Serious and organised crime (SOC) is crime that is planned, coordinated and committed by groups of people working together to acquire profit, power and influence. 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. My own SOC strategy outlines how I will play my part and work with others to ensure our communities are safer and feel safer.



As part of the operational response to serious and organised crime, the force is making increased use of additional new powers under the Proceeds of Crime Act which enable the force to pursue convicted criminals through the courts to seize cash and assets acquired through criminal activity. In February this year members of an organised crime gang who stole over 1 million pounds from ATMs across the UK were stripped of their assets. Following their conviction, West Mercia's Economic Crime Unit

pursued the gang using the Proceeds of Crime Act to secure forfeiture of assets deemed to be the proceeds of their criminality. Along with over £140,000 of cash, officers were able to seize assets including designer clothes and watches. A further £126,010 of cash seized by police (linked to their last ATM offence) was ordered to be paid back to the victim.

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. A key focus of both the force and PCC SOC strategies is to ensure a relentless and coordinated approach to tackling County Lines, 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. A two week regional intensification on county lines activity in February resulted in: 27 arrests; the seizing of heroin, crack cocaine, cocaine and cannabis; the seizing of over £35,000 in cash; the seizing of 20 mobile phones; and weapons including knives and an imitation hand gun.



Everything possible should be done to understand how people are drawn into criminality and prevent it from happening in the first place. I am committed to improving the lives of young people and preventing them from going down the wrong path in life. The trauma that these individuals can experience in their lives leaves them vulnerable, which greatly increases the risk of them being exploited or entering the criminal justice system

Despite the pandemic, Climb, the new name for my West Mercia Diversionary Network service, went live in May. Climb, run by the Children's Society, deliver an Early Intervention and Prevention service for 13 to 17-year-olds, incorporating sports, dance, arts and music. The service works with individuals who are: missing education; starting to be reported as missing; or at risk of entering the criminal justice system. My commissioning team have worked closely with partners and the force to promote referral pathways into the project. The service has received 263 appropriate referrals along with positive feedback from those involved.

“I feel your involvement with S is really helping and I’m so pleased he engages in your sessions and you have that time to talk things through with him.”

Mother of a service user

“Thank you for all your hard work with TR last term. I was really pleased that he engaged so well with you. He really benefitted from the sessions and able to reflect on them.”

The Forge School.

One organisation Climb has worked with is Worcestershire Arts Partnership who provide the Inspiring Futures through the Arts programme, which receives financial support from me. Over a five month period they have run a Hope and Dreams Pilot in conjunction with the Children’s Society who have referred 16 young people into the project. Many of the young people involved had experienced trauma or were living in challenging circumstances.

“F came in with a very negative mood where she was feeling down and needed to leave the room at the start of the project. She took some time to engage but as she progressed in each session her mood dramatically changed where she feeling much happier”

Teacher, Aconbury Centre

Acquisitive crimes such as burglary, vehicle crime and theft are the crimes that the public are most likely to encounter, and they are estimated to cost society billions of pounds every year. There is strong evidence that these crimes can be prevented by tactics that either remove opportunities to commit crime or act as a deterrent by increasing the chances of an offender being caught. In the last year I have secured £550,000 in 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 to feel safe, and not fear where they live or that they will become a victim of crime.

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.

I have since submitted an additional funding bid to the Home Office in the second round of the Safer Streets fund. If successful, this will see a further two areas in West Mercia benefitting from the initiative and help deliver my commitment to build safer and more secure communities.

Off the back of the Safer Streets project, I am pleased to once again be working in partnership with Telford & Wrekin Council on a new Safer Communities Project which will be launching this year. The £1.5m funding, of which I have contributed £500,000, will go towards other areas within Telford & Wrekin to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour and improve the quality of life for communities.

West Mercia Police are also committed to protecting people from this type of acquisitive crime. '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. The scheme has proved incredibly popular with individuals, communities and businesses alike.



Latest take up figures show the following are protected:

- More than 37,000 homes.
- 121 parishes.
- 520 rural farms.
- 28 allotments.
- 7 business areas and 10 industrial estates.

In addition, 260 retailers are registered with the WDBC second hand scheme and 173 petrol stations are promoting the scheme. The team also benefits from a covert asset resource utilising the latest in covert techniques to catch criminals when they do commit crime. During 2020/21 the recovered assets secured across all teams is valued at £1,131,621.

To help address the associated harm that often comes with serious acquisitive crime, an exploitation and vulnerability strand to WDBC is in place. 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. Up to the end of March 2021 a total of 26,898 people had received the training, which has been adapted to run virtually. 97% of training recipients 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.

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.

Protecting communities, particularly our most vulnerable, is an integral part of creating a safer West Mercia. While fraud is a wide ranging crime that can have a devastating effect on individuals and businesses alike, fraudsters will often target vulnerable people. Working in partnership with banks, building societies and Post Offices, the Banking Protocol is one way of tackling fraud. Under this scheme, branch staff are trained to detect the warning signs that someone is being scammed and to make an emergency call to the police. Police officers will then visit the branch to investigate the suspected fraud and arrest any suspects still on the scene. In 2020 across West Mercia 155 emergency calls were made and 89 crimes were recorded, stopping £888,829 of fraud, bring the total to over £2m since the scheme started.

Romance fraud is another type of fraud targeting often lonely vulnerable individuals and occurs when criminals feign romantic intentions towards their intended victim and use the nature of their relationship to fraudulently obtain money or sensitive information. In 2019 the average loss to victims was nearly £18,000. In support of a force operation to promote and target this type of scam, last year one of my Safer West Mercia podcasts was dedicated to romance fraud, focusing on how people can protect themselves.

Child sexual exploitation (CSE) continues to be a key priority both at a force, regional and national level. In 20/21 West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC) received £152,867 for the second year of a two year grant 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. In the last year the service has had 122 new referrals and worked with 218 young people. It is incredibly pleasing to see that 99% of the young people who have received support from the project have left it with a positive outcome. In October the service launched a young people's survivor group, which continued to provide virtual support as the lockdown continued.

“I just wanted to say thank you so much for organising this group for X. X has absolutely loved it and it's been amazingly helpful for her. She really gelled with the group and it's been really good for her. Thank you so much for all you do.”

Feedback from parent/carer of a young person engaged with the support group

One of the specialist teams within the force is the Online Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation team, who focus on the identification and arrest of offenders who access images of child abuse online. Since 2016 they have secured the safeguarding of 583 children in West Mercia which demonstrates the importance of recognising and addressing the issues CSE brings.

Roads

The periods of national lockdown over the last year have meant road networks have at times been much quieter than usual, but sadly 34 people have lost their lives on West Mercia's roads.



Roads is one of the key policing priorities for West Mercia Police and I welcome this clear strategic focus.

My investment in additional officers has enabled the force to provide an additional 19 dedicated roads policing PC posts. A two month snapshot of the work undertaken by the first nine officers into these posts shows that they submitted 139 Traffic Offence Reports and made 69 arrests, including 54 for drink or drug driving, one of a male on suspicion of murder following his vehicle triggering an ANPR camera, and one for human trafficking. This highlights the valuable contribution being made to keeping our communities safe on the roads.

As part of my own commitment, I hope to raise more awareness of road safety and reduce the amount of those being killed or injured, as well as the number of those committed road traffic offences, through further projects and initiatives.

My Roads Safety Strategy sets out my overall approach to how I intend to achieve this. I have directed resources towards initiatives that address the rising number of people killed and seriously injured on West Mercia's roads. In September I launched the Safer Roads Fund (SRF), a new £280,000 fund for initiatives which aim to improve road safety. A range of applications were received and a number of projects were approved for funding including the national charity, Road Peace, which has received £38,244 of support.

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. This initially piloted in Shropshire. 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.

Other smaller local projects securing funding include: Great Ness & Little Ness Parish Council (£18,500), Stretton Grandison (£10,235), Almeley Parish Council (£5,000) and a number of other projects including a bike checking service, high visibility kit for cyclists and supporting schools to educate young people through participation in Learn to Ride and Bike-Ability sessions.

I have invested £291,281 of funding for the MORSE project, which is an innovative safer roads partnership between YSS, West Mercia Police, Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service and Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service. MORSE aims to make our roads safer by reducing the number of risks taken by drivers throughout West Mercia. They do not concentrate on the offence in isolation but look holistically at the individual and focus on providing personalised support around their needs. 198 referrals were made into the project during the last year.



“I should never have done what I did, it has turned my life upside down. I lost everything (my home, family, job and my emotional health)...I know the changes I am making are working as I am getting my life back together...I know how to reduce my triggers and I am confident I will not re-offend.”

Feedback from a servicer user referred by the Probation Service following multiple drink driving offences

Previously my Roads Focus campaign, run in conjunction with Worcestershire and Shropshire Council, has enabled members of the public to take part in interactive training sessions. To overcome social distancing restrictions it has been possible to adapt the training which has enabled two online driver sessions to take place. The training, held in partnership with national driver-education providers TTC, test drivers on their Highway Code knowledge – including speeds, signs and hazard perception. Participants also gain an insight from a Roads Policing officer on collision statistics, the affects poor driving can have on lives and how technology, such as dash cameras, can help.

Reducing reoffending

To begin 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. I have continued to work in partnership with Worcestershire Public Health on the Drive Perpetrator programme.

Since its commencement in 2018 up to the end of March 21, the programme has worked with 254 high harm perpetrators, and has achieved reductions in high levels of physical abuse (72%), sexual abuse (75%), stalking and harassment (53%) and jealous, controlling and coercive behaviour (62%). The Drive case managers work closely with the IDVAs mentioned earlier in this report and 83.2% of victims/survivors associated with Drive who have engaged with IDVA services have reported outcomes of increased safety / reduction in risk at case closure

Originally funded with Police Transformation funding, this is now an equally split arrangement with Worcestershire County Council Public Health and I have extended my funding commitment to March 2022. Independent cost vs benefit analysis has been conducted, which demonstrates significant savings for criminal justice, public health and local authority agencies.

In October my commissioning team were successful in securing a further £178,863 from the Home Office to extend the Drive project into Herefordshire. Since then we have worked with colleagues in Worcestershire and Herefordshire Councils on further joint commissioning and working arrangements which has enabled Herefordshire Drive to go live in March 2021. The project is aiming to target 125 high harm perpetrators per year and in the first month of operation three multi-agency Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Panel (DAPP) meetings have been conducted.

As well as additional money enabling the extension of Drive, a further £207,163 was awarded by the Home Office to roll out the Respect Young People's programme. This programme includes a variety of training packages designed to support those professionals working with young people who are displaying domestic abuse perpetrator behaviour. It will see over 400 staff trained from a variety of agencies including Police, Local Authority and Youth Justice Service across West Mercia. This will ensure that those working within these organisations are better equipped to provide vital support to young people that are abusive or violent towards those close to them. Part of this funding will also provide an evaluation of the success of the project and is due later in 2021, however Covid has impacted on the programme which has had to be adapted for remote delivery.

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.

Jointly with other regional Commissioners, and the National Probation Service, I have provided £21,400 of match funding to the Community Rehabilitation Company to run sessions which help offenders move away from aggression. The 12 month pilot project will form part of an out of court disposal order, helping

around 40 offenders to explore and identify triggers of anger and anxiety, and develop skills to manage their behaviour. Through the investment in this joint initiative I am committed to breaking this cycle of behaviour. It provides yet another avenue for police and courts to help offenders to rehabilitate, ultimately reducing crime and preventing long term impacts.

I have also supported Willowdene Farm for the LINC project (Local Initiatives Nurturing Change) which is for women at risk of entering the criminal justice system, or are in it to reduce their risk of offending. During the last year there have been 74 new referrals into the project, 60% of women leaving the service have achieved a positive outcome and 51 have gained a new qualification. Some examples of the support offered and outcomes achieved include:

- A Worcestershire woman completed a seven week diversionary placement, working on a range of issues in relation to past trauma, debts, family relationships and planning for future constructive activity. She continues to be supported by Willowdene staff in the community.
- A Telford woman completed three weeks of residential placement in March after a period of alcohol detoxification as a diversionary intervention; her network of community support was established in this time and she was discharged to continue recovery with ongoing support from Willowdene staff.

Financial support has also gone to the West Mercia Youth Justice Service to develop, support and deliver the range of interventions to support youth caution and conditional cautions, as well as support the joint decision model for young people committing offences. This includes contacting known victims, where appropriate, to provide them with information and invite them to become involved in restorative processes. 155 young people were referred into this service between April and September 2020.

Criminal justice

The Criminal Justice System (CJS) is a complex web of partners, roles, budgets and priorities. An integral part of the CJS is the courts and this has been adversely affected by the pandemic. Initially very few trials were heard, resulting in victims facing a longer wait for justice, and their associated anxiety and trauma being prolonged. Given the capacity constraint of the Courts and the number of cases backing up, West Mercia Police Witness Care Units are now supporting over 21,000 victims and witnesses, an increase of 36% since March 2020, which has placed additional demands against police resources.

During the last year I have pressed ministers to take action to address the courts back log and I have also increased capacity in victim services, made offers to work with partners and supported innovation. I am committed to doing what I can but others need to step forward as well. While all of West Mercia's magistrates courts are now open, and is one of the only areas which in the last few months

has been able to clear its pre-Covid backlog in these courts, the picture in the Crown Courts is less positive and I shall continue to press for improvements. Victims want to move forward and recover. Part of that requires a justice system that works for them.

Collaboration and partnership working

Building a safer West Mercia is not, and cannot be, the sole responsibility of any one person or organisation. The Drive programmes in Worcestershire and Herefordshire, along with the new safer streets initiative in Telford demonstrate my commitment to developing strong collaboration and partnership arrangements to deliver shared outcomes, improve services for our communities and achieve efficiencies.

A key element of the police response to dealing with the pandemic has been working with partners to provide an effective joined up response on a local level. While this has brought immediate benefits to communities on the ground, it has also helped strengthen relationships with partners, which need to be sustained for the future and this is something I have discussed with the Chief Constable in my holding to account meetings. One benefit of the strengthened relationships is the formation of a Vulnerability Performance Executive Group which see senior leaders come together to identify issues and seek improvements in services. Significant issues relating to mental health prosecutions and also NHS long term planning has already been agreed and actioned as a result so far.

I continue to work with and provide financial support to the five CSPs in West Mercia. Each CSP is provided with a ring-fenced budget to be spent on proactive community safety initiatives, addressing local needs and creating a safer and more secure West Mercia. In addition, on top of the £1.25m I've already committed on CCTV during my term, in 20/21, a further £325,000 was made available to local Community Safety Partnerships to secure further improvements to new and existing CCTV schemes. In providing this additional funding I have made clear that the investment is for improvements in new technology and infrastructure and not to fund scheme monitoring costs.



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.

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.

One example of how regionally collaborative opportunities are being identified and developed relates to the proceeds of crime recovered as part a major policing operation in the West Midlands force area. While the proceeds will be returned to the West Midlands force area, as this was where the money was recovered, all four force areas are collaborating on a plan which will see some of this resource invested back into the ROCU. It will also go into preventative interventions across the wider region, bringing benefits to all our communities.



Reforming West Mercia

Enhancing and improving West Mercia Police

Transforming West Mercia Police into a modern innovative force is one of the central aims of my Safer West Mercia Plan. Part of the necessary reform to achieve this has been the ending of the policing alliance with Warwickshire Police. At the conclusion of the alliance with Warwickshire two new collaboration agreements were entered into to enable Warwickshire to transition out of the alliance by the end of September 2021 at the latest. One was for a shared IT service, the other was for West Mercia to host transactional, forensics and file storage services for Warwickshire. The shared IT service is on a fairer funding arrangement than that of the alliance and any residual IT services needed by Warwickshire after the end of September will be on a hosted basis with them paying in full for their share of any service required. These new arrangements are not only robust and effective but are ensuring each force's financial contributions are fair, in stark contrast to the previous alliance agreement.

My budget proposals for 21/22 will ensure vital transformation work will continue as planned within the police force to improve services and efficiency even further, despite the ongoing impact of Covid. It includes significant additional resource for things such as digital forensics, further investment in the new state-of-the-art police call centre and police ICT. I pledged that our police would have the resources they need to do their work to the best of their ability, and that I would ensure West Mercia Police

catch up and keep up with technology. These investments demonstrate how I am continuing to meet those promises and ensure that progress is not delayed or deferred.

Investing in our people

My decision to provide additional officers has been at the heart of my commitment to deliver a more secure West Mercia. Officer numbers have grown even further with the Government's commitment to add 20,000 officers nationwide. This uplift has resulted in an extra 93 officers this year, with a further 91 next year. This investment will see an additional 399 officers compared to May 2016.

West Mercia Police have recently launched a new People Strategy which further demonstrates the force's commitment to effectively supporting and empowering its workforce. A key objective within the strategy is to build the personal resilience of the workforce. This involves developing a trauma informed approach to promote recovery and support individuals through their career journey. I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account for delivery of this strategy.

The Occupational Health Team, welfare officers and the force's employee assistance programme are well embedded and have been utilised to provide officers and staff with physical and psychological support during the pandemic. A Covid Welfare and Testing team was also established and took on responsibility for assessing requirements for shielding, overseeing workforce testing and results, and providing expert advice and guidance to the

workforce. Officer sickness for 2020/21 is at a five year low of 4.1%. Staff sickness up 0.1% from 2019/20 but remains at a relatively low level compared to previous years. Whilst this performance is positive, West Mercia is still recording a much higher rate of sickness than the average of both the public and private sectors and is an area I will continue to monitor.

Other successful initiatives include an alliance wide apprentice scheme, providing opportunities for young people to take part in a 12 month apprentice scheme, taking part in 'Police Now' a national talent programme for graduates and implemented a new Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA) programme. The first intake of PCDA student officers started in January 2020 and the Degree-holder Entry Programme (DHEP) for recruits with a degree commenced in July 2020. March 2021 saw the first cohort of 17 student police officers on the regional Detective Constable Degree Holder Entry Programme (DCDHEP) starts with the force. It is clear that there is a real appetite for investigative careers with West Mercia Police and these new student detectives will help bolster its capacity and in doing so provide the best service to victims.

These new routes into policing have attracted a more diverse pool of candidates and the new intakes have been more representative of our communities in terms of gender and ethnicity. In the first nine months of 20/21 this has resulted in a joiner rate of 7.9% for ethnic minorities in comparison to an average of 2.1% in the previous three years. The female joiner rate has also increased to 42.6% in comparison to an

average of 33.8%. This means that 2.84% of West Mercia's officers are now from an ethnic minority and 32.97% are female, the most diverse the force has been in its history.

The improvements in female equality within West Mercia Police has been highlighted as a national example of best practice in the second annual HeForShe report on Gender Equality in UK Policing. In particular the force's Authorised Firearms Team was praised for the work it has done to attract more female applicants into these specialist roles.

I am committed to ensuring that the workforce of West Mercia better reflects the makeup of our communities and the uplift in additional police recruit numbers I have provided should be providing a real opportunity for the force to become more diverse and I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account to ensure everything is done to achieve this.



To further support the positive action initiatives, the force has recently launched the 'Step' programme in partnership with its staff networks to focus on improving workforce representation at the point of recruitment, across ranks and within specialist roles, ensuring attraction, retention and development of a diverse and inclusive workforce. The programme provides a range of support and services for new recruits and existing members of the workforce who identify with protected characteristics and builds on my commitments to ensure the workforce better reflects the demographic make-up of our communities.

I have continued my own commitment to investing in people, recruiting a graduate policy and commissioning 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. Many of the interns working in my office have successfully secured permanent employment following their internships.

Investing in technology

SAAB Safe, the new police command and control system, was successfully installed in the summer. The system, which call handlers use to record details of crimes, emergencies and other incidents, and to deploy police officers accordingly, replaced an ageing 30-year-old system, which was no longer fit for purpose. The new software helps the call handlers to

gather more information at the first point of contact, allowing the force to respond more effectively and gather more detail about a caller's circumstances. In the last month a roll out of a mobile Safe app has begun which will allow officers to directly input into the system using their mobile phones, improving access to intelligence and information for officers on route to and at an incident and provide for efficiencies within OCC with officers ability to 'self serve'. My investment in SAAB Safe gives staff and officers the tools they need to deliver the best possible service to our communities for years to come and should lead to sustained improvements as the benefits of the new SAAB system start to be fully realised.

Ensuring the force has the right contact channels for the public is one of the commitments in my Safer West Mercia Plan. The force is in the process of replacing its Community Messaging System (CMS) with a new service, Neighbourhood Matters.



This is a much more intelligent system which will enable people to get updates, how and when they want, tailored to their interests and concerns, rather than a one size fits all system. When registering for the first time the user is asked to provide some background information about themselves including how they want to be contacted, frequency of contact, what they are

interested in and any concerns. This will enable the force to provide targeted and tailored advice to each individual. Other improvements will enable police supervisors to have an overview of the messages coming in for their teams so can ensure that if an officer is off sick or on leave it will be seen and dealt with. I welcome the introduction of Neighbourhood Matters which will make the force more accessible to people and help provide reassurance.

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. This has included working with partners to introduce Video Remand Hearings (VRH) across Shropshire and Herefordshire. Regrettably this technology has shown to have had a detrimental impact organisationally for West Mercia Police as the force has had to assign operational resources in order to manage the new process, undermining its ability to protect and safeguard local communities. The impact on policing has been replicated across the country and, as a result, the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) announced they wouldn't be supporting the current approach from 1st December. It is my duty, as Commissioner, to ensure that the communities of West Mercia receive the best possible policing service and unfortunately the current approach to video remand hearings is undermining that ability. I have called on the Government to consider how this situation moves forward, and to ensure that the communities of West Mercia don't suffer from how it is currently running

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.

With the withdrawal of Worcestershire County Council from Place Partnership to take effect in March 2021, I and the remaining partners consider the most effective and efficient option for the future of Place Partnership Limited (PPL) is to proceed with a Members Voluntary Liquidation, plus re-establishment of in-house services at each authority.

This decision has not been taken lightly but I believe the establishment of the in-house teams represents an ideal opportunity to provide both a better value for money and enhanced property management service model. An insourced model will enable West Mercia Police and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) to realise their mid and long term visions as well as delivering their estates and financial strategies. The transition to an in-house team has gone smoothly and is effective from 1 April 2021.

While the establishment of an in-house estates function has been a significant piece of work, it has not detracted from the day to day management of the policing estate.

Most recently an innovative project with Redditch Borough Council, Worcestershire County Council and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service will see a three-way land swap and purchase between the borough council, county council and the fire service, enabling the new police and fire station to be built. This partnership solution enables improvements for vital emergency services, maintains the visible police presence local people want, supports the local economy, and achieves best value for local taxpayers. It is an innovative, forward-thinking approach and I am pleased to be delivering these improvements for the communities in Redditch.

As part of my commitment to reduce the environmental impact of policing, five new electric vehicles have joined the police vehicle fleet. The new zero emission vehicles will be used for community policing. They are part of a pilot scheme that signifies the start of the plan to move West Mercia Police's entire fleet to ultra-low emission vehicles over the next decade.

This is a significant moment for the force with these five cars representing a positive step forward in reducing our carbon footprint. Whilst we are still some way away from replacing the entire fleet, these vehicles which will be used by community policing teams are another example of my reform of West Mercia Police. I am very much looking forward to seeing these cars out in the communities, supporting visible policing and tackling crime.



Reassuring West Mercia's communities

It is vital our communities are not only safe, but feel safe too. People need to be able to engage with both myself and their police to be confident that we are visible, accessible, understanding of local priorities and able to tackle them effectively.

Throughout the pandemic the force has sought to provide a higher level of visible police presence within communities to provide public reassurance and maintain public confidence. In support of this the force has received an additional £466,243 of Government funding to support more visible policing in West Mercia around Covid-19. This funding has provided additional Covid patrols across all the policing areas. These patrols are not only bringing visible reassurance to our communities but also carrying out valuable enforcement work to target those individuals and business who choose to flout the regulations.



The new force website enables much more convenient access to online crime reporting and services such as firearms licence renewal. In response to the pandemic this facility was extended to give concerned members of the public the ability to report Covid breaches in a dedicated area of the site. Last year the online contact facility received 15,822 reports with a 189% increase in volume when comparing April 2020 to March 2021.

As Commissioner it is my duty to provide oversight and scrutiny to make sure that West Mercia Police is acting in the best interests of the communities it serves. Feedback I have received from our communities and my holding to account of the Chief Constable has reassured me that the force's response to enforcement throughout the pandemic has remained proportionate and effective.

It is clear however, from both operational demand and community feedback, that the force needs to maintain and enhance wherever possible a strong, visible presence. My 2021/22 budget set out how I intend to work with the force to deliver a community policing charter, which will give reassurance to the public that they will receive what they need and reasonably expect from their police force. This approach will ensure the force makes best possible use of all available resources to understand communities and the issues affecting them and make sure local communities are informed about and understand the work the force are doing on their behalf.

It's been a year that has challenged communities across West Mercia due to the restrictions on our movements. We have all had to adopt the way we work and communicate and make significant changes to how we live.

I am pleased to see more people engaging with my office and I. In 2016 around 350 items of correspondence or casework were logged by my office. That figure has now risen to more than 1,300 items in the last year. A contact management system is in place to ensure that anyone contacting me as Commissioner receives a prompt, personal service.

In the last year I have issued more than 200 public comments or articles in order to ensure local communities are aware of my views, decisions, or strategies.

In the last year my official Facebook page has seen an increase of 15% for page 'likes', with content reaching around 36,000 people each month. On Twitter, the average 'impression' is 100,000 and the page averages 3,000 new visitors each month with approximately 60 new followers each month. 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.

In the last year, just over 22,500 different users have visited my website, a slight decrease on the previous year. There were 31,697 individual sessions (up 1.75%), and 74,041 page views (up 2.65%).

In early 2021 a new version of the website was launched, to ensure the site is fully compliant with changes in accessibility legislation. At the start of the pre-election period for the PCC elections an adapted version of the website temporarily went live in line with election requirements.

Where possible 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 usually clock up a considerable amount of hours of service. However, due to Covid many volunteers couldn't carry out their normal work within communities. It is hoped that as restrictions ease, their incredibly valuable work can continue.

Rural and Business Crime

I know that sometimes rural communities feel isolated and have the perception of being forgotten. The impact of rural crime on farmers, businesses and the local communities shouldn't be underestimated.



My investment in tackling rural crime has enabled the force to appoint five dedicated Rural and Business Officers (RABOs) to work with local communities to provide support, advice and reassurance. This resource has been further strengthened through my precept to provide warranted officers in each local policing areas whose role is focused on rural and business crime. These officers work alongside the RABOs as part of a Wider Problem Solving team. In the last year the RABOs have completed 280 farm crime visits and undertaken a further 200 farm engagements, providing reassurance, advice and resources to help support rural communities. The PCs have undertaken over 900 visits to people and premises in rural areas and dealt with over 270 wildlife crimes.



Both the RABOs and the PCs are proactive in doing all they can to help our rural communities and supporting the policing teams that they work with. I will continue to prioritise rural communities and provide West Mercia Police

with the resources it needs to tackle rural crime and help to ensure our communities are safe and protected

Cyber-crime

Cyber-crime remains an ever present and growing threat in our communities and is recognised as one of the key national security threats by the Home Secretary. The Covid pandemic has undoubtedly seen many more individuals and businesses affected and in the first three months of 2021 cyber enabled crime has increased by 26% increase compared to the same period last year. I have used my Safer West Mercia Podcast series to help highlight two issues which have seen an increase in the last year, on romance fraud and scams.

The force has recently reviewed and relaunched its cyber-crime strategy to focus on the four P's approach of pursue, protect, prevent and prepare. In support of this the force wide officer uplift has enabled two PC Cyber Protect Officer posts to be created in the Cyber Crime Unit. These roles will focus on delivering consistent nationally approved cyber security advice to businesses and members of the public as well as providing cyber security advice to victims of cyber dependent crime to reduce the risk of repeat victimisation.

In the last month West Mercia Police has announced that every business and organisation in the area can now get access to a free tool called Police CyberAlarm, designed to help them understand and monitor the threats they face from malicious cyber activity. Government funded, Police CyberAlarm acts as

like ‘CCTV camera’ monitoring the traffic seen by a businesses’ connection to the internet. It will detect and provide regular reports of suspected malicious activity, enabling a business to take steps to improve their cyber resilience. Once a business or organisation becomes a Police CyberAlarm member, they will need to install the ‘CyberAlarm Virtual Server’ which will then collect and process traffic logs identifying suspicious activity from the firewall. I welcome this new initiative which will enable all businesses irrespective of size to take steps to protect themselves from cyber-crime.

Police ethics

Ensuring that West Mercia Police upholds an ethical policing culture is an important part of my role. I have continued to liaise closely with the Force’s Professional Standards Department (PSD) and have held quarterly briefings with the head of PSD to ensure complaints are dealt with fairly and complainants receive the service they need.

“88% 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 2020/21

In early 2020, legislative changes brought significant changes to the police complaints and discipline system. As a consequence my office has taken on responsibility for carrying out complaint appeals that were previously referred

to the force and in the last year I completed 89 complaint reviews. An independent and qualified external body has been appointed to assess reviews on my behalf, although the final decision on the outcome remains with me.

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

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.



The work of the volunteers is highly valued and I am always grateful for their contribution to West Mercia. Their visits are crucial to the safety of those held in custody and for providing transparency and confidence in policing.

There are currently 37 ICVs in the West Mercia scheme, with ages between 18 and 88 years old, including two ICVs who each have over 25 years' experience of custody visiting.

Due to the extra stress and risk associated with Covid we have seen 12 ICV members retire or leave the role during 2020. However, we have also received several applications from members of the public who are currently going through the recruitment process and following training will be ready to do visits.

In March 2020, ICV visits were suspended as a result of Government guidance surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. This was for the safety of our ICVs, staff and others coming into custody. During this time, the ICV Scheme Coordinator was able to maintain oversight through dip sampling of custody records with a weekly phone call to custody inspectors for an overview of detainee care, safeguarding and access to appropriate support.

In June 2020, volunteers moved to virtual checks using digital technology and mobile phones. This enabled social distancing, whilst maintaining the vital contact ICVs have with those in custody. By October 2020, physical visits were able to resume however these were suspended again in November with ICVs returning to virtual visits. This has meant an overall reduction in visits being undertaken, with around 100 checks in total.

In 2021, with the advent of the Covid-19 vaccination programme, there looks to be some light at the end of the tunnel. The scheme will continue to evolve as and when restrictions are lifted, making sure that we get the delicate

balance of maintaining the scheme, and the safety of our volunteers and detainees right.

Community engagement

Despite lockdown restrictions I have sought to maintain 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, my monthly newsletter changed to fortnightly to ensure timely information continued to be available.

I have worked with partners and used my Community Ambassadors to ensure that the most vulnerable in communities are being supported. Messages have been issued across social media channels, as well as through local media. I have also been working with partners through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) to ensure key messages are captured and shared from all partners.

In April 2020 as a result of the Covid 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.

I have successfully used modern technology to connect with the communities of West Mercia. My 'Safer West Mercia Podcast' series which 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 now 31 podcasts available to view, including a special edition four part series called White Ribbon which focusses on domestic abuse.

With Covid forcing the cancellation of many summer events, I was able to give West Mercia residents the chance to engage virtually with myself, and local policing Superintendents, in a series of live question and answer sessions. The sessions were advertised ahead of the date in order to give members of the public the opportunity to submit questions. A number of questions were received on topics such as cycle safety, drug dealing and anti-social behaviour. These were then streamed on social media channels to allow communities to watch.



Over the Christmas period the ‘Now that’s what I call a safer West Mercia, the official Christmas crime prevention playlist’ was launched. This was a series of crime prevention messages aimed at keeping communities safe, based around popular Christmas songs. Themes included keeping safe on the roads, checking on the isolated and vulnerable, looking out

for friends and family who may be at risk of domestic abuse and behaving responsibly within the Covid restrictions. A video highlighting these important subjects was released on my social media channels each week over the Christmas period.

In the New Year I used an online media platform to hold four public engagement events across the local policing areas. Joining me on these events were the West Mercia Police We Don’t Buy Crime team, the Rural and Business Officer for each areas and a representative from the Road Safety team. Speeding was by far the most common issue raised at all the events; other issues of note were ASB, drugs and officer visibility. I showed my commitment to listening to and acting on people’s concerns by funding a new Speed Indicator Device in Lyonshall and meeting with local councillors to further discuss speeding in and around Hollywood, Worcestershire.

Whilst virtual sessions are no substitute for face to face events, they are a great and safe alternative that allow communities to get involved and ask the questions that matter to them most and are a key part of my commitment to ensure community voices are heard.

Public consultation

Despite the pandemic the West Mercia confidence and perceptions survey has continued to gauge local views on policing and crime across the force area. To remain Covid secure the survey has moved to a telephone only basis but has still interviewed approximately 3,000 people at random, delivering statistically significant samples for each local policing area (LPA) – Herefordshire, South Worcestershire, North Worcestershire, Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. Detailed quarterly survey results are published on my website, but headline figures for 2020/21 show that 86% of residents have confidence in West Mercia Police and 61% are satisfied with the level of policing in the local area.

Last summer I chose to extend the contract for survey meaning local views on a range of subjects, including levels of confidence and trust, as well as officer accessibility and visibility will continue to be captured for a further two years and will help to provide invaluable feedback on the success of the Community Policing Charter.

I believe strongly in the value of town and parish councils and the understanding they have of the communities they serve. As such I have been keen to engage with them and get their feedback on local policing and crime. Later than usual because of Covid, I launched my annual survey with them in October. In total, 128 councils responded to the survey with 83% saying they felt the police were doing an excellent, good or fair job but 55% felt police

visibility in their local area was poor or very poor. The results from the survey are helping the force to shape the new Community Policing Charter along with the public perceptions and confidence survey.

I have also conducted five formal consultations with communities and partners, around my proposed strategies on domestic abuse, road safety and victims, the 2021/22 precept and in October I launched my ‘your voice - what matters to you?’ survey. As Commissioner, I’m committed to ensuring that the views of the communities that make up West Mercia are at the heart of my decision making.

This survey has given me a valuable insight into what matters to people, and where their areas of concern are from a policing perspective and helped shaped my decision making in preparing the 2021/22 police budget. Of the 998 respondents, the majority (72%) said that they feel safe in their local area. However, the majority (67%) also said that they are worried about the level of crime in their area. Anti-social behaviour, drugs and road safety featured highly for local concerns.

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. These processes ensure I can effectively scrutinise force performance on behalf of our communities and push for change and improvements where needed.

My office have been actively engaged with the force as its new performance framework has been implemented. My office has been both supporting and challenging of the force in the development of measures to ensure the commitments set out in my budget, and those in the new Community Policing Charter, can be effectively monitored and deliver on improvements for West Mercia's communities.

Throughout the pandemic I have maintained a programme of local policing area visits, either by holding virtual meetings with the local commander or in person when restrictions allowed. This 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.

I also hold regular meetings with a number of other service leads including the head of the Professional Standards Department and the Superintendent lead for serious and organised crime. I have ensured that where appropriate, a senior member of my office attends any Critical Incident Management Meetings (CIMMs)

concerning issues which could impact on the trust and confidence of the public in the force. This has included all the meetings in relation to the policing response to the police. This 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 holding to Account programme provides 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, diversity, equality and inclusion, mental health, Covid, public contact, domestic abuse and serious and organised crime. In each case, actions have been followed up and performance reviewed in future meetings with outcomes published on my website.

In addition to formal meetings, I also have a virtual holding to account process, where performance and service issues that do not require a focused thematic meeting, but are areas for which I wish to retain closer oversight, are scrutinised on an ad hoc basis. I submit a written email request to the Chief Constable asking for him to provide a response to the concerns I have raised. If I consider further scrutiny is required the issue can be brought into the holding to account meetings. Issues addressed this way have included confidence and the impact of the EU exit.

I have also held three Facebook live meetings, in April on policing during the pandemic, in July on diversity, equality and inclusion and in January on the policing budget. It's my role to give communities a voice at the highest level. This is something I've been doing throughout my time in office, and by hosting the meetings online through social media, I am building on this to ensure everyone can be more involved in the most open and transparent way.

**Live on Facebook @WestMerciaPCC
Monday July 13th 6pm**

What is West Mercia Police's approach to engaging with communities to gain confidence and trust?



Ensuring our communities have confidence in the police is one of the key commitments in my Safer West Mercia Plan and the budget. I have sought assurance from the Chief Constable on the levels of public confidence across West Mercia and how the force is working to positively influence it. While more recent scrutiny has highlighted there is still work to be done the results from the latest West Mercia confidence and perceptions survey are showing improvements in public confidence.

86% of residents have confidence in West Mercia Police, compared to 83% in 2019/20 and 90% of residents are confident they could access the police in an emergency compared to 79% in 2019/20. I am pleased to see these improvements.

I have promised to make sure that officers and staff have a fair and equal opportunity to join and progress a career within the force. There needs to be a drive to create a diverse leadership for the future, which better represents the communities of West Mercia. Over the summer I held both a formal meeting and a Facebook live event seeking assurance on these issues. The results from a joint PCC / force survey with under-represented groups formed part of the meeting. The survey has led to the establishment of a Speak Up working Group, focused on creating an environment where individuals can speak up if they are uncomfortable and ensuring that the force has sufficiently robust processes in place to support individuals that Speak Up.

Protecting the most vulnerable is integral to my mission as Commissioner, and I want to make sure those that need support receive it. In October I challenged the Chief Constable for the force to step up its organisational response to those in mental health crisis across the three counties. I am pleased to see that some of the work, whilst still in its early stages or in development, has since been progressed. This has included developing a new mental health strategy, establishing a Vulnerability Partnership Executive Group and embedding local triage arrangements.

Independent scrutiny

To support me in my oversight role, the Joint Independent Audit and Standards Committee provides independent scrutiny of activities, processes and policies.

In response to the Covid pandemic, HMICFRS, which is the lead body for the independent assessment of police forces and fire services, suspended its inspection programme in March 2020. The programme was restarted later in the year but moved to a mostly virtual approach at the beginning of 2021.

As a consequence, the next PEEL assessment report on the effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy of policing in West Mercia will not be published until January 2022. However as the Inspectorate has moved to a programme of continuous assessment different elements of the PEEL assessment will be subject to insight visits through the year.

A revisit on the PEEL 2018/19 investigations cause of concern / recommendations did take place in November. In general the feedback received was positive as the force was able to demonstrate improvements in many areas. I shall support the force in continuing to make the necessary improvements to ensure it can provide an efficient and effective service.

At the beginning of November the force contributed to the HMICFRS inspection into the policing response to Covid. The force were inspected on one specific element of the inspection covering preparedness, partnerships and strategic leadership and West Mercia was one of 11 forces for inspection as part of a follow up the 2019 thematic report 'Fraud: Time to Choose'. While the findings from these inspections form part of national reports, the feedback given directly to force on the elements they are inspected does enable the force to review its approach and performance.

The West Mercia Police and Crime Panel is responsible for scrutinising my activities and responsibilities and receives regular updates from me on how the commitments I have made in my Safer West Mercia Plan are being achieved.

Our resources

Revenue Outturn

The 2020/21 total revised net revenue budget for West Mercia was £234.890m which is funded through a combination of central government grants and council tax income. There was also use of reserves to fund transformation and improvement projects. At the end of the year, this budget was underspent by £0.881m.

The position on PCC spend and force spend in 2020/21 are shown below:

Area of spend – under/(over) spending	£m
Policing	(0.386)
Office of the PCC	1.267
Total net underspend in 2019/20	0.881
Additional grant recognised in 2020/21 to cover future years Council Tax lost income (held in reserves).	0.741

The most significant event effecting 2020/21 has been the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic. It has affected all areas of public life which has had a significantly impact on policing. With national lockdowns reducing crimes such as burglary, night time economy and vehicle related crime, it saw increased issues around domestic abuse. It also meant that forces had to respond to policing the national restrictions. All of this was in the context of ensuring officer were able to do this safely and moving to a remote working model.

During the year the force was able to deliver on the £4.786m of savings plans identified in the budget, ensuring that services were value for money. However pressures on budgets remain around management of officer pay and overtime, managing the contract with Warwickshire Police for third party services and the cost of providing IT services.

I believe that the force has recognised the pressures on the budget given the challenging operating environment and put control mechanisms in place to manage its finances to ensure that the overspend was kept to a minimum. I will continue to work with the Force to ensure that they have the resources and control mechanisms in place to operate within the budget allocated to them.

During 2020/21 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. With the impact of COVID19, the Ministry of Justice and Home Office have allocated additional funding of £1.000m to West Mercia to support these providers through the pandemic.

I have focused on ensuring that this additional allocation has been spent on those who need it most, particularly on those suffering domestic abuse and sexual violence. As officer time have been focused on allocating this additional funding, it has meant that there was limited ability to implement plans to extend the commissioning of services, resulting in an underspend of £1.267m against the budget allocated.

For 2021/22 I have ensured that the resources are available to focus on investing directly into our communities to tackle offending, support victims of crime and to invest in early intervention projects.

Use of reserves

At the start of the financial year West Mercia had a balance of £14.991m of reserves. During the year £1.952m of reserves were utilised to fund one off projects. The most significant proportion was allocated to cover the costs of Operation Lincoln, which is a major investigation into allegations of manslaughter at an NHS Trust.

The PCC has applied to the Home Office for a grant to help cover the majority of the cost, but this is not expected to cover the total cost of the investigation. As at the 31st March 2021 the balance on reserves have been replenished by the underspend reported and the specific grant received to cover future Council Tax income losses. The balance is expected to be £14.661m. Of which £7.351m has been allocated as General Reserves and the rest has been earmarked and allocated to cover expected future expenditure.

The balance on the general reserves is £0.376m above the minimum level of reserves that West Mercia has identified as being required in the Reserves Strategy. This will ensure that West Mercia has the resources available to support me in achieving my objectives, whilst ensuring resilience to cope with unexpected financial burdens which may occur.

Capital position

To ensure the force remains both effective and efficient, it is undergoing significant transformation, much of which is reliant on capital investment. During 2020/21 there was a total of £12.995m of capital expenditure Mercia, this includes

- £1.3m which has been spent on our estates strategy.
- There was expenditure of £9.419m in ICT of which £5.440m has been invested in our IT systems to transform them to be fit for purpose for the future.
- The remaining £2.235m has been invested in vehicles, road safety and other equipment.

More capital expenditure has been identified as being required to ensure that the force continues to remain fit for purpose. The 2021/22 budget includes £18.9m of planned expenditure with a total of £93.8m identified as being required over the next 4 years

Looking forward

The setting of the 2021/22 budget provided the opportunity to challenge the force to ensure that it can operate within the finances available whilst ensuring it can meet the needs of its residents more effectively, putting them first. I have set a balanced budget which included £4.640m of savings to ensure that policing in West Mercia is delivering value for money. As highlighted above I have approved capital and also revenue expenditure of £4.063m to enable the force to continue to transform and reform the services it provides.

I am pleased that the Government has recognised the challenges policing faces and provided increased funding in the 2021/22 budget to employ additional officers. An additional 91 officers are being recruited during the 2021/22 taking the total increase in police officers to nearly 400 in the past 4 years. 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 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.



Commissioning and grants

My Safer West Mercia Plan sets the overarching framework for local commissioning. This has been complemented by my Commissioning and Grants Strategy, which ensures that the commissioning of services or awarding of grants have followed consistent, transparent processes so that all parties, including our communities, can have faith in how decisions involving public money are being taken.

Understanding and responding to local need is a key part of my commissioning and in the last year a series of needs assessments were undertaken by an external consultant across a range of crime types. Through the enhanced understanding provided by the assessments, 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.

I have continued to seek out new opportunities to increase collaboration and jointly commission services with partners across the West Mercia force area and beyond, such as the pilot anger management course mentioned earlier. I have also 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.

In 2020/21 I invested more than £6m across over 48 different projects, targeted towards supporting victims to cope and recover, as well as reducing offending and reoffending throughout West Mercia. In 20/21, the total amount of funding allocated to victim services exceeds £3.7m, with £2.2 of that being provided through a MoJ grant.

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

Covid community fund

In response to the Covid crisis, I established a Coronavirus response fund. In total £47,279.94 of the £50,000 earmarked was given out to community groups, charities and organisations allowing groups at the heart of the pandemic to purchase essential items such as face masks, gloves and hand sanitiser, as well as printing supplies and envelopes, enabling the most vulnerable and at risk to be supported throughout. Examples include:

- £1,064 to Weobley Parish Council to enable the Weobley Support Group to deliver prescriptions and food to vulnerable groups and to distribute the parish magazines to all households.
- £1,680 to Wellington Town Council to enable the Polish Support Group to provide items for NHS workers and packs for children in hospital in Telford and Shrewsbury.
- £810 to Wythall Parish Council to help support vulnerable people in the local community.

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 - £2,750 towards a countywide project to eliminate rough sleeping and sofa surfing.
- North Worcestershire - £1,920 for the purchase of WDBC packs to enhance allotment security.
- Shropshire - £3,990 to purchase a knife arch to provide a capability to detect knives and weapons.
- South Worcestershire - £1,064 to purchase a drugs box and (alcohol) visual impairment kit for use by the Safer Schools team in schools.
- Telford and Wrekin - £3,200 towards equipment for the Next Generation Youth Club in Woodside.



Appendix

The year in numbers 2019/20

Putting victims and survivors first



2,300 new referrals to Women's Aid IDVA service



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% 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% of 101 calls answered within 30 seconds

Building a more secure West Mercia

87,176 offences were recorded:

44 people killed on West Mercia's roads

1,561 hate crimes reported

320 offenders managed via IOM

3,383 rape and other sexual offences

23,315 violence without injury offences

Reassuring West Mercia's communities



83% of residents have confidence in West Mercia Police*



54% satisfied with levels of local policing*



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



14% reduction in recorded police complaints

* West Mercia Public Confidence and Perceptions Survey 2019/20



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