



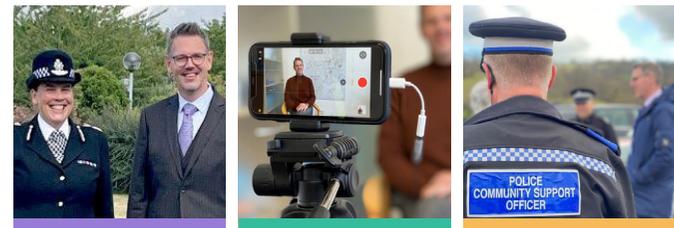
# Annual report

2021-22



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## Foreword

As I reflect on the last year, it's easy to forget just how much Covid continued to impact it. Only in February 2022 did we see an end to legal restrictions around the pandemic. However, as we have adapted to a life with the virus, I have been pleased to return to some of my normal duties as PCC.



This includes getting out and meeting with the public, in person, so I can hear people's views and concerns. This part of my role is key. I cannot make the decisions I do without consulting with communities, and ensuring their voice is reflected in my considerations. Ultimately, resulting in a police force that communities can trust and have confidence in.

Over the last 12 months I have continued to hear loud and clear that visibility and accessibility of police officers is key, I understand that road safety remains a concern and the threat of violence against women and girls has become ever more prevalent following the murder of Sarah Everard.

As the headlines highlighted this tragic death, and sadly further more, voices were heard loudly and, and as a society, we gained greater awareness of just how unsafe women and girls can feel. I made a commitment that this narrative should stay in our conscience and I would play my part in ensuring the women and girls of West Mercia feel safer

where they live and work. Whilst it's just a small part of a much bigger piece of work, I have been proud to work with partners to secure funding for self-defence classes, improve street lighting and underpasses, and distribute 10,000 personal safety alarms.

This was not the only area where partnership working took place to reduce crime. I have been proud to work with Telford & Wrekin Council on the Safer Stronger Communities project, which is just one area where improvements are being made to areas that have long suffered with crime.

Alongside this project, I have secured an additional £3m victim services and crime prevention initiatives. The area of prevention has long been a focus of mine, as we look to a world where crime can be tackled at the root cause to prevent harm being caused.

However, recognising the realities and how there is still very much a need for traditional policing,

I was grateful for the support of communities earlier this year when I set the policing budget. After hearing from communities via a consultation I ran, I allocated funding for 125 additional police officers, £1 million for crime prevention and intervention measures, and placed a greater focus on investigating crimes in order to ensure better outcomes for victims.

As we look to the coming year, and those after, I am committed to seeing improvements around the confidence in West Mercia Police, and the service the public receives. I want to see that the introduction of the Local Policing Community Charter delivers on its promise to make officers more visible and accessible to communities. For me, it is a non-negotiable part of policing and is what people expect.

I will continue to give communities a platform, listen to views and concerns and ensure they are acted upon.

## The year in numbers 2021/22



### Putting victims and survivors first

**57,097**

victims contacted by  
Victim Advice Line and  
offered support

**70%**

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

**1,678**

new referrals to Women's  
Aid IDVA service

**88%**

of witnesses  
attended court

**83%**

conviction rate for domestic  
abuse cases at court



### Building a more secure West Mercia

**87,059**

offences were recorded

**27,013**

violence without  
injury offences

**4,041**

rape and other  
sexual offences

**2,248**

hate crimes reported

**46**

people killed on  
West Mercia's roads

**351**

offenders managed by IOM

**19,660\***

victims and witnesses  
supported by West Mercia's  
Victim Care Unit

\*Monthly average of number of victims and  
witnesses receiving support during 21/22

To view the 'year in numbers' in the PCC's 2020-21 Annual Report, [click here](#).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) publishes a range of crime data. To view the number of police recorded crimes, percentage change from previous year and rate per 1,000 population by offence group, by police force area, [click here](#).

Please note that this data is updated on a quarterly basis.



### Reforming West Mercia

**£245.5m**

budget

**167,674**

99 9calls received

**92%**

of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds

**89%**

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

**52%**

of 101 calls answered within 30 seconds

**22,432**

reports made online to the public contact centre



### Reassuring West Mercia's communities

**81%**

of residents have confidence in West Mercia Police\*

**56%**

satisfied with levels of local policing\*

**73%**

feel crime and ASB are not much of a problem at all in their local area\*

**37%**

of stop and searches resulted in a police action being taken

**201**

independent custody visits

**7%**

decrease in recorded police complaints

\*West Mercia Confidence and Perceptions Survey 21/22

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Please note that this data is updated on a quarterly basis.

## Putting victims and survivors first

I'm committed to ensuring that people are at the heart of the Safer West Mercia Plan, and this includes putting victims and survivors right at the centre of the criminal justice system. I want every victim to get support that is tailored and appropriate, and helps them to cope and recover with whatever harm has come to them.

The pandemic, and associated lockdowns, have impacted all of us. However, it has been particularly difficult for victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse who struggle to access support. Throughout this time, my commissioning team have worked hard to secure national funding opportunities to maximise the funding I am able to provide for victim services.

Early in 21/22, the Ministry of Justice confirmed that we were successful in securing additional funding as part of a national uplift for domestic abuse and sexual violence services. In June 2021, I submitted a bid to the Critical Support Fund and was notified in July that the bid had been partially successful,

securing an additional £358,191 of funding for services which support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. Some of the services that have benefited from additional funding include: sexual violence counselling services across West Mercia; services working with parents who are experiencing abuse from their children; and services working with high risk victims of domestic abuse. Further details of the awarded funding is outlined in this part of my report.

The Victim Advice Line (VAL) is designed to get victims faster access to the right help by, by ensuring they only have to tell their story once and they receive the level and type of support that is tailored to their individual needs. During 21/22, the VAL has contacted 57,097 victims and offered support to 6,055 who requested it. 97% of victims who left the VAL service in the same period, did so with a positive outcome.



**The gentleman I spoke to took time to understand my situation. We discussed options for additional support. He chased up the investigation of the crime that had not yet started. Understanding how the investigation was progressing, is very important to me.**

#### **VAL service user feedback**

Ensuring victims receive the service they need at every step of their contact with the police and wider criminal justice partners is vital if they are to cope and recover. The Code of Practice for Victims of Crime (the Victims' Code) is the statutory code that sets out the minimum level of service that victims should receive from the criminal justice system. A revised Victims' Code was published in April 2021 and the VAL is supporting the force's Victims' Code compliance by ensuring that victims are informed and have the information they are entitled to.

The VAL now also administrates the Victim Right to Review (VRR) scheme on behalf of the force. VRR gives victims the right to ask for a review of a police decision not to charge a suspect. I have raised the matter of ensuring officers inform victims about VRR as part of my formal holding to account process. Between Jan –Mar 2022 the VAL received 14 applications for VRR, and I will continue to push to ensure all victims are made fully aware of the services available to them.

Additional funding secured from NHS England & Improvement (NHS/I) and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) enabled a specialist Sexual Abuse and Violence Navigator (SVN) post to be created in the VAL. The SVN is a fully trained Independent Sexual Violence Advisor & Counsellor that provides a single point of contact for victims and offers a personalised support pathway. This allows victims to focus on their recovery rather than trying to navigate a complex support system.



The role of the SVN has been integral in reducing the number of sexual violence victims not getting the support they are entitled to. There is still a gap in officers' knowledge of services, needs and rights of victims of sexual offences. However, without the SVN role, many victims would not have had information that allows them to make informed choices about accessing support.

The SVN has actively triaged 2,874 cases from recorded crimes in the 12 months of November 2020 to November 2021. Of these cases, 488 had needs assessments that identified that they required services that had not been offered to them previously.

The funding provided for the post was a one-off and ended after 12 months in November. However, recognising the value of the post I have applied to the MoJ for funding, which would see the reintroduction of the post for a further three years.

**XX listened to me. I was struggling with many issues and continually called me to talk and offer help and advice until counselling was offered. It has been a main stay in my life and helped me enormously through my troubled times. SVN Service user feedback**

Victim Support (VS) are commissioned by me to provide a victim support service across West Mercia to help victims cope and recover. VS work closely with the VAL who refer victims into the service. Over 1,600 victims have been referred into its service in 21/22. After identifying a gap in the provision of short term support for the victims of modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT), the existing contract with VS has been extended to include support for West Mercia Police on operations, as well as short-term support to identified adult victims of MSHT. The new service went live at the beginning of 22/23 and will ensure some of the most vulnerable people in our society receive the support they so desperately need.



**You have been a great support. I've spoken to you about things I never have spoken about before, it's really helped. Thank you!**

#### Service user feedback

In addition to the direct service delivery of its local team, victims of crime in West Mercia are also given access to a range of national VS services including:

- **24hr support via Supportline** – Victim Support's telephone support service that is open every day of the year including bank holidays. Any support provided to West Mercia residents is picked up by VS in West Mercia.
- **24hr support via Live Chat** – Victim Support's online chat service, available every day of the year including bank holidays. Any support provided to West Mercia residents will be added to the case management system and picked up by the local team.
- Information and self-help resources via My Support Space – an online resource filled with interactive guides related to specific crimes types, support needs and areas of the CJS.

Victim Support also deliver a restorative justice (RJ) service by bringing those that have been harmed by crime, and those responsible for the harm, into communication, enabling everyone affected to play a part in repairing harm and finding a positive way forward.

**Very satisfied, good communication, kept informed all way through process. Also, particularly beneficial to XX as he has learning difficulties. All the children involved were vulnerable and RJ handled it excellently. It was the first time S had admitted he was in the wrong and realised it was a choice made by him. It was also his idea to say he was sorry.**

#### Parent of harmer taking part in RJ

**Very satisfied and the process was well explained by the restorative justice team. I would recommend it to colleagues.**

#### Harmed RJ feedback

## Specialist support service

The start of 2021 saw the implementation of a new service model for the provision of Independent Sexual Violence Advisor Services (ISVA) across West Mercia. This supports my commitment to ensure all victims have access to the same level of service irrespective of where they live. The new contract was awarded to West Mercia Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Centre (WMRSASC), who were also commissioned to deliver the new child sexual exploitation (CSE) contract. Under the new contract arrangements for ISVA, AXIS, the previous service provider in the north of the force area, form part of the service provision provided by WMRSASC.

**Contact was made with me within a few days of my police report. XX clearly has a great deal of experience working with survivors of sexual abuse and she's an invaluable means of support. I couldn't have asked for a more inclusive and empathic individual. If she is representative of your service, it's most impressive. Thanks for providing this service. [Service user feedback](#)**

The core service maintains the current key front line ISVA, Male ISVA, Family ISVA and Children & Young People's (CHISVA) services across West. Additional funding secured from the MoJ has enabled WMRSASC to introduce an additional nine ISVA roles, covering a range of specialisms, including: support for children and young people (CYP); supporting CYP who have a disability; support for minority ethnic communities; and support for those who identify as LGBTQ+. Separately, I have also provided AXIS with over £200,000 of the additional MoJ funding to provide the same specialist roles in the Shropshire and Telford areas, as well as support for families going through civil and family courts.

**The LGBTQ+ ISVA has provided an outstanding service in supporting me. [Service user feedback](#)**

**We can't find the words to thank you as you have made such a difference to XX's life! The girl you see before you is so much happier and more confident. We really appreciate you. [Feedback from parent of a CHISVA service user](#)**

A growing therapeutic counselling waiting list for victims of sexual violence, exacerbated by Covid19 restrictions, saw me provide immediate crisis support funding to WMRSASC to reduce and reopen this list. Worcestershire County Council and Herefordshire Council are also providing support funding. In addition, I also provided further funding to both WMRSASC and AXIS for a range of therapeutic counselling support services for survivors of sexual violence and abuse, to meet additional demand across the whole of West Mercia.

I worked with regional and local commissioners, including NHS/I and local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), in West Mercia to procure a mental health needs assessment for survivors of sexual abuse. The needs assessment highlighted clear gaps in service provision, along with a lack of sustainable funding. As a result, I lead a local commissioners group to implement recommendations from the needs assessment.

I have recently secured £600,000 from NHS/I to fund a new Sexual Assault & Referral Centre in Telford. I will be providing match funding for this project which will deliver a large estates project, resulting in significant improvements to the services available to survivors of sexual violence in West Mercia.

In addition, I have continued to provide financial support to the Regional Paediatric Sexual Assault Service (SAS) which provides expert care for children and young people who have disclosed sexual assault, or who may have been subject to sexual abuse. My contribution of just under £130,000 forms part of a regional £2m contract. Clients are seen by an experienced paediatrician with specialist training in forensic examination and are supported by a crisis worker. Last year, 182 victims from West Mercia were referred into the service, demonstrating the need for this critically important service.

**The total number of victims and survivors who were supported through the above ISVA services in 21/22 was 3,305.**

In order to strengthen the existing partnership approach to addressing sexual abuse, and improve governance and oversight, I have secured an additional £50,000 of funding from NHS/I to appoint a sexual violence portfolio lead officer for an initial period of 12 months. The post holder, located in my office, works with West Mercia Police and partners to deliver the objectives set out in the national NHS/I Sexual Assault and Abuse Strategy. They are also exploring the potential development of a multi-agency strategic group, and development of a local strategy, with the overall aim of improving outcomes for victims of sexual assault and abuse.

In support of my commitment to undertake victim needs assessments to inform the provision of future service, I have worked with regional and local commissioners including NHS/I, local authorities and CCGs in West Mercia to procure a Mental Health Needs Assessment for survivors of sexual abuse. The needs assessment highlighted

clear gaps in service provision for this cohort of victims, along with a lack of sustainable funding. As a result, my commissioning team is leading a local commissioners group to implement recommendations from the needs assessment, which I hope over time will lead to improved services.

Tackling domestic abuse is a key priority for me. Inflicting any kind of harm, be it emotional, physical or psychological, is simply not acceptable. It is a priority of mine, West Mercia Police, and the services I have invested in, to do all we can to tackle it in all its forms.

I have commissioned West Mercia Women's Aid (WMWA) to provide an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) Service across West Mercia. 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. In 21/22 Women's Aid provided support to 940



victims and survivors within this service, and 90% of people leaving the service saw a reduction or end of physical abuse. Recognising that men, as well as women, can be victims of domestic abuse, further funding has been provided to WMWA for a part-time helpline support worker, specifically to support male victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

**This period of time has been very distressing and confusing, however XX's regular contact and supportive perspective has helped me to keep going through the immediate difficult days and weeks after the assault. I am very grateful that help was in place so quickly and has been consistently offered. [Service User Feedback](#)**

This year I also provided Women's Aid with additional funding for a pilot of specialist advisors to work with: children and young people experiencing domestic abuse within their own relationships (YPIDVA); minority ethnic communities and; families going through the family and civil

courts. For 21/22, the YPIDVA service supported a total of 37 victims and survivors, with 100% engaging with the service. I am pleased to report that joint commissioning with Worcestershire County Council has now secured the YPIDVA service to the end of March 2025.

WMWA also provide a hospital based IDVA (HIDVA) service in the four acute hospitals in our area. In 21/22, the HIDVA service provided support to 193 victims and survivors, with 79% leaving the service with a reduction or cessation of physical abuse. It is important to note that these roles provide support to any victim or survivor of domestic abuse, rather than just high risk which the core IDVA provision provides.

Funding is also given to WMWA to run a children and young people's (CYP) project. The funding is for Children and Young People's Workers to engage with 5–19 year olds identified as at risk of suffering significant negative outcomes as a result of domestic abuse within their family/home



environment. This service supported 197 children and young people, with 86% understanding positive and healthy relationships, and 75% having improved confidence upon service exit. Additional funding was provided in 21/22 to increase capacity of the service.

**XX is an 8 year old boy who has witnessed domestic abuse between his mother and father. Since experiencing this, XX has found it very difficult to express his emotions and feelings. He has also been finding it difficult to discuss his worries. He stated that he did not want to share them with his family as he didn't want to worry them. During a direct work session, XX was given a worry monster so that he could express how he was feeling. Since being given the worry monster, XX has spoken about how it has helped him get rid of some of his worries. XX also mentioned that he has given his worry monster to his family members so that they can also get rid of their worries too. [WMWA CYP project case study](#)**

The funding I was successful in securing from the MoJ's critical support fund also enabled me to provide financial support to PEGS, an organisation who work with parents who are experiencing violence and abuse from their children. Funding provided a range of courses to be delivered to parents across West Mercia. Of parents attending the course, 100% have said that they understand and have increased awareness of child to parent abuse with 100% of parents saying they have increased in confidence.

**I learnt so much from this course it also opened my eyes up to so many things and it's nice to know we're not alone. [PEGS service user feedback](#)**

Shropshire Domestic Abuse Service have also benefitted from funding for the provision of support services for adults and CYP experiencing domestic abuse in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin. This has enabled the service to employ two full-time specialist IDVAs who provide support

for high risk victims and survivors, as well as outreach community support.

In addition to the services I have outlined there are a number of other projects and organisations receiving domestic abuse funding from me. In many cases, it supplements other funding I already provide.

Examples include:

- **Victim Advice Line (VAL)** – to deliver the domestic abuse proactive intervention project, which seeks to pro-actively identify victims or survivors of domestic abuse who may not have accessed any support services, as well as facilitate pathways into support services.
- **Willowdene** – to provide specialist support to survivors of domestic and sexual abuse, including counselling, for those already within the Willowdene rehabilitation services.
- Funding for two domestic abuse support officers, one in Worcestershire and the other

in Herefordshire who provide support to the Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Panels as part of the DRIVE project.

Through the investments I have made, both in specialist commissioned services and the resources within West Mercia Police, I am committed to ensuring victims get the justice they deserve and the support they need. Building a more secure West Mercia



## Building a more secure West Mercia

My commitment to reducing crime and reoffending remains a key part of the Safer West Mercia Plan, as it was when I started my commissionership in 2016. For the communities of West Mercia, being safe is non-negotiable and I will continue to ensure My commitment to reducing crime and reoffending remains a key part of the Safer West Mercia Plan, as it was when I started my commissionership in 2016. For the communities of West Mercia, being safe is non-negotiable and I will continue to ensure the police have the resources, plans and focus they need to relentlessly fight crime and keep all of our communities safe from harm.

### Policing demand

I listened when the public said they wanted more police, and for them to be visible and accessible in their communities. In the last year alone, an additional 91 officers have been recruited and my budget provision for 22/23 will see an additional 125 recruited as part of the national police uplift

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

The start of 2021/22 continued to be dominated by the impact of the global Covid19 pandemic, with restrictions only beginning to ease in early summer. The force has followed the Government's roadmap out of lockdown, and played a key role in planning and responding to the changes that have been introduced.

The force recognised that, as a result of the country re-emerging from lockdown restrictions, general demand would surge with a potential increase in disorder and alcohol related anti-social behaviour. In response, in March 2021 the force implemented Operation Navigator across each local policing area (LPA) and operational policing unit (OPU). Each was tasked with providing a bespoke easing of lockdown plan, which took into account the demographics of their LPA and key dates in respect



of the recovery roadmap and the Euro 2020 football tournament. Each area was also required to consider a number of key priorities including the re-opening of the night-time economy, violence against women and girls and high visibility patrols in public spaces. The impact of Operation Navigator, and the increase in demand across key crime types, including sexual offences and public order offences, were a focus of a holding to account meeting that I held in June.

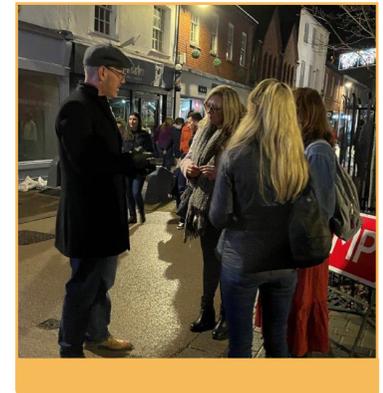
The increased demand is reflected in the number of emergency 999 calls, which saw a 20% increase in 21/22 compared to 20/21<sup>1</sup>. Despite the increase in volume, it is pleasing to see in recent months that 999 call handling performance has been consistently above target (90% within 10 seconds).

Emergency calls will always be the priority, but it's also important that people can access the police in non-emergency situations. I welcome the introduction of the Digital Desk, enabling the public to contact the police using social media

platforms. This shows how the force is adapting and giving the people alternative options to engage in a way which is convenient for them. In the first month of going live, the digital desk dealt with 7,190 engagements and sent 272 outbound messages providing advice and guidance to the public. The use of online reporting of crimes has also continued to grow, with 22,439 requests for service made using this platform in 21/22. This was a 42% increase on 20/21 levels.

Although the impact of the pandemic resulted in significant reductions in crime during 2020/21, for the majority of crime types, patterns and volumes of offending increased in 2021/22 as restrictions were eased.

Total recorded crime in 2021/22 was comparable to volumes recorded in 2019/20, there has been a sustained reduction across a considerable number of crime types. Traditional acquisitive offences have seen the steepest decline in recording compared to 2019/20. Theft from person offences declined



<sup>1</sup>Given the unprecedented impact of the pandemic on crime recording, it has become standard practice to use 2019/20 crime volumes as the baseline for comparison to understand longer term trends.

by 41%, shoplifting offences declined by 20% and vehicle offences declined by 17%.

Notable reductions in recording have also been seen for high harm acquisitive offences which impact on communities including a 35% reduction in business & community burglaries, a 25% reduction in residential burglaries and a 15% reduction in robbery offences.

Though volumes of violence with injury offences have remained stable, there has been an increase in homicide offences across West Mercia, with 19 offences recorded in 2021/22 (compared to 12 in 2019/20). These major and complex crimes have a significant impact on the organisation in terms of demand and resources.

Other crimes seeing increases in 2021/22 include violence without injury, sexual offences and public order offences. However, this increase is in line with both the regional and national picture. The volume of domestic abuse offences has also returned to

the levels seen previously and demonstrates a clear need for the additional resources secured to help victims and survivors of domestic abuse to cope and recover.

Whilst the role of the police will always be to respond to emergencies, the clear focus should be to prevent offending and victimisation in the first place. The more this can be achieved, the safer our communities will be, and the more demand on our police can be reduced. This is why my 22/23 budget commitments see a sharpened focus from the force and I on preventing crime from occurring in the first place.

### **Tackling crime and reducing harm**

Analysis that has been undertaken by the force, to better understand the increased number of homicides occurring across West Mercia, suggests one of the key local drivers to be serious & organised crime (SOC). The force has developed a clear understanding of the threats and has a SOC

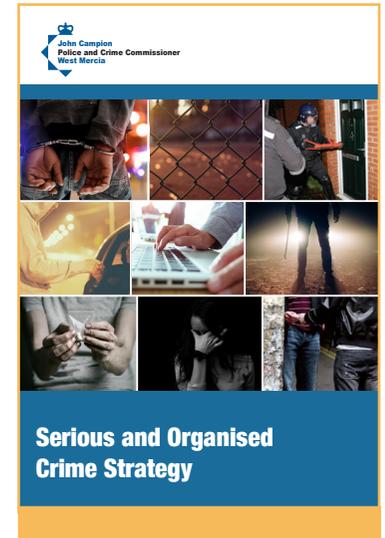
strategy and delivery plan in place to strengthen its response. I have made SOC one of the key priorities in my Safer West Mercia Plan and I will work tirelessly with both the police and partners to tackle criminality at its root as we work to protect our communities from the harm caused.

Within West Mercia around two thirds of organised crime groups (OCGs) have a primary crime type of drugs supply, including county lines . Tackling county lines<sup>2</sup> is a key focus for the force's approach to SOC and in 21/22 the force was successful in seizing drugs with an estimated street value of over £600,000, £156,000 of cash, 168 weapons and 314 people were arrested in connection with drug offences.

County lines drug dealers often exploit children and young people, recruiting them to run drugs and cash between urban and county locations and to deal drugs on their behalf. Once recruited in to county lines it can be difficult for those being exploited to leave, with threats and violence used.

This is why I have provided funding to the force for two exploitation and vulnerability (E&V) trainers, whose roles is to educate people across West Mercia on how to spot the signs of exploitation. In the last year alone they have held 292 sessions, across 218 organisations, to 6,531 participants.

As well as targeting those individuals responsible for supplying the local drugs market, providing early interventions to drug users can not only make a positive impact on the individuals concerned, but also to local communities and to potential future victims of crime. Along with my regional counterparts, monies seized regionally from proceeds of crime have funded the charity Cranstoun, to deliver the DIVERT™ project which offers early intervention for those found in possession of small amounts of drugs. In 21/22, 298 referrals were made into the project from West Mercia. The sessions are delivered virtually, encouraging more engagement across some of the vast rural communities in West Mercia.



<sup>2</sup>County lines is a term used to describe a model of drug supply whereby criminal gangs target the sale of drugs, often in smaller towns, exploiting vulnerable adults and young people through coercion, intimidation and violence.

The Government has recently published a 10 year drug strategy focusing on: rehabilitation for 300,000 drug users who are responsible for half of all thefts, robberies and burglaries; and tough measures for tackling county lines gangs. The national approach, coupled with the ongoing work locally, will make a real change to supporting the vulnerable, reducing crime and ultimately making our communities safer

While knife crime can be associated with SOC activity it is a complex national issue that doesn't have a single, specific cause. The force approach to tackling knife crime goes above and beyond the enforcement element towards preventing crime from happening. As part of the national operation, Op Sceptre, which ran in November, officers spoke to over 15,000 students and young people at 88 different schools and venues. They also carried out high visibility patrols, had pop-up stands in towns and carried out leaflet drops. Nearly 300 knives and bladed weapons were also surrendered.

Naturally our police have a central role to play in protecting us from knife crime and I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account to ensure that in West Mercia that work is happening effectively. However, a more holistic approach across our society is needed if we are going to be most effective. I am committed to continuing to work with partners to further reduce knife crime in our communities. In support of this, I have used my Commissioner's Community Fund to fund local projects such as workshops in Hereford which are delivered by No Wrong Door. These workshops explore issues around knife crime, and the impact on young people, families and the communities they live in. Over 150 young people attended the sessions, which were held in Hereford Cathedral. I have also provided the Children's Society with £20,000 to fund a Steer Clear link worker. This role works closely with the police to provide a mentoring and diversionary service designed to prevent and reduce youth knife crime in Telford & Wrekin.

**SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE TO SAY 'NO' TO KNIFE CRIME**

**Anyone can get in touch**

Our team work with young people aged between 10-18 who we believe could be exposed to knife crime and the harm associated with it.

We will strive to educate and support each referred young person whilst tackling knife-related crime in order to protect our communities from harm.

This voluntary programme is completely free. By getting in touch, you could help keep a young person safe from harm and assist in preventing the criminalisation associated to it.

**STEER CLEAR**

Please contact our team if you suspect a young person is involved in knife-related crime:  
[steerclearherefordshire@westmercia.pnn.police.uk](mailto:steerclearherefordshire@westmercia.pnn.police.uk)

Intervening at an early stage, and engaging with young people in a meaningful way, can have a significant long term impact on changing an individual's path and ultimately stopping crime. This is why I have commissioned the CLIMB service, which is run by the Children's Society. The service supports children and young people who are at risk of criminal exploitation in West Mercia. In 21/22, 520 children and young people were referred into the service, 350 of which were appropriate. 94% of children and young people leaving the service achieved a primary outcome from it.

**She said he has come home 'buzzing' from the many activities he has taken part in. She is pleased that he has come to the conclusion himself what a negative impact the gang youths were having on him and she felt confident he would make better choices in his friendship groups. Feedback from a service user's parent**

West Mercia Police's approach to early intervention and prevention has been highlighted as innovative

by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) in its PEEL 2021/22 inspection report. In May 2021, five Early Help and 11 Intervention & Prevention Officers were introduced. Data is used to identify repeat victims at the highest risk of being harmed, and repeat offenders at the highest risk of causing harm. Data is also used to help identify those who would benefit most from early intervention approaches, with a particular focus on children who are at most risk of suffering long term adverse childhood experiences. In the first six months of deployment the officers had engaged with 142 families. While the true success of the Early Help work with children will not be known fully, until the children involved reach adulthood, the approach the force has adopted should go some way towards reducing future criminality and long term police demand.

We all have a responsibility to protect children and young people from harm. Child sexual exploitation (CSE) remains a key priority from the national level right through to the local. In the last year I have provided £305,000 to West Mercia Rape and Sexual Assault Support Service (WMRSASC) for the provision of the Branch and Early Intervention and Prevention services (EIPW). These offer support to those at risk of, or experiencing child sexual exploitation, across Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire.

**It helped me with my emotional well-being and expressing my worries in a healthy way. (Feedback from child victim)**

As lockdown restrictions eased, and children returned to school, the service was once again able to offer face to face meetings, while also continuing to offer a blended approach including video/WhatsApp, phone, text, and email support sessions. This enabled 369 victims of child sexual abuse/child sexual exploitation to receive specialist support. A further 1,958 children and young people

(CYP) were engaged with in targeted sessions delivered as part of the EIPW service. Of the CYP and 396 professionals attending the sessions, 100% reported leaving with a positive outcome.

**It's reassured me to know that whilst the Branch worker supports my daughter – I'm not excluded! I don't need to know what XX shares with the worker but having an understanding on what topics are covered really helps me to know that she is getting the help she needs. Parent of child attending the Branch Project**

The impact of crimes committed online can be just as horrific as those committed offline, but sometimes are more complex and harder to detect. Investment in the force's specialist Online Child Sexual Exploitation Team (OCSET) has seen this team grow to three Detective Sergeants and 17 investigators, increasing its capacity and capability to tackle high-risk online child sex offenders across the force and further afield. The team has recently partnered with Stop It Now!, the only UK-wide charity dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse,



both online and offline, from happening in the first place.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) has been rightly highlighted nationally in a number of harrowing recent examples. It is clear that as a whole society there is more work needed to address some of our cultural issues and attitudes.

In October 2021, I received confirmation that two joint partnerships bids I'd endorsed had been successful in securing funding from the Home Office Safer Streets Fund 3. This fund is specifically designed to improve the safety of public places for all, with a particular focus on reducing VAWG crimes. Just over £1m was secured for two areas in South Worcestershire and Herefordshire where a range of interventions, including CCTV, education and security gates are being put in to make our public spaces safer.

In response to the reopening of the night time economy, and the potential uplift in VAWG related offences this could bring, I have provided funding to local policing areas for drink spike awareness training and prevention devices as well as 10,000 personal safety alarm to act as a deterrent to potential perpetrators.

More recently, in March 2022, my office organised a month of action which saw various activities and visits to a range of diverse groups take place. Alongside these visits, a series of VAWG dedicated podcasts were hosted to hear from experts including West Mercia Women's Aid, and the domestic abuse lead for West Mercia Police. I know that societal change will not happen overnight, but I am committed to doing all I can to effect change to achieve a safer West Mercia. I also recognise that the onus needs to be placed on those committing the crime, as opposed to the victims.

**I am aware that acquisitive crime, such as burglary, robbery and theft, causes huge harm to communities, which has been recognised by the Government in its National Priorities for Policing.**

I am committed to seeing that our communities don't have to face the fear of crime, or have their lives blighted by the actions of others – they should feel safe where they live. In support of this commitment I have worked with partners to secure an additional £863,185 of funding from the second round of the Home Office Safer Streets Fund. This has seen local crime prevention initiatives benefitting communities in Redditch and Telford. Local projects, developed in consultation with local communities, have included upgraded street lighting, alley gates and improved CCTV. These measures enable people to feel safe, and not fear where they live or that they will become a victim of crime.

In March 2021, Telford & Wrekin Council and I came together to build on the great work already being done through the first round of the Safer Streets project. Identifying that there were more areas of Telford that had long suffered with crime, the Safer Stronger Communities project was

created for two years to address the root causes of crime and issues that inadvertently enable crime within targeted areas, ultimately improving life for communities within Telford & Wrekin. Combining £1 million from Telford & Wrekin, and £500,000 from myself, over the last year we have been able to start work on addressing inequalities, tackling the fear of crime and reducing crime rates, whilst building community confidence.

Whilst we still have a year left, we have already made a number of improvements. This includes: installing CCTV in areas of concern; holding community engagement events to open and maintain dialogue with communities; introducing youth clubs where anti-social behaviour is prevalent; improving street lighting; and creating intervention programmes to direct people away from crime.

There is still more work to be done with the remaining year of this intense and focused activity, however this is about creating a lasting

legacy where communities can feel empowered, relationships are maintained and we see these areas improve in levels of community safety through reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour.

West Mercia Police's Local Policing Community Charter is one example of how the force is also committed to protecting people from acquisitive crime, through a consistent problem-solving approach, supported by the Problem Solving Hubs based in each of the five local policing areas. As part of my commitment to ensure the force has the resources to address acquisitive crime, I have continued to provide additional funding to the force for its 'We Don't Buy Crime' (WDBC) initiative and rural and business resources.

The WDBC scheme aims to reduce and disrupt the market for stolen goods, as well as protecting homes and possessions using Smartwater marking. Since its inception, over 59,000 properties have been protected and over 240 retailers have signed up to the second hand good's scheme. Victims of

domestic burglary are always offered a Smartwater pack and, after raising concerns at a holding to account meeting in March about performance, I have asked my commissioning team to explore options to expand the distribution of Smartwater to neighbouring properties of burglary victims. This will help to strengthen community confidence and reduce the fear of crime.

Rural crime can have a significant impact on quality of life for our rural communities, who may feel particularly vulnerable because of their isolated location. My commitment to address 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. Examples of the good work these officers do include:

- **Herefordshire** – taking a proactive role in tackling quad bike thefts resulting in an 85% reduction across Herefordshire compared to 2020/2021



- **South Worcestershire** – production of the South Worcester ‘Rural Beat’ electronic newsletter distributed to 132 Parish Councils and to district and county councillors
- **Shropshire** – working with local policing teams at livestock auctions, approaching Defender owners due to the increase in thefts, and issuing free Smartwater vehicle packs and passing on crime prevention advice.

One of the challenges faced in measuring the effectiveness of rural crime initiatives is that there is no national definition or specific crime type for rural crime. One of the measures I have agreed with the force, in support of my Safer West Mercia Plan, is the volume of rural crimes. I am pleased to see that the need to better understand and more accurately measure rural crime has been recognised by the force. I look forward to seeing this work develop.

Whilst environmental crimes, such as fly-tipping, are often most prevalent in our rural areas, it is an issue which has been raised time and time again by communities across all of West Mercia. Not only is fly-tipping unsightly and a nuisance, it causes a substantial cost to landowners and is hazardous to our environment and wildlife. To underline my commitment to developing a partnership response to properly tackle this issue, I launched a fly-tipping grant round in September 2021, earmarking up to £100,000 over two years for initiatives to tackle fly-tipping on private land. One initiative this fund has supported is a Tyre Tag scheme, led by West Mercia Police in partnership with Smartwater and nine local authorities. The scheme provides garages with a Smartwater kit to mark tyres scheduled for disposal. This enables authorities to easily trace any that are fly-tipped back to the garage responsible for disposing them, but it also prevents garages from being targeted by organised criminals to illegally dispose of tyres. To date, 98 garages across West Mercia have joined the scheme.



Too many people are killed or seriously injured on our roads. During 21/22, 46 people lost their lives on West Mercia's roads, which is an increase of 13 compared to 20/21 when the roads networks were significantly quieter as a result of national lockdowns.

The sheer volume of correspondence I receive from the public regarding road safety is too great to deny there is a problem. I too agree that more needs to be done to change the culture of driving and put care and responsibility back into the users of roads across West Mercia.

The lasting impact of a serious collision can be devastating for both the victim and their family, which is why I have invested approximately £75,000 in RoadPeace to run a pilot scheme that provides a support and information service for victims of serious injury collisions. The scheme, with works within the VAL showed early signs of success with 98 referrals and 95% of users engaging with the service within a short time of launching. The project

has now been extended for a further year until March 2023.

Speeding, as well as inappropriate speed, can have a devastating impact on the safety of road users, increasing the risk of a collision and the severity of the consequences. Last year saw a new average speed system go live on the A449 in Worcestershire, made possible by a significant investment from my 20/21 Road Safety Funding round.

The project is a partnership between West Mercia Police, Worcestershire County Council and leading speed technology firm Jenoptik. The average speed system aims to influence and change driver behaviour by ensuring the speed limit is adhered to throughout the whole section of the route, 24 hours of the day. The cameras are fully operational throughout the day and night and do not flash speeding motorists, as is the case with older technology. Within the first few weeks of going live, 551 drivers were found to have exceeded the 50mph limit.

I have continued to invest in the MORSE project, which was granted £320,742 last year. Road users committing motoring, or criminal offences, are referred to YSS for mentoring support to get to the root cause of the offending behaviour. They are then offered holistic support to prevent further offending. MORSE offers a combination of 1-1 intensive support and short specialised interventions. Last year, 196 referrals were made into the project.

**'I would not be where I am now had I not met XX or been referred to MORSE by the officers who arrested me... I have had support from other services in the past but XX and MORSE are just amazing people, I will never be able to thank them enough, I would recommend this service to anyone and everyone'. Service user**

On a smaller scale, but no less significant, I have allocated £20,000 to each local policing area for my Road Safety Commissioner's Community Fund (CCF). This can be accessed by local communities to

fund projects designed to improve safety on roads. Some examples of how the money has been spent are provided in the commissioning and grants section of this report.

### Reducing reoffending

To continue to break the cycle of crime and reoffending of individuals, as well as lessen the impact this behaviour has on our wider community, it is important that partners work together to provide the right interventions at the right time.

Successful joint working, including an agreement for match funding with Shropshire Council, Herefordshire Children's Services and Worcestershire Children's Services, secured over £455,000 of additional Home Office funding in September for the provision of Domestic Abuse perpetrator programmes across West Mercia. As a result of this funding, there is now a DA perpetrator programme in every county of West Mercia. This offers vital assistance to the community and



challenges perpetrators to change their behaviour to prevent further offending.

Perpetrator schemes are now available across West Mercia and my contributions are set out below:

- £176,184.60 to co-commission the DRIVE service across Worcestershire and Herefordshire. The DRIVE project, which was first implemented in Worcestershire in 2018, focuses on priority high-risk or serial perpetrators both male and female aged 16 and over. By addressing perpetrator's behaviour, DRIVE targets the root cause of domestic abuse and improves outcomes for victims and children. For 21/22, 52 perpetrators were referred in Herefordshire, and 104 for Worcestershire. DRIVE continues to see significant reductions in all forms of abuse, with 80% reductions in high levels of physical abuse at end of Q4



- £336,250 to the Richmond Fellowship to deliver the 'My Time' programme across Telford and Shropshire. This is group based domestic abuse perpetrator intervention, which involves working with perpetrators. This service is delivered in partnership with the Shropshire Domestic Abuse service, who will be supporting victims associated with the perpetrators, and Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils.

The Telford expansion includes specialist BAME/ LGBTQ+ workers designed to work with these groups alongside existing provision

- £328,639 to Cranstoun and West Mercia Women's Aid to deliver the Male and Masculinities project. Male and Masculinities is a group perpetrator programme delivered by Cranstoun across Worcestershire and Herefordshire. This programme is delivered in partnership with West Mercia Women's Aid who will deliver the victim support provision that supports a linked (ex-) partners to those men accessing the service
- £50,000 to West Mercia Police to complete a comprehensive needs assessment for domestic abuse perpetrators. This needs assessment will be used as an evidence base to inform future commissioning activity.

As well as providing continued leadership and governance through my Crime Reduction Board,

I have also committed funds to ensure vulnerable offenders in the community receive the support they need. The support provided often enables offenders to address key issues affecting them, such as substance misuse, and to take part in education and learning support to develop new skills and qualifications.

I have continued to support Willowdene Farm with a grant of £103,000 for the LINC project (Local Initiative Nurturing Change). The project enables vulnerable women who are offending, or at risk of offending or leaving the custodial estate, to transform their thinking and behaviour to build purposeful, stable and offending-free lifestyles. During 21/22, there were 56 new referrals into the service, 54 of whom engaged, and 43 left the service with a positive outcome. An example of the support offered, and outcomes achieved, include a woman who was referred onto a residential programme for three months. She had a range of complex issues including excessive drinking, mental

health, domestic abuse and a chaotic lifestyle leading to her child being subject to a social care placement. As a result of her time on the LINC programme, she received access and support from specialist service providers and was also successful in attaining a number of qualifications, including in finance, IT and workplace skills such as customer service.

During 21/22, financial support has also gone to the West Mercia Youth Justice Service (WMYJS) for two intervention projects. One project delivers a range of interventions to support youth cautions and conditional cautions. It saw 183 young people referred into the service between April and September 2021. The second project provides specialist substance misuse assessments and interventions to young people in the criminal justice system, or who are at risk of entering the youth justice system, with the intention of reducing the harm caused by substance misuse. The project also assists young people with recovery and reduces the likelihood of offending and re-offending. The following case study shows how life

changing being able to access intervention can be:

**XX is a 17yr young person who was heavily involved in Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) and subsequently placed into care. XX was arrested for possession with the intention to supply Class A and B drugs. XX was recommended for a community order by the police. Throughout his order, XX completed numerous programmes on substance misuse, reduced from daily cannabis use, engaged in his care placement, and ceased almost all of his substance misuse, which considering his background was exceptional. XX secured an apprenticeship fitting carpets and doesn't intend to go back to his home town other than occasional visits to family.**

#### **WMYJS report**

West Mercia Police will move to a new approach in the use of out of court disposals in 2023, which will result in a significant increase in the number of offences being discharged in this way. This will also require a potential uplift in the number of intervention projects available for all ages of offenders. As well as monitoring the progress the



force makes in implementing the new approach, my commissioning team will work with the police and partners to identify opportunities to expand existing or develop new intervention projects.

### **Partnership working**

I firmly believe that building a more secure West Mercia is not, and cannot be, the sole responsibility of any one person or organisation. The joint working to secure perpetrator services across the whole of West Mercia, and the Safer Stronger initiative in Telford, demonstrate my commitment to develop stronger partnership arrangements that improve services for our communities and achieve greater efficiencies.

The commitment I have set out in my 22/23 budget, for both the force and I to move towards a more preventative approach for policing, will require an even stronger focus on partnership working. Again, with the aim to achieve success and deliver better outcomes for our communities.

In 21/22, as in previous years, I have worked with and provided financial support to the five Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in West Mercia. This year I have introduced a bi-annual CSP summit where I meet with CSP Chairs and lead officers from each partnership to discuss key issues and plans. The Police, Crime Sentencing and Courts Bill recently received Royal Assent and introduces a new duty for CSPs to prevent and reduce serious violence. The legislation also gives PCCs a role to assist the local partnership. The CSP summit meetings are proving invaluable in establishing how each CSP is approaching the new duty, and how I can best assist CSPs so that together we can reduce serious violence and make West Mercia a safer place.

Each CSP is provided a ring-fenced budget to be spent on projects that focus on community support, reducing offending, victim care and early intervention and prevention.

In addition, following an internal review of CCTV, I agreed to provide each CSP with £65,000 for the year which, from 1st November onwards, could only be utilised for capital purchases and can no longer be used for CCTV monitoring. In making this change I recognise that CCTV is an extremely valuable resource. Not only can the presence of a camera make people feel more secure, but by improving the cameras, and updating the equipment, it will ensure better quality of images.

## **Criminal justice**

The Criminal Justice System (CJS) is a complex web of partners, roles, budgets and priorities. My Deputy PCC currently chairs the West Mercia Local Criminal Justice Board which brings partners together to ensure we have an efficient and effective CJS operating across West Mercia. To strengthen the partnership, a recent review has refocused the board so that it provides a more open and challenging forum for partners to

scrutinise performance of individual partners and of the whole CJS system. To support this, I have provided one off funding for CREST Analytic to provide a bespoke end to end CJS performance management framework to support and drive improvement.

The impact of the Covid19 pandemic has continued to have a significant impact on court backlogs. Pleasingly, the backlog in the Magistrates Court is below pre-pandemic levels, however, backlogs in our Crown Courts remain. The backlog has created unacceptable delays for victims, witnesses and defendants in West Mercia. The ongoing delays also have a knock on effect for support services. The force's Witness Care Unit is supporting just under 20,000 victims and witnesses every month, placing additional demands against police resources. In particular I am concerned that the delays are compounding and extending the harm suffered by victims of sexual assault, some of whom have been waiting three years for their cases to

begin in court. I have had a series of meetings with the regional head of HMCTS to discuss my concerns and continue to press for action to be taken.

Despite the increased demands resulting from the Crown Court backlog, the Witness Care Unit continues to provide an outstanding service which has resulted in West Mercia having the highest witness attendance rates in the region. In West Mercia, 88% of witnesses attend court compared to a national average of 83%.

To begin to break the cycle of crime and reoffending of individuals, and lessen the impact this behaviour has on our wider community, it is important that partners work together to provide the right interventions at the right time. Through my Crime Reduction Board (CRB) I am able to bring together representatives from key agencies to ensure this approach is happening in West Mercia. One of the areas of ongoing scrutiny of the CRB is of the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Programme. This manages high harm/high risk

offenders to reduce the risk of harm they present to West Mercia's communities. As part of the approach, an IOM coordinator is located in HMP Hewell to ensure high risk offenders released back into our communities are managed effectively, again reducing the risk of harm.

Data from March 2022 estimates that 28% of offenders in the community are reoffending, however the focus IOM brings can bring positive change as shown in the case study below.

**XX is a prolific acquisitive crime offender, predominantly committing dwelling burglary offences to fund his substance misuse. Since release on licence, he has fully engaged with probation and IOM, and although he has had a couple of 'blips' in terms of drug and alcohol use, there has been no intelligence linking him to any offending. He is subject to a Buddi Tag, to assist with monitoring his curfew, which he manages well. The tag also serves as a protective factor, and has been useful in immediately**

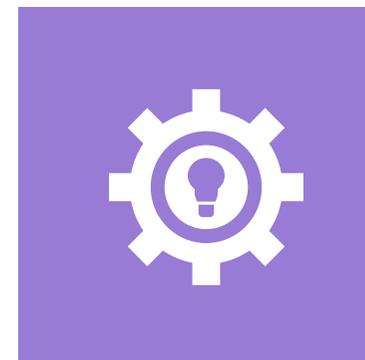
## Reforming West Mercia

Reforming West Mercia Police remains a key part of what I want to deliver as PCC.

The residual arrangements, put in place following the ending of the police alliance with Warwickshire Police, saw the hosted Transactional and Forensics Services conclude as planned in September 2021. At that point, IT services moved to a hosted arrangement, with the majority of services due to conclude 31st January 2022 and provision for others to end March 2022, leaving 30 applications in place until March 2023. Whilst the hosted IT arrangements are at no additional cost to West Mercia, it has limited the force's ability to deliver plans to improve digital services for its police officers and the communities they serve. The process of reform and transformation must now continue at a pace in West Mercia, so the force can not only respond effectively to changing demands, but can also play a much greater role in shaping and reducing demand in the first place.

In July 2021, following a rigorous selection process, I was delighted that Pippa Mills was confirmed by the Police and Crime Panel as the new Chief Constable for West Mercia Police. This represents a significant milestone for the force as her appointment sees the first female Chief Constable in the force's history. The new Chief Constable took over in September 2021, following the retirement of her predecessor Anthony Bangham.

This change in leadership also brings a natural evolution in the direction of the police force. Earlier this year the Chief Constable launched her 'plan on a page' to the wider workforce. This provides a summary of the force's strategic way forward for the next three years, bringing together its vision, values and organisational priorities. These will enable the force to move forward, meet challenges, and focus on delivering a policing service that reassures the public and enhances public confidence. In support of this, 'inclusion' has been added into the values of the force to capture the



importance of an inclusive working environment, as well as recognising the progress that has already been made to strengthen the relationships with everyone the force serves and work with. The Chief Constable and her command team are now hosting a series of roadshows across the force to meet with staff and embed the plan on a page.

To support the increased focus in my Safer West Mercia Plan, in my budget for 22/23 I am allocating £1 million into preventing crime. In doing so I will ensure West Mercia Police prioritises more resources towards prevention. I will also directly commission more services to provide effective community based prevention programmes, aimed at tackling the root causes of crime. Whilst the role of the police will always be to respond to emergencies, the clear focus should be to prevent offending and victimisation in the first place. The more this can be achieved, the safer our communities will be, and the more demand on our police can be reduced.

## Investing in our estate

Our police force needs to be in fit-for-purpose buildings that support the new technology we are introducing. It is also important that, whilst doing this, we are identifying savings and ways of working better and more closely with partners. My work around estates has focused on delivering against those needs.

From 1st April 2021 an in-house estates service, that supports both West Mercia Police and Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS), went live following a smooth transition from Place Partnership. This insourced model enables West Mercia Police and HWFRS to realise their mid and long term visions as well as deliver their estates and financial strategies. The new service is already proving to be both a better value for money and enhanced property management service model.



In the very near future a public consultation will be launched on a new Estates Strategy for West Mercia, giving as many people as possible the opportunity to comment on the future direction of West Mercia's estate.

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 HWFRS will see a three-way land swap and purchase allowing for 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.

In addition, we have seen highly successful partnership working with partners such as town councils and HWFRS, whereby we have delivered co-locations, sharing buildings in Shifnal, Pontesbury and Tenbury Wells respectively, to achieve best value for the estates, whilst maintaining a front line policing presence within those communities.

The recently published HMICFRS West Mercia Custody report highlights a number of issues relating to the fabric of the custody estate and the poor facilities in some of the blocks. Whilst these shortcomings have rightly been raised, it is reassuring that these were already identified by estates as part of their quarterly inspections and form part of the remedial programme.

### **Investing in technology**

There are many projects under my 'reform' agenda, and the force has a number of significant transformational projects that are a key part of

these reforms. My budget investment for 21/22 saw a significant investment in digital forensics to ensure that the police have up-to-date technology to investigate crime and provide faster outcomes. As part of this transformation work, digital media investigation (DMI) hubs went 'live' in each local policing area (LPA) from September 2021. These were supported by 11 digital forensic experts, with technicians on hand to support policing colleagues, whilst focusing on computer and mobile forensics. The first year of the digital forensics transformation project has been able to demonstrate the benefits realisation and service improvements the investment has made. This has included a 20% reduction in the digital backlog and a dramatic reduction in the turnaround time for the examination of forensic evidence in the digital kiosks from 46 days down to just six. These service improvements bring real benefits to victims of crime who are now having their digital devices, such as mobile phones, returned to them much sooner.

Enabling greater access and convenience around self-serve solutions, for both staff and communities, is one of the commitments in my Safer West Mercia Plan. One step in achieving this was the launch of the new Neighbourhood Alerts system in July 2021 to replace the Community Messaging system. This will be covered in more detail within the 'Reassuring West Mercia section'.

### **Investing in our people**

Communities have told me time and time again that they want more police officers that are both visible and accessible. I have committed to delivering that, as well as ensuring that West Mercia Police has the resilience to cope with changing demands. My 21/22 budget enabled the force to successfully deliver the year two national Police Uplift Programme (PUP) target. The uplift has resulted in an extra 91 officers allocated to key areas of policing across West Mercia including patrol, SNT and local investigations. A further 125 officers will be recruited in 22/23.



The new national entry routes (PEQF) into policing launched in 2019. Over the last two years, West Mercia Police has designed and successfully delivered these new programmes as part of an innovative, regional collaboration with Staffordshire University, and the other three forces in the West Midlands region. In recognition of the work of this collaboration, the West Midlands regional PEQF partnership recently won the NPCC Partnership of the Year. In addition, the apprenticeships delivered by Staffordshire University were inspected by Ofsted in January 2022. The university was rated as 'good' in terms of overall effectiveness, and across all categories. I am keen to ensure there is continuous improvement going into the next phase of the contract.

The new routes into policing have attracted a more diverse pool of candidates and the new intakes have been more representative of West Mercia's communities in terms of gender and ethnicity. In 21/22, of the 253 new starters, 36%

were female and 3.6% came from an ethnic minority background. This is in the context of a national aspiration of 35% for females (set by the British Association for Women in Policing) and a local aspiration of 3.8% for ethnic minorities. I am committed to ensuring the public have a diverse police force, reflective of the communities they serve. I am glad that West Mercia Police is ambitious about this and, whilst there is still some way to go, this is a fantastic step forward.



A number of initiatives have been utilised by the force to support increased diversity through the new entry routes. This work has been delivered by the Positive Action Team and includes the development of the 'Step In' programme which includes pre-assessment centre workshops, one-to-one coaching, mock interviews and targeted social media recruitment campaigns. Following the success of the team this year, the force has committed to increasing the positive action resources, to ensure sustained focus on improving diversity, equality and inclusion within policing.

I have continued my own commitment to investing in people; recruiting a graduate policy and commissioning 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. I have also published my equality objectives which set out how I will work towards ensuring my own

office seeks every opportunity to advance diversity equality and inclusion across West Mercia.

I am committed to ensuring the workforce has the rights skills and training to support victims as well as provide a quality policing service to the diverse communities of West Mercia. This year, the force has developed a number of new initiatives to develop, retain and upskill talent within the workforce. The force developed and launched the LEAD programme (leadership development across all levels of the organisation) in 2021. The Professional Action Learning Sets (PALS) programme was launched in the force in 2021, having been successful in several other police forces across the country in providing an opportunity to recognise and develop talent amongst ethnic minority officers and staff. There are further plans to progress with a leadership development programme aimed at females.

Whilst I am pleased to see the steps taken by the force in improving the training and development



of all its staff, the PEEL 2021/22 inspection report has highlighted the limited progress the force has made in investing in how the force manages individual performance and identifies talent. I shall continue to hold the Chief Constable to account to ensure improvements are made in this area.

The force is committed to ensuring the workforce has access to advice and services to support their health and wellbeing, and it is important to me as PCC that the force provides adequate, tailored support for all officers and staff, particularly those exposed to work-related traumatic events. Key initiatives in 21/22 include:

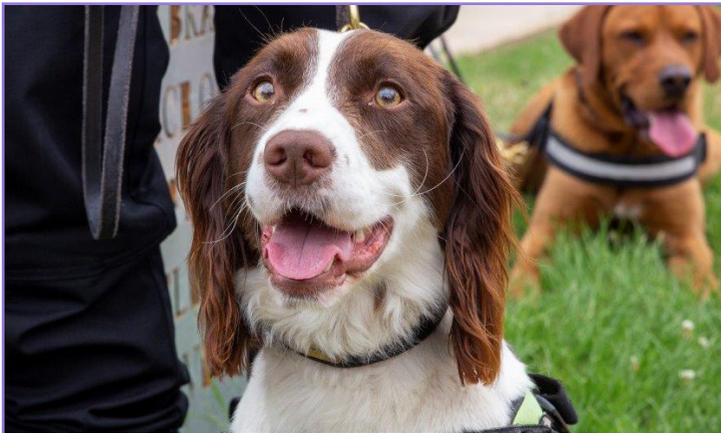
- Securing £150,000 funding from Police Care UK to deliver Mental Health First Aid Training to officers and staff across West Mercia Police over three years. Mental Health First Aid Trainers were upskilled to deliver the courses in-house, however the Covid19 pandemic has impacted on delivery and the project has been extended to four years. To date, close to 106 officers and staff have been trained

- Adopting the National Police Wellbeing Service (NPWS) model of peer support. West Mercia Police currently has 37 Peer Supporters with additional officers and staff in the training process
- Engaging with a number of external charities (inc. the 'Climbing out' charity) to provide the workforce with a range of options that support their mental and physical health and wellbeing.

While the welfare of officers and staff is clearly important, the welfare of police dogs is also a priority. Police dogs carry out a vital role in supporting frontline policing and are often the first to run towards a potential threat, therefore at risk of being harmed. To help protect the animals from injury, West Mercia Police has now issued all of its police dogs with protective vests to help protect them from bladed weapons and the impact from blunt objects.

Joint working between my office, West Mercia Police Dogs Section and the Dogs Trust, has seen the launch of a new Animal Welfare Independent

Visitor's Scheme (AWS) in September. The scheme aims to ensure the welfare of those animals working within the force is protected. As part of the AWS, independent visitors are trained to check on the welfare of the animals. The scheme is being managed by the Independent Custody Visitor (ICV) Coordinator and five existing ICVs have stepped forward to support the AWS.



## Collaboration

At the regional level, I work collaboratively with regional colleagues to ensure the four forces meet their obligations under the Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR). In support of this there are formal collaborations in place across regional organised crime, counter terrorism, police air support, public order training and PEQF.

Governance of the collaborative activity is via a Regional Governance Group (RGG). The RGG enables oversight and collective decision making in respect of the formal collaborations. It also provides a forum for oversight of national programmes that may have local and regional implications.

This activity is facilitated by two Regional Policy Officers, jointly funded by the four PCCs. They provide policy support and scrutiny of the regional collaborations and also lead the coordination of regional criminal justice governance arrangements.

Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) form a critical part of the national policing network to protect the public from SOC. The ROCU continues to grow and develop and in 22/23 there will be a further 42 officers joining the ROCU funded through the Police Uplift Programme. As a consequence of the growth, the ROCU has initiated an operating model review. I will be closely engaged in how this develops, ensuring we have a flagship ROCU which is delivering for local communities.

Although West Mercia is a relatively safe place to live, we can still be affected by trends and events that occur nationally and internationally. It is my role to ensure that West Mercia Police and the work of the West Midlands Counter Terrorism Unit (WMCTU) are effectively tackling these threats locally and that those vulnerable to radicalisation are being safeguarded appropriately.

In 21/22, the national threat level from terrorism moved from SUBSTANTIAL to SEVERE following the tragic attacks on the Liverpool Women's Hospital and the murder of Sir David Amess. It has since moved back to SUBSTANTIAL. During this time, through the RGG and my local Counter Terrorism briefing, I sought reassurance that the system was working effectively to counter the threat and ensure the safety of West Mercia's communities.

In October 2021, the four PCCs held a second "deep dive" session with the WMCTU focusing on the progress made to improve the management of terrorist offenders in light of the learning that came out of the Fishmonger's Hall attack inquiry. We were pleased to see the changes that have taken place in the last 12 months since our first deep dive on this topic, but will continue to monitor this.

I also engaged in the delivery of a national project which saw the Special Branch functions of local police forces move into counter terrorism policing. I have been active in seeking assurance that this arrangement has a positive impact on the service to West Mercia's communities and will continue to do so.

In March 2022, regional PCCs and their Chief Constables participated in an exercise to help us understand our respective roles should there be a major incident, such as terrorist attack. As a PCC, it's my role to not only to provide civic and community leadership during a major incident, but also to ensure the provision of support services to victims and witnesses. We will continue to build on our approach in 22/23 to ensure we are sufficiently prepared and joined up with our partner agencies.



## Reassuring West Mercia's communities

I am clear that our communities not only are safe, but feel safe too. People also 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.

Our communities expect and deserve the very best from their police service. They want officers that are visible and accessible, protecting them and preventing harm and they want to be confident West Mercia Police has the resources to tackle crime effectively. As part of my budget development for 21/22, I worked with the Chief Constable to agree a new Local Policing Community Charter. This Charter sets out clear commitments from West Mercia Police as to how it will improve delivery against key community priorities, ensure all the additional resources secured in the budget are fully utilised, and is felt and evidenced in all our communities across West Mercia.

The Charter was launched in March 2021 and covers six key areas for improved service delivery: visibility & accessibility; responding to communities; prevention; vulnerability; relationships; and partnerships. As part of the Charter commitments, local policing teams have approached all of West Mercia's Town and Parish Councils seeking to establish a contact contract with each, so that local policing priorities are identified, agreed and addressed. Across West Mercia, as a whole, the top three community concerns identified relate to safer roads (35%), crime (26%) and ASB (15%).

Whilst it is pleasing to see the force is responding to local concerns, there is still much more to do to create further opportunities so the public can raise concerns, provide feedback, be involved and help shape policing.



**70% of residents feel West Mercia police understands issues in their community - West Mercia Crime and Perceptions Survey 21/22**

I was therefore pleased that Neighbourhood Matters launched last year, as it enables residents, businesses and community groups across West Mercia to find out more about what is happening in their local community. It also gives them the opportunity to contact police officers and local policing teams directly so they can raise any concerns and provide feedback.

The messages people receive are targeted and based on their location and preferences selected by each individual. The public can sign up for local updates from their neighbourhood policing team, or join a number of specialised community interest groups such as Business Watch, wildlife crime and crime prevention. Since its launch over 17,000 people have signed up for alerts.

As PCC, I am clear that our communities demand and deserve effective and timely communication around crime and community issues in their area. I am therefore pleased to see that this service has finally launched. I have heard loud and clear from

the public that they want their police force to be more visible and accessible – Neighbourhood Matters is just one way of achieving that.



I have heard loud and clear from communities that many still don't feel their police service is visible or accessible. Whilst West Mercia Police has made progress, it's important we build on this. I am therefore committed to doing all I can to improve the overall confidence and perceptions the public

have. My budget for 22/23 will see a further 125 officers taken on in West Mercia, taking the force to a total of 2,456. This is the highest establishment the force has seen since 2009 and is close to the highest level on record, enabled by what is by far the highest budget our area has seen for policing and crime.

### **Independent custody visitor scheme**

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. I greatly value the work of the volunteers and I am always grateful for their contribution.

The easing of national lockdown restrictions meant that the ICVs were able to return to physical visits at the beginning of June 2021. This was following a challenging six month period when they reverted to virtual checks using digital technology and mobile phones.

During 21/22 the 41 ICVs carried out 201 visits, double the number in the previous year, which was also impacted by Covid19 restrictions. In total, 40% of detainees consented to meeting with the ICVs.

The ICV Scheme Coordinator has worked with the Head of Custody to introduce more robust oversight of custody data at the ICV Panel meetings. The local custody inspector for each panel now provides a custody data report for their local panel to enable the ICVs to scrutinise and challenge the data and identify any concerns. Issues raised are assessed by the Head of Custody at a force wide coordination meeting attended by the ICV coordinator.

The recently published HMICFRS report on West Mercia's custody facilities has identified a number of recommendations and areas for improvement and I shall be working with the ICVs to ensure that the scheme can play its part in improving the custody provision in our force area.

**89% of residents said they trust West Mercia Police (WMP), 85% believe WMP treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are and 85% believe that WMP act with integrity - Quarter 4 West Mercia Public Perception Survey 21/22**

## Ethical policing

During 21/22 the force has seen a sustained increase in the number of misconduct cases against officers and staff, rising from 71 in 20/21 to 108 in 21/22. While the increase does in part reflect growing confidence in the wider workforce to report poor behaviour, I have questioned the force on its approach to addressing this issue through my holding to account process, most recently in February. I will continue to monitor the success of the initiatives in place to reverse this trend. In my 22/23 budget, I have prioritised additional resource into force vetting and professional standards. This will provide reassurance that the right checks are being carried out on all officers, staff and others working with or for the police, in order to root out any individuals not suitable for such a trusted role in our community.

It is important that when the public speak to us we react, and we put it right when it needs to be put right. Whilst complaints are few, our communities deserve to know that their concerns will be dealt with quickly. As well as close liaison with the force's Professional Standards Department (PSD) I have held quarterly briefings with the head of PSD to ensure complaints are dealt with fairly and complainants receive the service they need.

To further improve transparency around complaints, and to help provide the public with the confidence they need to trust the police to always do the best they can, I now publish annual data relating to police complaints on my website.

Since taking on responsibility for carrying out complaint appeals, which were previously referred to the force, the number of reviews has grown from 89 in 20/21 to 99 in 21/22. An independent and qualified external body has been appointed to assess the reviews on my behalf, although the final decision on the outcome remains with me.

The additional oversight the complaint review process brings, enables me to identify strategic themes to address through my role in holding the Chief Constable to account on behalf of our local communities. This has included awareness of the Victim Right of Review (VRR) which was raised with service leads and through my formal holding to account programme. As part of the work to improve Victim Code compliance, officers now provide victims with an information leaflet setting out what support they have and their rights including the VRR.

## Public engagement

I am pleased that the public continue to engage with my office and I. This year saw 1,603 pieces of correspondence logged. As a result of the growing contact, I brought in a dedicated Casework Officer to manage this area of work and ensure that correspondents receive an appropriate response.

In the last year I have issued more than 130 public comments or articles in order to ensure local communities are aware of my views, decisions, or strategies.

In the last year I have seen an increase to the amount of interaction on my social media platforms. I have also started using Instagram, recognising its success and that it has the potential to reach a different community group I would like to engage with more. Over the year, on Facebook I saw an increase of 301 followers and 605 page likes, on Instagram I have seen an increase of 238 since using the platform and on Twitter there has been a continual increase – 479 followers.

As a result of the pandemic, I continued producing podcasts in order to highlight interesting subjects and services to the public. Since starting my 'Safer West Mercia' podcast, I have produced 42 episodes with a total of 3,926 downloads.



My website is continually audited to ensure transparency and to engage our communities. I continue 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 22,973 different users have visited my website, a slight decrease on the previous year. However, there were 31,224 individual sessions and 62,397 page views.

In order to capture the engagements via social media, the website and others platforms, I produce a quarterly metrics document that details the activity from the four months. My team also carries out a monthly metrics meeting to understand how engagement with the public can be improved.

I have been pleased to run campaigns that focus on important subjects, such as the VAWG campaign that was previously mentioned in this report. I have also continued to work with partners on issues

around water safety, domestic abuse and knife crime, ultimately strengthening the messages that are given to the public around keeping safe.

The force communications team has been working closely with my office, and a number of joint campaigns have been identified such as SOC and VAWG. These will be implemented in the coming months.

In September, as part of a roadshow, the Chief Constable and I visited communities in Herefordshire, Shropshire, Telford & Wrekin and Worcestershire. We visited small businesses, local projects, community groups and residents to understand concerns, and whether they feel engaged with. We will be looking to carry out more of these in the coming months.



## Public consultation

Over the last year, I have carried out consultations around the budget. As part of my commitment to ensure I am capturing views from the public, I provided a platform for people to share their concerns around crime and the visibility and accessibility of West Mercia Police. This involved getting out and about talking to people on the streets, which I was pleased to do again following the pandemic.

I am currently running another survey on the budget for next year slightly earlier than I have done previously. I'm doing this in order to ensure I am incorporating people's views into my decisions from the very beginning of the process.

As part of my Communications and Engagement strategy, I have committed to run more frequent surveys to capture the views of the public on a range of subjects.

I will also be carrying out a series of summer events again, with the hope that in person public engagements can remain.



# Performance and accountability

## Monitoring force performance

### Oversight

In the last year I have continued to monitor force performance. Weekly, monthly and quarterly performance reports are produced which help to inform my regular meetings with the Chief Constable and other senior leads. I have had a regular programme of local policing area visits, which enable me to discuss performance and community issues with the local commands 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 Superintendent lead for Serious and Organised crime and the Head of the Professional Standards Department.

I, or my team, attend a range of internal organisational meetings to provide effective oversight of wider force activity. Where appropriate, a senior member of my office attends

any Critical Incident Management Meetings (CIMMs) concerning issues which could impact in the trust and confidence the public has of the force. Anyone attending a governance meeting provides a briefing note of key issues discussed and identifies any areas where I or the wider team need to take action or seek further assurance.

The West Mercia Governance Board is the overarching joint governance meeting between my office and the force and ensures the organisations and their resources are well directed and controlled. Each meeting now includes a deep dive agenda item on a key issue aligned to the Safer West Mercia Plan and force priorities. In keeping with my commitment to be open and transparent I ensure that notes of this meeting are published on my website.

As part of the development of the new Safer West Mercia Plan, my office has worked with the force to identify a number of key metrics to more clearly demonstrate performance against the plan. The



70 metrics identified incorporate the National Priorities for Policing which were announced by the Government in March 2021. In addition I have ensured that metrics, to track progress against the commitments in my budget, have been aligned to the plan metrics. The plan metrics are published on my website along with a statement on how the force is performing in support of the national policing priorities. To make the data published more engaging and accessible to the public, my office is working on a solution to provide easy to read 'bite sized' information updates on performance and outcomes.

### **Holding to account**

It is an important part of my role to hold West Mercia Police's Chief Constable to account for ensuring the service the force is delivering is efficient, effective and meets the public's needs. My holding to account programme provides a clear and robust way for me to do this. In response to

my increased focus on performance, I have revised the holding to account programme. It includes a number of dedicated performance meetings to enable a 'deep dive' approach to be taken on performance issues. This focus has included the impact of a power outage on the force and its Operational Control Centre (OCC) and on the force's response to the increase in homicides.



In addition to the performance meetings, in the last year I have held the Chief Constable to account on: the force's response to an illegal rave in Herefordshire; protecting vulnerable people; the impact of budget investment; and the work of the Force Operations Unit. In each case, actions have been followed up and performance reviewed in future meetings with the outcomes published on my website.

I have also held one Facebook live meeting in January on the policing budget. It's my role to give communities a voice at the highest level and by hosting the meetings online I am seeking to ensure everyone can be involved in a more open and transparent way. I hope to hold more of these in the coming months.

To supplement the formal meetings, I also have a virtual holding to account process. 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. The virtual process is run via email and requires the Chief Constable to provide a written response to the concerns I have raised. If I consider further scrutiny is required, the issue can be brought into the formal holding to account meetings. Issues addressed this year have included: stalking; crime recording; investigation of anti-social behaviour; and the use of the National Police Air Service and drones.

One issue, which I initially instigated a virtual request for but resulted in me calling an extraordinary formal meeting, was on the force's response to calls for service and rising levels of unresourced incidents. At the meeting the Chief Constable set out a clear plan to ensure 80% of non-emergency 101 calls was answered within 30 seconds by the end of the year. Since then, I have received regular updates on progress and have continued to push for improvements. However, disappointingly the response to 101 calls remains well below the target set by the force. This clearly

highlights the need for more to be done. Holding the force to account on concerns like the handling of 101 calls is important for our communities. If someone calls the police, they expect to be able to talk to someone within a reasonable time. They also expect police presence if there has been an incident, or something that warrants attendance. I will continue to support and challenge the force to ensure that their plans are delivered and the public get the level of service they rightfully expect from their police force.

Protecting the most vulnerable is integral to my mission as PCC and I want to make sure that those who need support receive it. At September's Protecting Vulnerable People meeting I was able to raise a number of issues relating to the Victims Right to Review (VRR) identified through my complaints review function. VRR has now been included in an information leaflet given to all victims of crime to help them understand the service they will receive and the support available to them.

The Protecting Vulnerable People meeting also highlighted to me the importance of ensuring that the force's approach to addressing the harm caused by crimes, such as serious violence and my future commissioned services, are better aligned to maximise their effectiveness and to address any gaps in service. As a consequence, closer working practises have been set up, with my Deputy PCC attending quarterly grant review meetings to ensure the right services are commissioned for communities in West Mercia.

My continued investment in officer numbers has enabled the force to redesign how it investigates crime. The new model has seen an additional 88 investigative post across the organisation to support the provision of consistent high quality investigations. While the uplift has been achieved, initial feedback from HMICFRS following its most recent PEEL inspection of the force indicated that more needs to be done to improve how the force investigates crimes. I used my holding to account meeting in March to better understand how the



force was responding to findings, and to seek assurance that improvements would be made. The force has commissioned a detailed whole service review to look at every aspect of investigation. The outcomes from the review, and service improvements required, will be implemented in the coming months. I will continue to hold the force to account to ensure it fully addresses the shortcomings identified by HMICFRS.

### **Independent scrutiny**

During 21/22, HMICFRS carried out the field work elements of its PEEL inspection regime in West Mercia. The resulting inspection report, PEEL 2021/22, was recently published in April 2022. The report provides graded judgement on eight areas of policing. The force was graded good for preventing crime and anti-social behaviour and highlighted for its innovative approach to early intervention and prevention. Three areas were graded as requiring improvement: 'Investigating

crime', 'Responding to the public', and 'Good use of resources'. This report has highlighted a number of areas where the standard is below what our communities and I expect. The force must take action to improve and I am reassured to see that this is already happening.

HMICRS also carried out an unannounced visit to inspect West Mercia's custody provision in 2021, with the inspection findings published in the same week as the PEEL report. The report has raised serious areas of concern around legal rights, safety, and welfare in West Mercia Police custody. While the findings of this report are not good enough, these are issues that the force and I are already aware of and I am reassured by the action that is already being taken address them.

On behalf of our communities, I will continue to hold the Chief Constable to account to ensure that the improvements identified in both reports are made as swiftly as possible.

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

As part of my commitment to the communities of West Mercia to ensure the best outcome for the victims, my deputy PCC chairs an independent Out of Court Disposal Panel which reviews criminal cases, dealt with by way of community resolution or caution, to ensure consistency in the outcomes. While the panel, made up of subject matter experts, including senior magistrates, cannot change the outcome of particular cases, it can make recommendations which lead to organisational change in how the force operates moving forward.

When cases do not meet relevant standards, the force is asked to go back and review the case and report on lessons learned. The work of the panel has led to a series of improvements in how the force deals with out of court disposals, including

knife crime, domestic abuse and hate crime.

It is important that the outcome of key decisions and discussions are made accessible so that our communities can have trust in me as their PCC, and the police force I hold to account on their behalf. I have achieved this through my Facebook live events, publishing report notes and minutes from a wide number of governance and scrutiny meetings including: the holding to account meetings; the West Mercia Governance Meetings; my Crime Reduction Board; and Victims' Board. In addition I provide regular performance and activity reports to the West Mercia Police and Crime Panel, who are responsible for scrutinising my activities and responsibilities.



## Our resources

The 2021/22 total revised net revenue budget for West Mercia was £245.5m, which is funded through a combination of central government grants and council tax income. There was also a contribution from reserves to fund transformation and improvement projects. At the end of the year, the revenue budget was underspent by £7.717m.

The position on 'Office of the PCC' and 'Force' spend in 2021/22 are shown below:

Area of spend - under/(over) spending	£m
Policing	6.299
Office of the PCC	1.488
<b>Total net underspend in 2021/22</b>	<b>7.717</b>

During 2021/22 there has been a return to business-as-usual practices as Covid19 restrictions have been slowly rolled back over the course of the financial year. West Mercia set a budget for the financial year to include the impact of changes to working practices as a result of Covid19. However, there have been other external factors which have had financial implications on West Mercia, including from Brexit, global supply chain issues and rising demand for energy, exacerbated by the war in Ukraine. In 2021/22 the principal impact has been on the ability to receive all goods ordered, particularly in respect of fleet purchases. We are working closely with supply chains to ensure we can access goods as quickly as possible. Cost inflation pressures did start to impact towards the end of the financial year, but are a greater risk to the 2022/23 financial budgets.

In 2021/22 the force successfully recruited an additional 93 officers, funded from the Home Office as part of the government core settlement. The officers have been going through a significant amount of training as part of their induction, before being deployed to operational activities, of which the majority of roles are in Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

During 2021/22 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. Through the work of my office, an additional £3m of funding has been accessed from the Ministry of Justice and Home Office. 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 time has been focused on allocating this additional funding, it has meant that there was an underspend from the allocated budget, which I

have authorised to be carried forward to extend the provision of these vital services into 2022/23.

The majority of the force underspend is in relation to the purchase of goods and services from external bodies, particular in respect of business support functions. Considerable investment has been placed in information and communications technology (ICT) to improve the aging infrastructure. However, there has been £3.5m of savings against the budget of £18m as costs associated with supporting and replacing the network infrastructure. Hardware support and maintenance, as well as software purchases in the year, have not been realised.

In September 2021 I agreed to move to a hosted services agreement with Warwickshire in respect of the ICT provision. This remaining legacy of the alliance was to end in March 2023, but Warwickshire has now served notice to end the agreement in June 2022. Uncertainty around what service levels would be required has led to an

underspend of £593k, as not all predicted costs were incurred. With the end of the agreement in June 2022, I will have fulfilled my promise to end the alliance and ensure that all the focus is on improving the delivery of services for the public of West Mercia.

There were also savings of £1.075m from the change and transformation programme, as challenges in the employment market has meant that there were vacant posts within the team, which ultimately impacted on ability to deliver the challenging programme. I remain committed to ensuring that the force has the resources it needs to deliver an effective service. I will hold the Chief Constable to account for delivery of quality digital support services.

During the year, the force was able to deliver £3.237m of the savings plans identified in the budget, whilst ensuring that services were value for money. Several savings plans could not be delivered. This included fleet savings and delivery

of Phase 2 of SAAB which were impacted by external factors. The savings plan, related to front counter reduction, was not realised when I instructed the force to review the project in light of the negative public consultation responses to the proposals. I have made my commitment clear to the force that West Mercia Police should be visible and accessible to the public. Alternative in year savings have been delivered.

### **Use of reserves**

At the start of the financial year West Mercia had a balance of £14.252m of reserves. During the year, £1.651m of reserves were utilised to fund one off projects. The largest contribution was to road safety initiatives. To install the average speed cameras on the A449, £0.381m was used. Another £0.425m was allocated to fund other road safety initiatives and for a road safety post in VAL to support those who have been effected by road traffic incidents in our region (RoadPeace). This is



in addition to the work that the force's road safety team undertakes during the year. The remaining expenditure was on supporting one off projects to expand the support from our providers, or on initiatives such as providing electric bicycles across the region and to tackle fly-tipping.

As reported above, there is a balance of £7.717m from the outturn position on the 2021/22 budget. Of this balance I have authorised the use of £3.5m to reduce the borrowing requirement. This is an opportunity to make sure that the organisation is managing its finances both now and into the future. It will reduce the debt held, and the cost of servicing that debt, by £510k in 22/23 and as an ongoing revenue saving over the next 10 years. This revenue saving can be invested back in policing services. The remaining resources from the outturn of £4.127m are being used to complete projects that started in 2021/22 but weren't fully delivered. The remaining resources will also ensure that there is sufficient contingency available to

manage the external risks facing West Mercia. The balance on reserves, to be carried forward into 2022/23, is £7.5m of general fund reserves (less than 3% of the revenue budget) and earmarked reserve of £10.085m of which £2.5m is allocated to cover the cost of one-off major investigations. I have made these decisions to ensure that the Chief Constable and I can meet statutory responsibilities, manage critical risks and contribute towards key strategic initiatives.

### 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 2021/22 there was a total of £10.860m of capital expenditure, this includes:

- £2.7m which has been spent on our estates. This has included the start of some significant new projects including a joint fire and police station in Redditch, and the development of the firearms



training unit which will ensure that West Mercia has the facilities to train officers to keep the public safe

- There was expenditure of £7.0m in ICT projects to transform them to continue the investment required to make them fit-for-purpose for the future
- The remaining £1.164 has been invested in vehicles, road safety and other equipment which the force needs in order to be able to provide the appropriate response to the public.

There is an ongoing ambitious plan to invest in the infrastructure and estate of West Mercia, as I must ensure that the force continues to remain fit for purpose. The 2022/23 budget includes £30.5m of planned expenditure with a total of £99.4m identified as being required over the next five years.

## Looking forward

The setting of the 2022/23 budget provided the opportunity to challenge the force to operate within the finances available, and to meet the needs of its residents more effectively – ultimately putting them first. I have set a budget of £260.485m, which included £8.355m of savings that the force has been asked to deliver, to ensure that policing in West Mercia is delivering value for money.

I am pleased that the Government has recognised the challenges policing faces and provided increased funding in the 2022/23 budget to employ additional officers. An additional 125 officers are being recruited during the year taking the total number of police officer posts to 2,456, the highest establishment since 2009. I am committed to providing the investment in the training of the new recruits to ensure that they can provide the professional police service expected by the public.

I have obtained commitment from the force that the majority of these officers will then be placed in roles which will have a positive outcome for visibility and accessibility of front line policing.

### **Commissioning and grants**

I have a central role in the commissioning of services related to victims, community safety and crime reduction. My Commissioning and Grants Strategy, which is reviewed and published on an annual basis, provides further information on the approach taken. It also sets out how the commissioning of services, or awarding of grants have followed consistent, transparent processes so that all parties, including our communities can have confidence in how decisions involving public money are being taken.

I am committed to investing in local, outcome-focused interventions and projects that demonstrate value for money. Working collaboratively with other parties is one way of

maximising funding opportunities and making best use of public funds. In support of this I have expanded existing joint commissioning arrangements with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) for the DRIVE project, with Herefordshire Council also now providing funding. This has secured the longevity of the project for a further three years. Further examples of joint commissioning or joint partnership funding include:

- Joint commissioning with WCC for IDVA and local DA support services contracts
- Working with regional NHS/I and PCCs to re-commission the CYP SARC for a further six years
- Jointly funding a grant for the Steer Clear worker in Telford
- Working in partnership with all four top tier local authorities to jointly commission the Men & Masculinities and MyTime – DA perpetrator interventions across West Mercia



In 2021/22 I invested approximately £10.4m across all the 135 commissioned services and projects I support, targeted towards supporting victims to cope and recover, as well as reducing offending and reoffending throughout West Mercia.

**£4.8m**  
allocated to victim services

**£0.5m**  
was spent on road safety

**£0.26m**  
was spent on CCTV

**£0.88m**  
was spent on specific services run by the police including VAL and the Rural and Business Officers

The remaining investment was directed towards CSP activity, CLIMB project, drug and substance misuse projects and other prevention and intervention activities.

### **Commissioners Community Fund (CCF)**

Through my CCF fund I have provided £150,000 to West Mercia's Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNT) with the autonomy to support local initiatives relevant to their policing area. Examples of CCF funding include:

**Herefordshire** – £1,000 towards the `Making Changes` football project, aimed at vulnerable children aged 9-12yrs who are either struggling in school or at home with behavioural issues and low confidence and/or esteem.

**Shropshire** – £2,500 towards Crucial Crew to provide up to 50 schools in the Shrewsbury and Oswestry areas with up to 1,500 safety workbooks containing 18 safety scenarios for their year six pupils.

**North Worcestershire – £550** towards 'Discover Me' – an eight-weekly group session for young women who may be at risk of sexual exploitation or genital mutilation to help women discover their self-value and self-worth.

**South Worcestershire – £2,000** for tag rugby. The Safer Neighbourhood Teams utilise tag rugby initiatives in schools across Worcestershire with the aim of developing relationships between the police and children.

**Telford and Wrekin – £5,000** for the Telford Meeting Point House Youth Project. The project enables young people from all over the Telford area to meet in a safe and neutral environment and take part in sport, dance and mindfulness, with the aim of diffusing the growing issues of street gang culture.

In addition to the SNT CCF fund, I also provided a further £100,000 to enable local communities to apply for funding to prevent the harm caused by road traffic collisions in their local area.

Examples of local initiatives receiving support from the CCF roads fund include:

**Herefordshire – £1,209** for Be Bright Be Seen (cyclist safety) to purchase high visibility equipment to give out to cyclists in areas of Hereford.

**Shropshire – £1,440** to Llanyblodwel Parish Council for a vehicle activated sign on the A495 to assist traffic calming.

**North Worcestershire – £1,014** for the Young PCSO scheme. Pupils are taught about road safety and basic parking laws to help the school and local residents deal with bad parking around the school entrances.

**South Worcestershire – £2,090** to provide a solar powered vehicle activated speed warning sign in Salwarpe Road.

**Telford and Wrekin – £5,300** for the purchase of speed indicator devices in Ercall Magna.

**Contact your Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion:**

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