

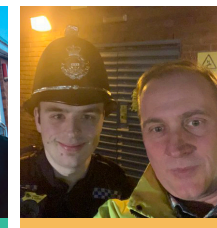
Annual report

2022-23



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Foreword

I am clear in my commitment to the communities of West Mercia – I will work hard to make sure that they are safe and feel safe, and the issues that are causing the most harm are tackled.

Over 2022/23, I can report progress on delivering that commitment. Either through focusing the budget, and resources I have at my disposal, holding the Chief Constable to account for the effect of operational policing and working with partners to tackle local issues that are affecting communities.



Last year saw an additional £15m in funding for policing. This enabled West Mercia Police to build on delivering an efficient and effective service to all communities. To provide a snapshot of the progress made over the last year, it is pleasing to see that there has been an improvement in the levels of confidence in West Mercia Police, increasing by 2% on the previous year. Delivering on my commitments around putting victims and survivors first, it is pleasing that the Victim Advice Line contacted and supported 5,853 victims. This will ensure those affected by crime are given the relevant support to enable them to move on with their lives. As a result of partnership work, a number of areas have seen a reduction in anti-social behaviour, crime levels and fly-tipping. All of which are concerns of communities across West Mercia.

Despite that progress, I remain frustrated at the pace of that delivery of improvement to the public. I am frustrated with the pace of some of the change within West Mercia Police, as I am well aware that the public is not yet seeing the full benefit of the additional 500 police officers that have been recruited. My confidence survey has highlighted that for the 12 months, ending December 22, 20% of residents saw an officer or PCSO at least once a week. This is a 5% reduction on levels seen during the same period in the previous year. I am therefore committed to ensuring this improves.

I know that the public of West Mercia value their local police officers being visible and accessible. I have continued to focus delivering on what communities want – this is why I supported the force in not only delivering on the Police Uplift programme, but exceeding it, by bringing the officer total to 2,456 for 2022/23. This is the highest establishment figure on record in West Mercia. I will continue to support the force in ensuring these

additional officers are focused on what matters to communities. In the same way that confidence in policing may be damaged by the litany of police misconduct that has dominated our headlines, not responding to, or being seen to respond to, community concerns is an equal threat to public confidence.

My drive is to continue doing better for the communities of West Mercia. I have therefore supported the force with the resources it needs to enable officers to carry out their roles efficiently and effectively. I have challenged and supported the force in areas of concern through my Assurance & Accountability meetings with the Chief Constable. These meetings, once titled holding to account, underwent a thorough review to ensure the process is efficient and effective.

Reflecting on my own office, I have also made significant changes this year, including recruiting a new Chief Executive, Deputy PCC and supporting a wider restructure within my office. I will continue to ensure it is fit for purpose to efficiently and effectively deliver the priorities of our communities



and support the expansion of my role as PCC.

Supporting my focus on prevention, I have been pleased to continue working in partnership with Telford & Wrekin Council to deliver the Safer & Stronger Communities programme. It has been pleasing to see progress, particularly around the reduction of anti-social behaviour and fly tipping, as well as increases to public confidence. There has also been an improvement in clubs and projects for people, who live in the area, to get involved in. The projects have also created a sense of community through the investment in CCTV and tidying of public spaces. I am pleased that through my budget for 2023/24, I will be providing funding to the other areas within West Mercia to tackle their key concerns.

This last year has also seen the start of my role as Senior Responsible Officer for the local Combatting Drugs Partnership, which supports the Government's 'From Harm to Hope' 10-year drugs plan. I hear regularly from communities about their concerns in relation to drugs and the crime

associated with them. By educating people about the dangers of drugs, intervening with the right help when substance abuse happens and enforcing the law to stop criminals profiting from misery, we will see and feel a real change.

The subject of violence against women and girls has very much remained the focus of my work as PCC, as well as nationally. This has been reflected in the services I have continued to fund and the securing of additional funds, to the tune of more than £2million, to tackle sexual and domestic violence and create safer spaces within communities.

It is saddening that the poor traits of society are replicated in those that serve in the police. National

reports have shone a light on cases of sexual assaults, misogyny, and rape within police forces. It is my responsibility to support and challenge the force to ensure these kinds of individuals are prevented from joining and those that are currently employed are rooted out. This has naturally, and quite rightly, meant that the reputation of policing has been called into question, which has added to the challenge of building people's confidence and trust in their police force. In West Mercia, it is good that confidence in policing remains high.

Within West Mercia, in July, we saw the publication of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation (IITCSE) within Telford & Wrekin. I said then, and I will say it again, that my focus and drive as PCC is to ensure that lessons are learned to ensure no further harm is caused. I will continue playing my role in ensuring those that live in West

Mercia are safe and I will support West Mercia Police to allow them to do the same.

As I look ahead to next year, I remain resolute in ensuring West Mercia Police delivers a quality level of policing for the communities it serves. Through my investment, I am confident there will be improvements where the service is falling short.

The year in numbers 2022/23



Putting victims and survivors first

15,000+

victims referred for onward assessment and triage to the Victim Advice Line

68%

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

59,494

victims receiving information about how to access support

80%

conviction rate for domestic abuse cases at court

2,421

new referrals to Women's Aid IDVA service

88%

of witnesses attended court



Building a more secure West Mercia

94,842

offences were recorded

2,096

hate crimes reported

27,476

violence without injury offences

630

offenders managed by IOM

4,098

rape and other sexual offences

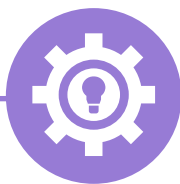
21,226

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

49

people killed on West Mercia's roads

* Rolling 12-month figure at end of January 2023



Reforming West Mercia

£260.5m

budget - fourth lowest Council Tax increase since 2016

183,274

999 calls received

91%

of 999 calls answered within 10 seconds

86%

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

27,991

reports made online to the public contact centre

Average wait time for 101 calls is 2 minutes 16 seconds

Continue to deliver the £40m, four-year digital improvement programme

Construction commenced on the Joint Redditch Police and Fire Station

£2m

annual investment in estates improvements to assets, infrastructure & buildings

£2.7m

investment in progressing major estates capital project projects at Redditch Combined Police & Fire Hub and a new Firearms Range at Hindlip



Reassuring West Mercia's communities

84%

of residents have confidence in West Mercia Police**

56%

satisfied with levels of local policing*

72%

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

38%

of stop and searches resulted in a police action being taken

222

independent custody visits

3%

decrease in recorded police complaints

** West Mercia Confidence and Perceptions Survey 22/23

Putting victims and survivors first

I'm committed to ensuring that the public are at the heart of my 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.

My Commissioning team continued to attract new funding and support organisations to have more sustainable funding streams throughout 2022/23, with multiple successful funding bids that I have been proud to lead in order to support the delivery of my Safer West Mercia Plan.

I have been successful in attracting a further £1.9m of funding from the Ministry of Justice, specifically to support victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence. In addition to this funding, an additional £130,451 of funding has been provided alongside the core £1.5m victims grant, taking the final allocation of spend for victims' services for 2022/23 to over £3.5m, an increase of over £200,000 from the previous year.

In addition, £4.7m of funding has already been secured for 2023/24 and 2024/25.

This additional funding has enabled some sustainability for 20 additional roles within PCC commissioned service providers. These roles range from counsellors to children and young people (CYP) workers who are tackling technology-assisted exploitation abuse and risk management, focused on delivering better outcomes for victims and survivors across West Mercia.

The Victim Advice Line (VAL) is designed to get victims faster access to the right help by ensuring they receive the level and type of support that is tailored to their individual needs. During 2022/23, the VAL has contacted over 15,000 victims with identified needs and offered support to 6,215 victims who requested it. 95% of victims who left the VAL service in the same period did so with a positive outcome. The VAL has supported officer training by producing a series of 'The Voice of The Victim' videos as part of my commitment to trauma-informed front-line approaches, with



surveys, feedback and dip sampling continuing to test this. I am in the process of working with the force to review the provision of services to support victims in West Mercia, which will include the provision provided by the Victim Advice Line.

“I live on my own. It was particularly helpful to have someone to talk to. It gave me confidence to move on and to try and put it out of my mind, also the fact that the line was always open to have further conversation if I felt I needed it.”

For victims that have reported a crime, ensuring they 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.

Whilst high, I am committed to seeing a greater increase in confidence levels that the public have in West Mercia Police. I know the importance of

public confidence and I’m assured it can improve. This continues to be a priority of mine, as 82% falls short of the 88% target. Specific areas of focus centre around Shropshire and Herefordshire, which have the lowest levels of confidence across the whole area.

Except for hate crime, which has seen a 2% increase, and road safety, which has remained the same, the satisfaction levels of victims of domestic abuse, burglary and violent crime have all gradually declined since April 2021. The most notable decline is for violent crime which has dropped from 69% to 56%.

Throughout 2022, I have raised victim satisfaction and confidence in a number of Assurance & Accountability sessions, where I hold the Chief Constable to account. In May, August, November, and December, I sought assurance from the Chief Constable that this too was a priority for West Mercia Police, seeking her commitment to making improvements. During early 2023, I have also



made some improvements to the Assurance & Accountability process, the outcome of which is that I will have four quarterly performance focused meetings with the Chief Constable for the 2023/24 year.

The VAL is supporting both my Safer West Mercia Plan priority and the force's Victims' Code compliance by ensuring that victims are informed and have the information they are entitled to. The VAL oversees the Victim Right to Review (VRR) scheme on behalf of the force, which gives victims the right to ask for a review of a police decision not to charge a suspect. In the last year, 21 new VRR requests were raised and overseen by VAL.

Further funding secured from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) enabled a specialist Sexual Abuse and Violence Navigator (SVN) post to be continued in the VAL up to 31st March 2025. The SVN is a fully trained Independent Sexual Violence Advisor and counsellor that provides a single point of contact for victims and offers a personalised support pathway. They will review all sexual offence reports

(whether a referral has been received or not) to West Mercia Police and liaise with the investigating officer and partners to assess whether they have been offered, or are receiving, support. If not, the SVN contacts them to undertake a detailed needs assessment and offer support. 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 VAL} "Listened to how crime has affected me. Listened which makes a lot of difference"

Victim Support (VS) are commissioned 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. 1,480 victims

have been referred into Victim Support in 2022/23. Their multi-crime Victim Care Co-ordinators tailor support to individual needs to enable those impacted by the harm of crime to cope and recover.

“If it hadn’t been for you, I don’t think I could have gone on to give evidence in court. I only wish I’d had your support sooner.”

The introduction of a modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT) specialist post within the VS service has provided key learning around gaps in professional knowledge and work to integrate the role, such as the need for prior specialist consultation to be integral to planned operations with West Mercia Police. The role has added value by increasing partnership awareness around the challenging, complex nature of MSHT. The role ensured key messaging is disseminated and appropriate identification, response to, and support of those who are so vulnerably exploited, but all too often criminalised, is improved.

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, which is 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 crime 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. This year VS worked with 67 individuals across a range of crime types, including child to parent domestic abuse and incidents within school settings. RJ has proven to have a greater satisfaction rate for empowering victims, enabling them to cope and recover, and improving their overall experience of the criminal justice system and reintegration (moving on) from the crime.

“I am very grateful to you for helping him understand the consequences of his actions.”

West Mercia hate crime offences have more than doubled in the last five years. For the first six months of 2021/22 total hate crime records have reached the levels seen for the total year of 2019/20. Despite the rise in recorded offences, we know that many hate crimes and incidents largely go unreported and the true number of offences

is far higher. I am committed to protecting lives and preventing the damage done to people and communities because of hate crime. As such, I am pleased to have granted £82,000 towards Victim Support’s Hate Crime Engagement and Awareness Project ‘I am ME!’.

This 12-month project, which began in October 2022, has so far delivered over 30 awareness/training and outreach/community events engaging with nearly 500 people. On the back of this early success and the positive feedback received I have decided to extend the project until March 2024.

Alongside West Mercia Police I agreed to join a pilot testing a new app ‘Kulpa’ aimed at supporting victims of domestic abuse and sexual violence.

Kulpa is a phone app that is accredited by UKAS for two international standards. The app was originally developed to capture best evidence in the form of forensic quality photographs of injuries. However, it now provides the ability to capture and store all forms of evidence on the ‘Kulpa cloud’, in a way that ensures it holds evidential weight and



is immediately legally admissible and is therefore able to be used instantly by law enforcement.

The launch of this app further demonstrates my commitment to ensuring that victims and their voice are central to the criminal justice system.

“The app looks really straight forward. It gives the opportunity for survivors to store evidence in one place. Phones shouldn’t need to be seized by the police.”

“I personally really like this app. I have been a victim of domestic abuse and from my own experience the thought of being able to securely store evidence all in one place is a fabulous idea and I feel it empowers victims to take control and it helps speed up the whole police process.”

Specialist support service

2022 saw delivery of the second of a three year contract with West Mercia Rape & Sexual Abuse Support Centre for the provision of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors (ISVA). The ISVA service has received 1,622 referrals and has provided

support to 2,650 victims in 2022/2023. The increased investment into these specialised services supports my commitment to ensure that victims have an appropriate range of help based on their need. The annual budget for this provision in 2022/2023 is £1,898,936.

The numbers of victims/survivors leaving the service has reduced this year, largely contributed to by the backlog of cases waiting to go to court. These delays are unacceptable and are having a significant impact on victims and survivors waiting within the system. These delays are not only prolonging the trauma, but also resulting in some victims withdrawing from the process all together. This means offenders aren’t being brought to justice. I therefore remain committed to playing my part in making improvements where needed, such as addressing the lack of a crown court facility in Herefordshire. However, it is pleasing that 54% of those leaving the service had increased confidence in the CJS, a 3% increase from last year. Of those leaving the service, 85% felt better able to cope and recover with aspects of everyday life.

A poem written by a client to her Independent Sexual Violence Advisor:

**It's going to be hard to say goodbye
I'll have to try not to cry
Thank you for helping me get by
Thank you for always being there to reply
You saved my life numerous times
You always seem to notice the signs
Thank you for always having the time
Ur an amazing support
Being there when I opened the report
Especially you sticking by me through court
But it's come to that time for me to move on and restart
You've been my rock right from the start
You have a very big heart
Thank you for always being there when I fall apart
Thank you for being my first person for support**

I have committed £492,175 across three years for AXIS Counselling to deliver a range of therapeutic counselling services to victims and survivors of sexual abuse in Shropshire and Telford. This funding includes specialist provision to support victims and survivors that have

learning disabilities or difficulties, alongside specialist support for children aged 5-10 years. This funding has enabled these important services to be provided up to 31st March 2025.

Putting victims and their voice at the heart of the criminal justice system is a key priority within my Safer West Mercia Plan. In June 2022, I hosted a 'Listening to the Voice of Victim and Survivors' conference where we were fortunate enough to be joined by some survivors who shared their experiences of the criminal justice system. It reinforced a very important message that there is always more that can be done, and I will continue to be relentless in my drive to see that happen. Since the conference, I have engaged with victims and survivors who have met with my commissioning and policy teams. Their input has been integral around in-service re-design and development in terms of their ability and power to help others to recognise and to understand the scale, complexity and impact of sexual violence and abuse.

A small number of survivors of sexual violence have agreed to sit on a lived experience group. As part of my commitment to victims and survivors, I want their voices to be heard when I am commissioning services designed to meet their needs. The benefits of service user involvement are not limited to service design improvements. Involvement can have a direct benefit to service users, including improved confidence, skills and knowledge and wider wellbeing benefits.

Following the production of a needs assessment which focused on the mental health of survivors of sexual violence, which was undertaken in 2021/22, I have worked collaboratively with partners and key stakeholders to implement some of the recommendations from the report.

Some specific actions I have undertaken are below.

Survivors Pathway Development

Feedback from the needs assessment informed me that survivors find the pathways to access support challenging. I have been working collaboratively

with partners, alongside victims and survivors, to develop an online Survivor Pathway. The Pathway will promote clear access to support, will improve awareness of the range of support options available to survivors and their families and include ways to more effectively reach survivors who do not report sexual assault and abuse to the police.

Collaboration

The needs assessment recommended that in order to meet victim and survivors needs, partners (commissioners, stakeholders and providers) should aim to work more closely in the future, beyond the task of creating pathways. I have worked with the Integrated Care Boards in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, and Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin to submit a bid to NHS England & Improvement (NHSE/I) to pilot an innovative Complex Care Pathfinder project for victims of sexual assault and abuse. This bid was successful and, as a result, I was awarded £1.3m over the next two years. The aim of the project is to commission services which address needs of victims and



survivors which cannot be met with existing services. These include:

- Individuals with complex trauma-related mental health needs, who are deemed 'too complex' for SARC therapeutic services, or who experience long waiting lists for community mental health services.
- Individuals who are/have engaged with mental health services for complex trauma related mental health needs relevant to their experience of sexual assault and abuse, who have not been able to receive a tailored, trauma-informed therapeutic offer that meets the breadth of their psychological, social and occupational wellbeing needs.

“I needed to talk to someone outside of my circle. My counsellor was so supportive and listened without judgement; she also taught me some valuable coping techniques to help me cope through one of the worst experiences of my life.”

“My counsellor was excellent, and I found the method of trauma-based therapy very effective.”

As part of my commitment following the victim and survivor conference in June 2022, I established a West Mercia Joint Strategic Sexual Assault and Abuse Board. The board has senior representation from a range of key partners within West Mercia with the overall aim of improving outcomes for victims of sexual assault and abuse. Representation includes partners from health, education, safeguarding, Crown Prosecution Service, police, children’s services, specialist sexual violence services, women’s services, University of Worcester, Community Safety Partnerships and the High Sheriff.

I am also pleased and proud to be able to say that each meeting has had the voice of the victim echoed by direct representation.

West Mercia has two Sexual Assault & Referral Centres (SARCs), which I fund and support financially, as well as provide the maintenance through my Estates services. The SARCs provide a safe environment for victims of sexual assault and abuse to receive crisis care, medical and forensic examinations, and emergency contraception. They can also provide access to immediate crisis counselling and Independent Sexual Violence Advisors. These services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Working with NHSE/I and PCCs from across West Midlands I am re-commissioning the Adult SARC service, with the new contract to commence from April 2024.

Throughout this year, I have been working with the NHSE/I and West Mercia Police to ensure that the SARCs in West Mercia meet the forensic standards required. As part of this work, I have committed funding for two years to employ a Forensic Quality Manager to support the implementation of the required forensic standards by the Forensic Science Regulator, for both sites in West Mercia.

In addition, I have continued to provide financial support to the Regional Paediatric Sexual Assault Service (SAS) which provides specialist 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.

Within the service, children and young people are supported by an experienced paediatrician, specially trained in forensic examination, as well as a crisis worker. Last year, 285 victims from West Mercia were referred into the service, over 100 more than the previous year, demonstrating the need for this critically important service.

I have been able to secure an additional £100,000 from NHSE/I to continue the role of the Sexual Violence Portfolio Lead Officer for an extra two years up to 31st March 2025. The post holder, located in my office, works with West Mercia Police and partners to deliver the objectives set out in the national NHSE/I Sexual Assault and Abuse Strategy.

Tackling domestic abuse continues to be a key priority for me. Inflicting any kind of harm, be it emotional, physical, or psychological, is simply not acceptable.

“I’ve been through lots of difficult times, the support which we have and still receive has changed our lives for better. Thank you so much for all your support, time and understanding because we are not feeling alone especially by not having any family in the UK.”

During this year, I have worked in partnership with Worcestershire County Council to re-commission 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 at the point of crisis to assess the level of risk and develop tailored options and safety plans. The new contract runs for three years up to March 2025, with a total value of £3,348,644 – which includes additional funding that I have been able to secure from the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).

Within the IDVA contract, WMWA provide IDVAs in community settings, as well as the hospitals across West Mercia.

I have been successful in several funding applications to the MoJ for services to support victims of domestic abuse. Through this funding, WMWA have been awarded £543,867 until March 2025 as well as a further £710,931.

This funding has provided specialist advisors who 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. As well as these roles, there are two specialist YPIDVA roles that work with children and young people with additional needs, as well as specialist IDVAs working with those with additional needs. Recognising that men, as well as women, can be victims of domestic abuse, funding was also approved for an IDVA to work specifically with men and boys. All roles are now also commissioned until 2025 in line with the core contract.

In 2022/23 Women's Aid supported 1,391 victims and survivors through their range of specialist IDVA services. 98% of those leaving the service reported the end of, or a reduction, in all abuse types, with 99% reporting a reduction in further risk of harm. The YPIDVAs supported 89 victims and survivors.

"XXX has been amazing with me, from the age of 17 I've been having the same problems and couldn't find a way out or someone that wanted to help me, she's supported me like no one has ever before!"

"I couldn't have asked for more supportive and genuinely caring people to help me through this dark chapter, make sense of it all and reassure me that things would get better. I'll be forever grateful to this organisation."

WMWA also provide a hospital based IDVA (HIDVA) service in the four acute hospitals in the West Mercia area. In 22/23, the HIDVA service (who provide a service to any victim or survivor of domestic abuse, rather than just high risk) provided

support to 156 victims and survivors who fully engaged. 97% left the service feeling a reduction in the risk of further harm."

"My client was really appreciative of the support and the options available to her. She found it reassuring that we can all work as a multi - agency behind the scenes to establish a safe plan for her, or that MARAC may be able to assist with concerns around his Mental Health should this decline or become unmanageable." [Service user feedback]

This year, I have provided funding to WMWA to run a children and young people's (CYP) project. The service provides children and young people's workers to engage with 5-19 year olds who are identified as at risk of suffering significant negative outcomes as a result of domestic abuse within their family/home environment.



386 referrals have been received throughout the year with 162 CYP supported through group programmes or one-to-one support. WMWA report that the largest number of referrals came from those aged 11-13 years old, with a growing number also being seen from those aged 4-7 years old. 90% of children and young people reported that their confidence had grown, 89% reported that they understood what a positive and healthy relationship looked like, 100% felt their voice had been heard, and 99% felt better educated about healthy relationships.

Support workers have received the following comment from an attendee and their parents:

“I just want to say thank you. In all my years of seeking help for A and us, I have never found anyone that could do what you did yesterday. So, from the bottom of my heart, thank you for taking the time to connect with her and communicate with her the way you did, as that was a complete game changer in my experience of working with professionals to help my family.”

By securing additional funding from the MoJ, I have also been able to provide funding to Shropshire Domestic Abuse Service 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 one full-time, plus a part-time (equivalent), specialist IDVA who provides 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 my office. 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.

“XXX contacted me and I wasn’t so sure I needed to talk but how wrong I was. She has been so wonderful to me; she really listens and takes in what I’ve said and has gone above and beyond with the time she has given me. She’s been like a really good friend I’ve known for ages. A real credit to Women’s Aid. Thank you so much.”

My Safer West Mercia plan is clear - putting the views of victims and survivors will be at the heart of everything I do. To support this, I have commissioned a three year programme of needs assessments to be used to inform future commissioning intentions. The first to be produced is a victim needs assessment, which is due by the end of May 2023 and seeks to identify the needs of victims in West Mercia, along with gaps in current service provision. In addition to this, future needs assessments have been programmed into the work plan around themes such as road safety, child sexual exploitation and violence against women and girls.



Building a more secure West Mercia

As PCC, reducing crime, re-offending and ensuring people are safe remains a key commitment of mine 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 125 officers have been recruited and my budget provision for 2023/24 will see an additional 40 new officers join the force, which will take West Mercia's establishment to 2,496 – the highest establishment number on record for the force.

The 40 additional officers in 2023/24 will be based at the heart of communities in new Neighbourhood Crime Fighting teams and as Community Safety Engagement Officers. These new officers will continue the focus on neighbourhood policing and addressing key community concerns. I will support

the force in continuing to prioritise the greatest possible proportion of resource towards front-line policing and ultimately delivering the best for communities.

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.

Total recorded crime has increased by 9% in 2022/23 when compared to 2021/22. This was predominantly driven by increases in public order offences and some theft offences (shoplifting and all other theft offences) whilst other crime types saw smaller increases. The increase in total recorded crime has been seen nationally, and the crime rate in West Mercia remains significantly below the national average.

Whilst police recorded data has increased, estimates from the Crime Survey England and Wales (CSEW) show levels of actual crime continue to decrease nationally. Increases in the numbers of crimes being recorded by police are likely the result of a number of factors including more



accurate crime recording, as well as improved awareness and confidence to report offences to the police. This creates a scenario where crime is falling, but demand on policing through recorded offences continues to increase.

The increased demand is reflected in the number of emergency 999 calls, which saw a 9% increase in 2022/23 compared to 2021/22. 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. There are a number of ways in which the public can contact the police for non-emergency situations, including social media platforms. The use of online reporting of crimes has also continued to grow, with 27,991 requests for service made using this platform in 2021/22. This was a 25% increase on 2021/22 levels.

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. Therefore my 2023/24 budget commitments see a sharpened focus 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 and organised crime (SOC). West Mercia Police has developed a clear understanding of the threats and has a SOC strategy and delivery plan in place to strengthen its response. There is more progress and improvement to deliver, which is why I will work tirelessly with the police and partners to tackle criminality at its root. I will also hold the Chief Constable to account on this in the coming year.



West Mercia is encountering a rising number of criminals involved in cyber, fraud and economic crime. This is both as a result of the force's improvements in identification of fraud related activity, as well as a change in criminal behaviour. Although organised criminal groups (OCGs) are known for having a primary offence type, they will commonly extend their criminal behaviour across various crime types and across geographical borders, adapting their methods and approach based on current climate. The increasing reliance of the public on the use of technology and the rise in vulnerability and isolation has provided further opportunities to successfully involve themselves in cyber, fraud and economic crime for profit.

The primary criminal activity identified for around two thirds of OCGs is the supply of drugs, and this has remained consistent over the last 12 months. As of March 2023, there were 29 active OCGs mapped across West Mercia. Just over two thirds (69%) of OCGs (including both active and archived OCGs) have a primary crime type of drugs supply which includes several involved in County Lines.

During 2022/23, West Mercia Police closed down 21 county lines. A week of intensification in March 2023 became the most successful to date after three lines were closed and 60 arrests were made. As a result, 336 arrests were made, the force seized over £446,000 worth of drugs and £96,000 in cash. In addition, over 130 weapons were seized. I will ensure the force continues to relentlessly focus on dismantling organised crime and county lines during 2023/24.

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.

Providing early intervention has continued to be a focus for 2022/23. I have commissioned the DIVERT project with my regional counterparts, using monies seized regionally from proceeds of crime. DIVERT is delivered by the charity Cranstoun and is an education programme that improves treatment pathways, diverts drug users from long-term drug

use and reduces drug-related crime. The DIVERT programme can be delivered remotely or in person and caters for anyone over 13-years-old found in possession of an illegal substance. Since April 2022, DIVERT has received 741 referrals, with an average of 62 per month. Of those who were then assessed, 237 have attended a group. The typical age of those who attended a group was between 18-32 years-old, with the most typical drug of choice being cannabis. Following encouraging results, since July 2022, I have extended the project for a further 12 months (until June 2023) and have provided funding totalling £58,388.

I am now working to commission a Regional Pre-Arrest Diversion Scheme for simple drug possession offences, which will operate across West Mercia, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and West Midlands. This scheme will ensure those found in possession of controlled drugs are fully aware of the potential risks they face, including the harms that their use may cause to themselves and others, and are able to make more informed choices. The

programme also seeks to support the roll-out of the national two-tier out of court disposal (OOCD) framework that all forces are aligned to from April 2023 and will draw on the lessons learnt by existing drug diversion schemes. It is expected that this scheme will work with a capacity of 670 individuals within West Mercia, with referrals being received via an out of court disposal issued by a police officer. The funding for this scheme for 2023/24 will come from monies seized regionally from proceeds of crime as well as £16,740.39 contributed from my office.

West Mercia have seen slight improvements in action taken* against offenders over the last part of the year. However, the proportion of offences where action is taken against offenders sits at only 8.6% for total recorded crimes across West Mercia with larger fluctuations seen across policing areas (6.9% in Shropshire to 10.9% in Herefordshire). When compared to most similar forces West Mercia see a lower-than-average rate of action taken. The disparity also continues between crime



*Action Taken = Charge/ Summons, Caution, Taken into Consideration, Penalty Notice for Disorder, Cannabis Warning, Community Resolution.

types with vehicle offences seeing action taken against 3.2% of offenders, 5.9% of rape offenders and 10.7% for violence with injury offenders. I am clear that West Mercia Police can continue to improve on this position.

Performance continues to be an issue where evidential difficulties prevent further action, or where the victim does not support the prosecution, with West Mercia seeing the highest usage of this outcome amongst most similar forces. Although remaining stable over the last 12 months, 30% of offences are finalised in this way and this increases to 62% for DA cases with an increase seen more recently for its use in DA cases. As with action taken, there is also disparity between policing areas with Shropshire being an outlier across the board for lower action taken levels and high use of OC16.

As referenced in my annual report last year, the Government has published their 10-year drug strategy which is focused on delivering the following outcomes:

- **Fewer people using drugs** – the strategy aims to reduce the number of people using drugs, particularly young people, and to prevent the initiation of drug use.
- **Fewer drug-related deaths** – the strategy aims to reduce the number of drug-related deaths by promoting effective treatment and support services for individuals struggling with addiction.
- **Less drug-related crime** – the strategy aims to reduce drug-related crime by disrupting drug markets and targeting drug-related criminal activity.
- **Better access to treatment and support** – the strategy aims to improve access to effective drug treatment and support services, particularly for the most vulnerable and marginalized individuals.
- **More people in recovery** – the strategy aims to support individuals in their recovery journey, helping them to rebuild their lives and achieve their full potential.

- **Stronger families and communities** – the strategy aims to reduce the harm caused by drug use to families and communities, and to promote healthy and resilient communities.

In order to deliver the outcomes, the Government has established Combating Drug Partnerships (CDPs) across the country. There are two such partnerships in West Mercia. One for Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin and the other for Worcestershire and Herefordshire. The aim of the partnerships is to coordinate and integrate the efforts of different organisations to prevent drug and alcohol abuse, provide effective treatment and support for individuals struggling with addiction, and reduce drug and alcohol related harm to communities.

As the Senior Responsible Officer for both CDPs I will work tirelessly with partners to deliver the above outcomes, making West Mercia a safer place to live, work and visit.

While knife crime can also be associated with SOC activity it is a complex national issue that doesn't

have a single, specific cause. The force's approach to tackling knife crime goes above and beyond the enforcement element towards preventing crime from happening. Whilst the number of serious offences involving a knife or sharp instrument have increased locally, regionally, and nationally, the knife crime rate in West Mercia remains significantly lower than the national average.

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 system and society is needed if we are going to be most effective.

My Safer West Mercia Plan includes a specific commitment to collaborate with police and partners to prevent and reduce serious violence including knife crime. Central to this is supporting the local delivery of the Government's new Serious Violence Duty (Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022).

Over the last six months I have utilised my convening powers to bring specified authorities together across the force area to prepare for the implementation of the Duty, including leading on the funding application to the Home Office. I continue to work closely with Crest (appointed by the Home Office to provide the national support offer) to assess readiness of partners to implement the Duty. I am currently reviewing local governance arrangements to ensure I remain well placed to monitor local implementation of the Duty to reduce the risk of serious violence in West Mercia.

I am committed to continuing to work with partners to further reduce knife crime and serious violence in our communities and have ring-fenced £370,000 of funding towards the commissioning and evaluation of a West Mercia wide Children and Young Person Serious Violence Diversionary Service. The service will deliver a mentoring intervention programme that is focused on education, not criminalisation of young people, that seeks to stabilise/increase resilience and

opportunity by providing trusted adult, safe space support to improve outcomes of those who may be drawn into knife related activity in our region, offering an early pathway out.

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 harm and crime. This is why I commissioned the CLIMB service, as part of my ambition towards a prevention agenda, which is delivered by the Children's Society.

The service supports children and young people who are displaying early indicators of being at risk of, or involved in, criminal exploitation across West Mercia. In 2022/23 the service gave sustained support to 631 children and young people aged 10-17 years-old. It is evident that the cost of living crisis is having an impact on families. A challenge for the service has been the increasing complexity of supporting and stabilising a young person, as access to mental health provision,



sustainable diversionary activity, or navigating systems with them, come under increasing demand and pressure, reflected by longer times in service. During the year, 158 children and young people came through the CLIMB service, having achieved a positive outcome by reducing their risk and improving their prospects, whether that was by sustaining an education placement or diversion into some vast array of activity tailored to need such as boxing, creative arts or music.

“I enjoy our sessions too. Climb is the rainbow that came from the black cloud I was under.”

“Your ‘real friends’ can become your worst enemies.” [A supported young person who was asked what they may tell their year 7 self]

“I was really close to getting involved in county lines, but now everything’s going the right way. I’ve GOT to get an apprenticeship this year. Even if it means going to college to re-do my GCSEs.” [Shropshire young person]

“I used to get exclusions every week and now I don’t. Used to be naughty at home and start fights, but now I don’t. I want to be in IT, now that I’m not naughty at school it’s easier because I’m in lessons.” [Supported young person]

Last autumn, I got to hear first-hand about some of the challenges faced by young people today when I welcomed some of the programme’s Steering Group to Hindlip Hall, where they led the way on a podcast with me, questioning me about my role and vocalising some of the issues they come up against in their respective communities. CLIMB staff have integrated and become an important key contributor across organisations, helping the force, local authorities, education establishments, and exploitation partnerships in formulating appropriate responses to tackling child criminal exploitation and systems change, and I look forward to the continuous commissioning review and service development the commissioning team has planned for this contract extension year.



Professionals and communities of West Mercia continue to benefit from the wide reach, high impact training delivered by the funding. I have continued to provide towards two Exploitation and Vulnerability Trainers, who deliver a broad oversight of the types of exploitation, signs, and responses for anyone with concerns. They have delivered training to social care and police professionals, parish councils, community organisations, taxi drivers, teachers, and more.

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.

The Independent Inquiry into Telford Child Sexual Exploitation was published on 12 July 2022. The report contained 47 recommendations, 13 of which related to West Mercia Police either solely or jointly with partner agencies. There were two recommendations for my office which are being tracked through action plans.

One of the recommendations for my office was to hold the Chief Constable to account following publication of the report. A specific holding to account meeting took place in March 2023. The force provided all the information required as part of the inquiry recommendation and I was able to scrutinise the force's governance, leadership, and progress in delivering against the 13 recommendations. I was reassured by progress made to date and I share a commitment with the Chief Constable to continue to work with partners, focusing on putting victims first. As recommended by the inquiry, a full partnership report is due to be published in June 2023 and I am confident that my office and West Mercia Police will be able to demonstrate clear improvements.

However, I am clear that learning should be implemented across the force area, not just in Telford & Wrekin.

This year I have increased the funding provided to West Mercia Rape and Sexual Assault Support Service (WMRSASC) by a further £205,000 for the

provision of Branch, a direct support service to work with those aged 8-18 years-old (up to aged 24 years-old for those with additional needs) and an early intervention and prevention programme across Herefordshire, Worcestershire and Shropshire and the Purple Leaf prevention service.

In 2022/2023 the Branch service has worked with 305 CYP directly, many of which are staying with the service longer due to the delays being experienced by courts. The Branch Practitioners work with a young person to understand what factors in their life may lead to an increased risk of CSE and identify what long-term support is needed. The team work with other support agencies to develop safety and support plans to help reduce risks to exploitation, especially in the absence of full-time education. Working alongside other organisations also helps to build the CYP self-advocacy skills and support network.

Age 14: "I like that you listen and show me you're listening."

Age 18: "I can't believe you have been around four years. I didn't think it was that long but you know it's great having you – I don't want say bye to you ever cos I really don't think I would have got through all the crap and seen the court case through."



The additional funding for Purple Leaf has allowed the development of two new roles; a Family Support Practitioner who will work alongside an Early Intervention Practitioner who can support dual experience cases; where a child or young person may be at risk of being harmed and who may also cause harm to others. A gap was identified for this dual experience support and the work follows the whole family approach with integrated parental/carer sessions where appropriate.

“The early warning signs were a new idea I had not encountered before.”

The core Purple Leaf service continues to achieve great success with its targeted education programme, delivering a modular programme tailored to the needs of a school, group or individual with sessions focused on consent, gender, sexualisation, social media, pornography, and bystander intervention. Last year, 2,431 children and young people across Herefordshire,

Worcestershire Shropshire received either a group or a 1:1 session.

Of those supplying feedback this latest quarter, 99% report that they have an increased understanding of consent and healthy relationships and the confidence to challenge behaviours rising each quarter to 100% this last quarter (*out of 30 responses to that particular question*).

“The new information about grooming and how to report it, cause when I was in year 9 being groomed and sexual exploited there wasn’t this type of support and was kind of pushed aside so glad it’s getting talked about now.”

Additionally, Purple Leaf have also delivered 41 sessions, reaching over 706 professionals to ensure key messaging and consistent approaches are cascaded through their awareness and learning sessions. I am pleased to see that last year, the numbers of parents and carers accessing these sessions increased, with 81 attending.

Service feedback highlights the importance of offering this safe conversational space for children and young people to discuss subject matter they may not otherwise get a platform.

“The breakdown of myths vs reality in sex and pornography was helpful.”

“I think the impact of porn session was particularly useful as it is so taboo.”

Following on from feedback from attendees, Purple Leaf adapted sessions accordingly to continue to meet the need. Some examples of feedback were:

- CYP would like more, or longer, sessions and smaller groups.
- CYP would like to see more LGBT+ examples/discussion.
- CYP wanted more on male issues including toxic masculinity.
- CYP would like more information about why people might choose not to have sex.

Purple Leaf demonstrated the importance of not only obtaining these views but acted collaboratively to ensure that young voices were heard, listened to and were integral to service development.

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.

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 £1,774,964 for 2022/23 and 2023/24 from the fourth Home Office Safer Streets fund.



This particular round of funding aimed to combine and expand previous focuses of the Safer Streets Funds and the Safety for Women at Night (SWaN) Fund through targeting neighbourhood crime, VAWG and ASB.

- **Bid 1 West Mercia Wide** - received funding of £391,120.60 with match funding from West Mercia Police and Street Watch Volunteer Scheme. Funding has provided an expansion of StreetWatch Schemes into areas where there is a clear fear of safety amongst women and girls. It also includes provision of a digital platform that provides functionality to alert and dispatch, instant location of victims, and scene location. To assist in addressing unacceptable behaviours within the Night-time Economy (NTE), training is provided to raise awareness and promote knowledge of safe spaces to go in time of crisis for help and support.
- **Bid 2 Shrewsbury, Shropshire** - received funding of £548,178 with match funding from Shropshire County and Town Council, Shrewsbury Town

Council, Shrewsbury Bid, Street Pastors and Shropshire CSP. Funding has provided a range of services such as street rangers and security officers designed to reduce anti-social behaviour and improve feelings of safety in the town centre area of Shrewsbury in particular.

- **Bid 3 Herefordshire** - received funding of £344,785 with match funding from Venture, Hereford City Improvements Project, Herefordshire County Council and West Mercia Police. The funding included expanding the 'Lean on me' programme, an education programme for partners in the night-time economy on sexually harmful behaviours, CCTV, lighting, landscaping and subway artwork.
- **Bid 4 Telford** - received funding of £490,881, which was match funded by Telford and Wrekin Council, Community Safety Partnership and West Mercia Police. The funding has paid for the implementation of Housing Enforcement Officers, Neighbourhood Coordinator, Active bystander programme, education and training

for young people in secondary schools on sexual harassment and abuse, target hardening by using CCTV and improved street lighting.

Throughout 2022, I have continued to work in partnership with Telford & Wrekin Council to deliver the Safer & Stronger Communities project. Over the course of the project, it is pleasing to see that confidence levels have increased - with one ward seeing an increase of 16%. Levels of fly tipping and anti-social behaviour are continuing to see a decrease in a number of wards, which is the result of targeted activity to prevent these two concerns. Whilst levels of crime have not seen an overall decrease, I am confident that as the project beds in there will be further positive outcomes.

Due to the success of the Telford project, in my 2023/24 budget, I committed £2m to work with the remaining local authorities to roll out similar programmes across the rest of West Mercia, attracting match funding from partners to further enhance my investment to create more outcomes for the communities of West Mercia.

As well as committing to support me deliver my Safer West Mercia Priorities, 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.

WDBC is a leading from the front project, which seeks to reduce acquisitive crime throughout West Mercia using a holistic approach to acquisitive crime and associated harm. The crime deterrent 'SmartWater' forensic property marking solution is distributed across villages and towns to protect people's property. Since inception in 2015 over 64,000 properties have been protected, 827 commercial properties and 50 farms across the



counties covered by West Mercia Police have also signed up to the initiative.

Along with more than 100 towns and villages the team also works with second-hand stores and fuel stations. A covert team looks to use the latest in covert technology to catch criminals in the act and exploitation and vulnerability trainers work with front-line professionals to raise awareness of associated harm and how to spot the signs someone may be being exploited by criminals.

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 have conducted include:

- **Telford & Wrekin** - petrol stations throughout the borough were visited and advised on crime

prevention for make-off-without-payments and provided WDBC stickers.

- **South Worcestershire** - a freight crime event was held at Strensham Services on the M5 to provide awareness to lorry drivers concerning recent theft from articulated trailers.
- **Shropshire** - in total 70 visits have been made to rural locations to offer support, reassurance, and crime prevention advice.
- **North Worcestershire** - setting up of a new cross agency panel to address crime and ASB in Redditch Town Centre known as the Redditch Operational Subgroup. This brings together police, council, the BID, CCTV, Cranstoun and the Kingfisher Shopping Centre.
- **Herefordshire** - working with the force to conduct joint visits to a number of victims of shed burglaries in the village of Weobley.



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 the whole of West Mercia. Not only is fly-tipping unsightly and a nuisance, but it also causes a substantial cost to landowners and is hazardous to our environment and wildlife.

To underline my commitment to developing a partnership response to tackling fly-tipping, I launched a grant round in September 2021 earmarking £100,00 over two years for initiative

to tackle fly-tipping on private land. This initiative is due to complete in October 2023 but some examples of what has so far been achieved are:

- **Herefordshire** - CCTV cameras being deployed and monitored; proposed publicity of using the fly tipping sign on the side of refuse collection vehicles.
- **Telford & Wrekin** - Operation Fly tip continues to develop through a multi- agency approach, working closely with Police, National Farmers Union, Harper Adams university and the Environment Agency to combat fly-tipping.
- **West Mercia Wide Tyre Tagging Scheme** - 107 garages have now signed up to the scheme and 45 fly-tipping incidents have been reported.

Too many people are killed or seriously injured on our roads. During 2022/23, 49 people lost their lives on West Mercia's roads, this is comparable to the number of people who lost their lives in 2021/22.

This is echoed in the sheer volume of correspondence I receive regarding the impact road safety can have on communities. 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 victims, their families, and witnesses of road traffic accidents which is why I have invested approximately £74,000 in RoadPeace. This service provides a support and information service for injured and bereaved victims of serious injury collisions. The scheme, which works within the Victim Advice Line, has shown a steady increase in referrals since the start of the pilot programme at the end of 2020. During 2022/23 there were 95 referrals of which over half were for bereaved victims and 22 witnesses to fatal collisions were offered supported. RoadPeace initiated a very successful round table event in November 2022, which was chaired by the APCC, with the aim of bringing together multiple stakeholders to discuss

support and justice for the victims of road traffic crashes and identify examples of best practice, areas for improvement and how to promote support available. Due to the positive feedback received from the day, a further round table event is being planned for 2023.

“RoadPeace have been amazing from day one. When the police first told me about RoadPeace I did not want to speak to anyone – I felt nobody would understand. I agreed to give it a go, but was clear that if I didn’t like it, I would tell them. I have had someone to talk to who knows where I am coming from. When I talk to those who have not been through it, they may try to understand, but they will never really see it through my eyes. I have been able to meet people who understand and to speak openly with people who know what I am going through.”

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. In 2021, my investment saw



a new average speed system go live on the A449 in Worcestershire, made possible by a significant investment from my 2020/21 Road Safety Funding round.

I have continued to invest in the MORSE project, which was granted £229,000 in 2022/23. 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. In 2022/23 190 referrals were made into the project.

“MORSE was very clear and made things very easy to understand, they made me believe we had a mutual respect and helped me to understand my actions and the effects they have on others and appreciating the affects it has on their families. They constantly asked me about my cocaine misuse and supported me in continuing efforts to ensure it is now behind me. I pledge

to continue to clearly understand the risks and dangers of my actions and will continue to respect the law and the safety of others.”

MORSE are in the process of exploring additional funding opportunities and are looking to increase their visibility in other regions nationally. They have conducted discussions with both Warwickshire and The Wirral where they have promoted their model and are looking to see if a pilot project can be put in place. 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.

West Mercia is very fortunate to have many waterways, however this can come at a danger. That is why, as PCC and part of my commitment to reduce harm, I am proud to fund West Mercia Search and Rescue (WMSAR) and Severn Area Rescue Association (SARA).



SARA provides a search and rescue service across a significant part of the West Mercia Police area, primarily searching for missing persons, often in water, and conducts flood rescue and support operations. My £18,000 contribution delivered over the course of three years has been, and will continue to be, used to equip and support an uplift of trained water rescuers from 28 to 40 and food-qualified helms from four to 12 over the next three years. SARA also provides water risks and safety education and awareness having delivered over 30 face-to-face educational events at schools and youth clubs during the first half of the year.

WMSAR provide a world-class voluntary rescue service, for free, to the emergency services. They also engage with partner agencies and the public to deliver proactive and preventative safety measures, in person and online water safety resources, safety patrols and physical messaging boards. In the first six months of the year WMSAR attended nearly 80 events to raise awareness and advocate water safety. I have granted WMSAR

£20,000 to alleviate the fundraising burden placed on its small but dedicated team of volunteers, allowing them to focus on their own training, maintenance and call-outs. The additional capacity provided by this grant has allowed WMSAR to provide West Mercia Police with specialist services including drone, sonar, and quad bike capabilities. It also enabled the charity to develop the Home & Dry water safety course. So far 22,000 people have taken part in this course and are now better protected from harm on our waterways.

Between them the two organisations have responded to over 50 water rescue and missing person incidents. These robust third sector search and rescue capabilities play a crucial role in supporting our police and fire services save lives. Yet the most effective way to reduce harm on our waterways remains prevention and education, which is why I will continue to support organisations such as SARA and WMSAR as part of my shift towards a prevention commissioning strategy.



Reducing re-offending

To continue to break the cycle of crime and re-offending 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.

Following a successful application for continuation of Home Office Funding in 2022/23, I secured £487,405.40 to deliver a further 12 months of low to medium risk perpetrator programmes designed to tackle domestic abuse perpetrator behaviours whilst ensuring impacted victims receive support. An additional amount of £103,978.60 was awarded to the DRIVE programme in Herefordshire; designed for high-risk DA perpetrators. The total new award for DA perpetrator provision for 2022/23 was £591,384. As a result of this funding, there continued to be a DA perpetrator programme in every county of West Mercia. This offers vital assistance to communities and challenges perpetrators to change their behaviour to prevent further offending.

The perpetrator schemes across West Mercia for 2022/23, and my contributions, are set out below:

- £219,590.33 to continue co-commissioning of DRIVE across Herefordshire and Worcestershire. DRIVE 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 2022/23, 63 perpetrators were referred in Herefordshire and 125 for Worcestershire. DRIVE continues to see significant reductions in all forms of abuse, with 86% reductions in high levels of physical abuse and 100% reductions in high levels of sexual abuse behaviours at the end of quarter four.
- £288,410.03 to the Richmond Fellowship to deliver the 'My Time' programme across Telford & Wrekin 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 support victims associated with the perpetrators, and Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin Councils. The Telford & Wrekin expansion includes specialist BAME/ LGBTQ+ workers designed to work with these groups alongside existing provision.

- In Telford and Wrekin, at Q4 2022/23, four individuals were engaged on group provision and 20 children and young people referrals had been received. In Shropshire, there has been 28 service users engaging in the perpetrator programme overall and 39 service users engaging in the associated victim/survivor support service.
- £190,672 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.

Women's Aid will deliver the victim support provision that supports a linked (ex-) partner to those men accessing the service. Since the start of the programme in 2021, Male and Masculinities has engaged with 182 service users. For 2022/23, 24 cases were closed by Cranstoun, with 92% of these cases reporting that their needs had been met. Since 1 April 2022, 142 victims have been referred to West Mercia Women's Aid.

- £15,000 was also awarded from the Home Office that has funded the completion of a Children and Young People's (CYP) consultation which sought to identify gaps and develop service provision around domestic abuse and healthy relationships, harmful sexual behaviour, teenage relationship abuse, child to parent violence and engaged with young people to ensure their voice is heard in what services work for them.

“My quality of life has improved a lot with the support of the case manager. Drive has made a huge difference to my life as I have not re-offended, and it has helped me rationalise my feelings by having learnt better communication skills and to reflect before reacting. I have learnt to be more patient and assess situations to respond in a positive manner. I feel honoured to be involved with Drive and have been able to engage fully and be open and honest without feeling judged. I can move forward with my life now. Things are different to what they were then.”
[DRIVE programme attendee, 2022-2023]

“He felt he could talk openly which he has previously struggled to do. He has learnt how to reflect before reacting and is able to regulate his emotions better than he had before. He would assess things and consider from the other persons views and to focus on what was important to all.”
[DRIVE victim/survivor feedback, 2022-2023]

“Since my husband attended Men and Masculinities, our relationship has been so much better, both have worked together supporting us in understanding how we communicated with each other, worked with us a family without judgment. I have a new social worker, and I get on with them much better, I feel listened to now. My husband has returned home, my children are feeling better about school, they have a better understanding of what is a healthy relationship, and the CP plan should be stepped down to a CIN at the next meeting. Without the support and programme in place, I don't think we would be in this situation. This has truly changed our lives for the better. Thank you for everything, my family is now back together, and we are happier than we have been in years.” [Men and Masculinities victim/survivor feedback, 2022-2023]

In January 2023, the Home Office announced new Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Intervention Funding for 2023 – 2025. My commissioning team, in conjunction with the force and local authority representatives, were successful in a bid obtaining £725,744 over the two year period towards a force wide standard to medium risk perpetrator programme. I have committed £100,000 of match funding to this programme. Alongside this provision, I have also committed £1,001,971 towards the roll out of DRIVE in Shropshire and Telford and Wrekin for 2023-2025. With this funding being obtained, West Mercia will benefit from a force wide all risk perpetrator programme.

As part of a successful bid to the Home Office domestic abuse perpetrator fund in 2022, I commissioned a Domestic Abuse Perpetrator Needs Assessment which was completed in November. This needs assessment was used to identify the needs relating to Domestic Abuse Perpetrators within the West Mercia area and assisted my commissioning team when completing the bid for the Home Office funding in February 2023.

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 2022/23 there were 56 new referrals with 49 women leaving with a positive outcome. Funding from my office allowed for residential bed space, which has been utilised for 41 weeks of the year by four women.

An example of the support offered includes a woman who was referred for a 12-week residential placement to address her alcohol use and associated debt and parenting issues, which had led to her two children being subject to Child in Need plans. She completed a total of 32 qualifications and educational units towards a certificate of employability whilst resident.

Alongside therapy and substance misuse work, she also completed individual work on repayment planning and debt management, as well as participating in ongoing reviews about her children's wellbeing. Since her discharge she is settling well into her new home routine, using new learnt strategies to manage difficulty, and maintaining a positive daily routine for her and her children.

I have also supported Willowdene in a bid to the Ministry of Justice Female Offender Fund. A total of £276,500 was awarded that will facilitate the expansion of their existing services by:

- Launching a new Out of Court Disposal (OOCD) option targeting women who are subject to Penalty Notice Disorders and/or Shoplifting Community Resolution Cautions, providing an OOCD Coordinator and Assessor to facilitate all aspects of the roll out of OOCDs with West Mercia Police and a Multi-skilled Interventions Tutor to deliver structured interventions.
- Providing a Step-down Residential Placement for women released from prison to complement existing residential provision.
- Providing a Parenting Counsellor to support delivery at Willowdene's Family Assessment Centre and liaise with statutory providers (e.g. Social Services and Probation).

The provision of a new OOCD will divert women from entering the Criminal Justice System,

reducing the likelihood of re-offending. Using a whole system approach to address the presenting needs of Service Users, their OOCDD interventions will challenge the root causes of offending behaviour and facilitate safe return to the community. Willowdene's OOCDD intervention will target an additional 200 women annually who would otherwise receive cautions or other criminal justice sanctions.

During 2022/23, funding was provided to West Mercia Youth Justice Service to provide timely and effective 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. This was with the intention of reducing the harm caused by substance misuse, assisting young people to recover and reduce the likelihood of offending and re-offending.

The following case study highlights the importance of the intervention.

“XX is an 18-year-old male who recently moved from Birmingham to Worcester and is currently on a six-month referral order relating to Assault offences. XX uses cannabis daily and has done since he was 15 years old. XX has mental health concerns such as ADHD, ASD and is showing behaviours relating to OCD. He was subject to seeing Domestic Violence as a child and parental chronic substance misuse issue, but now lives with his grandfather who provides him with a stable place to stay. He has a close association with friends living in the Stourport area, but this increases his vulnerability to criminal exploitation. Work commenced around harm reduction information and advice around safer use of cannabis, cannabis effects, exploitation, improving sleep and wellbeing. A reduction in cannabis use has occurred and the next steps are to explore motivation to stop using cannabis. Mental health screening has commenced and harm reduction intervention regarding self-harm. Referral has also been completed to education to support the YP with training opportunities.” [WMYJS report]



West Mercia Police will move to a new approach in the use of out of court disposals in 2023 as part of the legislative reform to ensure consistency across police forces in the way low-level offences are dealt with out of court. The force has started a phased approach to implement these changes with the final implementation date scheduled for April 2023, however nationally this date has been pushed back until later in the year to provide forces with additional time to ensure everything is in place for a smooth transition. I have been working and will continue to work, closely with the force and stakeholders to ensure that sufficient resources and effort are dedicated to implementing the new approach including having the appropriate intervention projects available.

Partnership working

I firmly believe that partnership working is vital to tackling crime, anti-social behaviour and substance misuse because these issues are complex and often require a multi-faceted approach to address effectively. No one agency or organisation can

solve these problems alone, and collaboration between different stakeholders is crucial to identifying and implementing effective solutions.

Effective partnerships allow for the pooling of resources, expertise, and knowledge from a range of different organisations, including criminal justice agencies, health services, local authorities, and community groups. By working together, these groups can develop coordinated strategies to prevent and respond to crime, anti-social behaviour, and substance misuse.

Partnerships also provide opportunities to improve communication and information sharing between different organisations, which can help to identify emerging issues and respond more quickly to incidents when they occur. This can lead to more effective prevention and early intervention measures, as well as more coordinated enforcement efforts.

An example of this partnership approach is through my Crime Reduction Board (CRB) which brings together representatives from the police, probation, prisons, local authorities, community safety, and health to tackle key priorities set out in my Safer West Mercia Plan.

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 Communities programmes across West Mercia, 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 2022/23 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 2022/23, as in previous years, I have worked with and provided financial support to the five Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) in West Mercia. I hold a bi-annual CSP summit where I meet with CSP Chairs and lead officers from each partnership to discuss key issues and plans.

The Serious Violence Duty introduced within the Police, Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 came into effect on 31st January 2023. This duty requires CSP partners to work collaboratively to prevent and reduce serious violence. The legislation also gives PCCs a role to assist local partnerships through the provision of funding and the PCC's convening powers. The CSP summit meetings proved invaluable in establishing how each CSP is meeting the requirements of the new duty, and how I can best assist CSPs through funding, oversight, and governance 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.

During 2022/23 I invested a total of £100K to invest in CCTV capital projects through the Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs). Some examples of how this funding was invested are:

- **North Worcestershire** – continuation of the capital upgrade programme, which has enhanced current monitoring capabilities and future-proofed the CCTV scheme that covers the district areas of Bromsgrove, Redditch and Wyre Forest.
- **Telford & Wrekin** – development of a new purpose-built control suite will complement the growing number of police volunteers who support the day-to-day operation of the control room.
- **Herefordshire** – installation of two IP CCTV cameras and upgrading three CCTV cameras into high definition 4K capability providing much clearer real time and recorded images.

Criminal justice

The Criminal Justice System (CJS) is a complex web of partners, roles, budgets, and priorities. I have actively and consistently called for improvements within the criminal justice system, to ensure victims are able to access justice and to make sure offenders are brought to justice. This continues to be the case, as I have taken on the role of Chair of the Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) to ensure improvements can be made. The LCJB is currently being reviewed to ensure local arrangements are fit for purpose and driving impactful change for victims of crime with clear priorities, a supporting delivery plan and the development of a performance framework. In March 2022, the PCC Review (Part two), carried out by the Home Office, identified LCJBs as a critical vehicle to empower PCCs with the levers to bring together criminal justice partners to effectively tackle crime. As part of this the Ministry of Justice have recently published updated guidance strengthening the role of the PCC.

Court backlogs continue to be an issue impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent Bar strikes. The backlog continues to create unacceptable delays for victims, witnesses and defendants in West Mercia and ensuring timely access to justice will continue to be a key focus for the LCJB. The ongoing delays also have a knock-on effect for support services. The force's Witness Care Unit is supporting over 21,000 victims and witnesses every month, placing additional demands against police resources.

To support the work of the Witness Care Unit, I have funded two additional witness care officers to provide support to victims and witnesses on their journey through the CJS. Despite the court backlogs this allows the Witness Care Unit to continue 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 84%.

To begin to break the cycle of crime and re-offending 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. One of the areas of ongoing scrutiny of my CRB is of the Integrated Offender Management (IOM) Programme. IOM manages high harm/high risk offenders to reduce the risk of harm they present to West Mercia's communities.

As part of the approach, I have funded an IOM coordinator who is based in HMP Hewell to ensure high risk offenders released back into our communities are managed effectively, again reducing the risk of harm.

The latest data indicates that 58% of offenders on IOM have a substance misuse issues. As SRO for the two CDPs I will ensure that we improve the continuity of care for offenders, ensuring they receive the help and support needed to break the cycle of offending.



Performance and accountability

Monitoring force performance

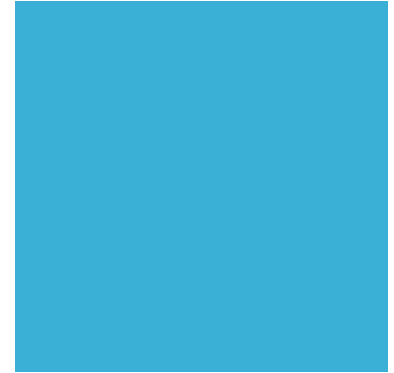
In the last year I have continued to monitor force performance. Weekly, monthly, and quarterly performance reports are produced which help to inform my regular meetings with the Chief Constable and other senior leads. I have had a regular programme of local policing area visits, which enable me to discuss performance and community issues with the local command teams and to engage with officers and staff on an informal basis. I also hold regular meetings with a number of other service leads, including the Superintendent lead for Serious and Organised crime and the Head of the Professional Standards Department.

My team or I attend a range of internal organisational meetings to provide effective oversight of wider force activity. Where appropriate, a 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 act 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.

I continue to engage with the force to ensure key performance indicators (KPIs) linked to my Safer West Mercia Plan and my annual budget are integrated into the force performance management framework. This ensures that the performance reports, produced by the force, demonstrate performance against key priorities in my plan and commitments that were made as part



of the budget setting process. The KPIs agreed for next year's budget (2023/24) have been further aligned to the National Policing Priorities (included in the Safer West Mercia Plan) to ensure focus on key areas that impact communities including serious violence, neighbourhood crime and victim satisfaction.

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. The KPIs for each annual budget are included in the budget report published on my website.

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. The holding to account programme for 2022/23 included a focus on quarterly performance data as well as thematic



'deep dives' across the policing portfolios, aligned to key priorities within my Safer West Mercia Plan.

Over the course of the last year, I have held the Chief Constable to account over 17 meetings focusing on a range of areas including: the force's response to increased recording of homicide offences and the Serious Violence Duty; connecting with communities; investigative quality and outcomes; HMICFRS PEEL and Custody inspection findings; delivery of the force's diversity, equality and inclusion strategy and equality objectives; the impact of the 2022/23 budget implementation for communities in West Mercia; and the independent inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation in Telford. In each case, actions have been followed up and

performance reviewed in future meetings, with the minutes from each meeting published on my website.

Two of the meetings held this year have been public meetings which were streamed on my Facebook page and informed by questions submitted by members of the public. The meetings focused on key public concerns raised with me through correspondence and engagement with communities. The meeting in June 2022 focused on road safety and the meeting in January 2023 focused on public confidence in policing. 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 will be reviewing my approach to these public meetings in 2023/24 to further improve engagement and provide assurance to the communities I represent.

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. This enables me to respond dynamically to emerging performance issues or concerns. 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: the force fleet; vehicle offences in North Worcestershire, the national uplift programme, diversity of new student officer recruits, rape and other serious sexual offences, performance of the Victim Advice Line, local and national HMICFRS inspections on vetting, misconduct and misogyny and the Casey Report.

Each of the holding to account meetings and briefings has enabled me to challenge and support the force to ensure delivery of an effective and efficient service to the public and to ensure compliance with national requirements including the uplift programme and findings from HMICFRS



inspections. The scrutiny I have provided has driven force activity resulting in positive outcomes for communities.

I remain committed to continuously improving the processes I have in place. In January 2023, I commissioned a wholesale review of my holding to account function. As a result of the review, a number of recommendations were identified to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of my holding to account process with a focus on tangible outcomes and service improvement for communities. I will work with the Chief Constable to implement the recommendations from the review in the new financial year.

Independent scrutiny

Throughout the year, HMICFRS has published local and national inspection reports to identify areas of best practice, and areas of improvement across the service. In 2022/23, the inspectorate published three local inspection reports for West Mercia Police.

In April 2022, HMICFRS published two reports specific to West Mercia Police: the PEEL 2021/22 inspection report and a joint inspection of Custody Provision report.

The PEEL report provided a 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 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 that this is already happening.

The joint inspection report of West Mercia's custody provision 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 action

has been taken to address these issues. The force has developed a Custody Inspection Action Plan to address the areas for improvement identified by HMICFRS and the learning from the inspection has been further utilised by my office to develop an improvement plan for my Independent Custody Visitor (ICV) scheme.

In November 2022, HMICFRS published a report into the effectiveness of vetting and counter-corruption arrangements in West Mercia Police. As the inspection took place over 12 months prior to publication of the report (September 2021), HMICFRS did not provide a graded judgement, however three areas for improvement were identified. HMICFRS acknowledged that the force had already addressed some of these areas for improvement prior to publication of the report.

This local report was superseded by the publication, also in November 2022, of a national inspection of vetting, misconduct, and misogyny in the police service. Following publication of the local and national report, the force developed an action

tracker to monitor activity underway to address the reports' findings. I am pleased that for over a third of the national recommendations West Mercia Police has either successfully delivered or made significant progress in delivering the required activity.

I have formally held the Chief Constable to account for the performance of the force in respect of all three local HMICFRS reports published in 2022/23. I had two formal meetings with the Chief Constable in May 2022 to review the findings from the PEEL and Custody inspections. More recently, I utilised my virtual HTA process to scrutinise the force's position in relation to the local and national vetting and counter corruption reports.

The review of my holding to account function has identified further opportunities to strengthen my oversight and governance of force performance in respect of HMICFRS findings. On behalf of our communities, I will monitor progress on a quarterly basis, holding the Chief Constable to account, to ensure that improvements identified by HMICFRS 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, I chair 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.



Reforming West Mercia

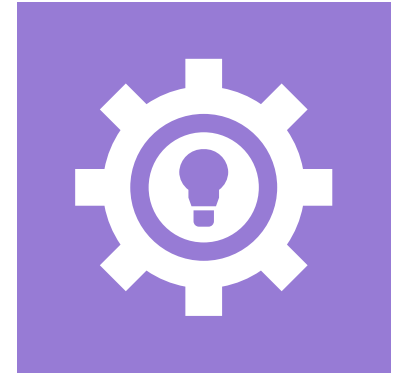
I want the organisation to be one that uses its resources efficiently and effectively so that it maximises its service delivery to the public. Reforming West Mercia Police is a key part of what I want to deliver as PCC and is vital to respond to the current economic challenges, particularly the pay and energy inflation impacting on costs.

The budget for the year was set at £260.5m, an increase of £15.6m on the previous year. With this additional resource, there was a commitment to increase police officer numbers by an additional 125 officers, taking the establishment figure up to 2,456 for 2022/23, representing the highest number of officers the force has seen in the last 14 years. Not only did West Mercia achieve this, but the total additional officers recruited in year was 144, an additional 19 officers above the target.

The additional investment was also part of my focus to solidify the force's future operating model as a single entity. The Alliance with Warwickshire is now fully dissolved, and this was the second year of the estates service being run as an in-

house service under the direct control of my office. These changes are important as they allow the organisation to focus and control the delivery of change and reform. This reform includes the delivery of the third year of the four year digital investment programme. I have also made a significant financial commitment to invest in the physical estate to provide the buildings which are fit for purpose, in the appropriate places to ensure effective delivery of public services across West Mercia. This includes the commencement of building the first new purpose built joint police and fire facility in nine years. 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.

I will continue to back the force with the resources they need.



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.

The insourced estates 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.

An effective police estate must support the needs of communities and the police force – which should be one and the same. Whether that is around visibility and reassurance, convenient access to services, enabling effective responses to incidents or making sure that best value is achieved for the money given by the public. My Estates Strategy 2021-26 sets out how I plan to deliver on all of

this for both the public and the police force in the coming years.

I am committed to ensuring I am a good custodian of the police estate on behalf of our communities. I will make sure that our police estate gets the right investment, is more sustainable, is situated in the right places, and is aligned to operational needs. This will in turn set our police force up to succeed, both now and in the future.

An effective estates strategy will improve services to the public, not only by ensuring the police have the right resources in the right places, but also by driving efficiencies in our estates portfolio to be able to reinvest in front-line service delivery.

A lot of hard work has already gone in to making sure that West Mercia now has a system and structure that can deliver against this strategy. It is now time to do so and ensure that the police estate is contributing to, and enabling, the best possible policing service as well as helping to deliver a safer West Mercia for our communities. 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.

As part of my commitment to moving the estate to a carbon neutral position, I am investing in additional charging infrastructure to support the West Mercia Police electric vehicle fleet. Other carbon reduction initiatives also include the LED Lighting installation project at Kidderminster police station, due for completion in the summer of 2023. I will continue to support the level of investment required to roll out LED installations at the five Divisional Headquarters by November 2024 and the remainder of the estate by

September 2027. 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 HMICFRS West Mercia Custody report, published in April 2022, highlighted several 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. Since the report was published, the custody estate and facilities have undergone internal and external assessments. My estates team are delivering against a Custody Improvement Action Plan, devised by the force, and a significant number of the improvements required have already been delivered.

Investing in technology

The next most significant area of investment after additional officers has been in the digital transformation agenda. During 2022/23 the Digital Transformation Programme has delivered a significant upgrade in the support infrastructure for running IT applications, including a significant improvement in resilience through investment in using a Crown Digital Database Hub. With this work undertaken it has enabled the roll-out of M365 to start. The force is now able to look at the wider benefits from the available tools and apps to deliver more effective and efficient services. 2023/24 is the final year of this current programme and will see even more focus on benefits being delivered from the force utilising technology effectively to deliver service.

- **£4.752m** - improving the end user experience, ensuring that the force has the equipment, primarily laptops, for all officers and staff (over 4,000) to move onto Microsoft 365.

- **£1.277m** - improving the technology, ensuring that it is fit for purpose to deliver modern, stable digital infrastructure that supports policing.
- **£1.362m** - ensuring key systems and applications work effectively on the infrastructure.

I am proud of the work that has been done to add resilience to West Mercia's digital infrastructure and make services more resilient and reliable. My estates service inherited an antiquated, unconventional and not fit-for-purpose system. They have worked hard to update as much as possible in the last year and improve the system.

Investing in our people

As referred to earlier in this report, communities have told me 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 resources it needs and the resilience to cope with changing demands. My 2022/23 budget enabled the force to



successfully deliver the year three national Police Uplift Programme (PUP) target. The uplift has resulted in an extra 125 officers recruited to West Mercia with an uplift across key areas of policing including SNT, local and major investigations and the Professional Standards Department (PSD). Not only did West Mercia Police achieve the target uplift but were able to recruit 19 additional officers, that I have supported, by the end of the financial year. I am committed to ensuring every additional police officer makes a difference to the public.

Whilst I want to see these extra officers operating in our communities daily, I also recognise that we need to ensure that the outcomes for the public are realised, and so have seen the highest proportion of officers in 2022/23 going into Local Investigations, including problem solving. Ensuring that Local Investigations are solving criminal activity, they are also the officers who can see what is happening in local communities and through Problem Solving Hubs they are able to identify long term solutions to specific community criminal activity.

The Police Education Qualification Framework (PEQF) entry routes into policing were launched in 2019. These entry routes included a degree apprenticeship and degree holder entry programme. Over the last three years, West Mercia Police has designed and successfully delivered these programmes as part of an innovative, award-winning regional collaboration with Staffordshire University, and the other three forces in the West Midlands region. There has been ongoing review of the delivery of the PEQF programme in the region to ensure officers are supported with fit for purpose training. This review work has been supported by my office and I am keen to ensure that there is continuous improvement going into the next phase of the contract.

The National uplift programme, and the new entry routes into policing, have provided a rare opportunity to understand and improve workforce representation across all protected characteristics. West Mercia has made good progress in attracting a more representative workforce across the three

years of the national programme. The data shows female representation is above the national average and the number of officers from an ethnic minority has increased by 18 since 2020.

West Mercia's population has become more diverse since 2011, with the total black and minority ethnic population increasing from 3.8% to 5.8%. The force will be reviewing internal aspirations related to representation in line with this new Census data.

Development and use of a Diversity Dashboard will provide the force with the ability to drill down to function level to see the diversity make up of each department and performance in comparison to the force as a whole. It will be used to identify areas of disproportionality enabling work with different departments to help address specific areas of concern and under-representation.

Activity to improve the diversity profile of the force, includes:

- Developing positive action initiatives to support ethnic minority applicants applying for police staff vacancies.

- Continuing to develop Step Across/Step Up programme plans, including the review of effective practice in other organisations inside and outside of policing.
- Continuing to review base line ethnic minority and gender data in relation to recruitment, leavers and promotions using a 12-month comparative analysis.
- Enhancing methods employed to continue to attract and improve application rates from under-represented groups including targeted recruitment events at community and faith venues and targeted marketing campaigns.
- Developing initiatives to address disproportionality identified in gender and ethnicity pay gap. Areas for review include ethnic minority women in policing and their representation across all ranks and grades.
- Developing the Step Across Programme Work with specialist departments prior to recruitment campaigns to raise awareness of specialist roles with under-represented officers and staff.



- Scoping ideas on developing a 'safe spaces' initiative and providing an opportunity to ask questions, talk openly and not feel uncomfortable to ask anything.

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, including internal training and scrutiny of the force's functions under the Equality Act.

The evolution of policing capabilities such as surveillance, analysis, cyber, armed policing and others has always been a core part of how the service operates. The public expects the police to combat key threats using information and command structures that are wholly unaffected

by force boundaries. Capabilities, however, have often developed in single forces. This has meant that policing has grown itself in a way that does not maximise the breadth of talent, resources, and equipment it has at local, regional and national levels.

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 police entry and training.

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 three Regional Policy Officers, jointly funded by the four PCCs. They provide policy support and scrutiny of the regional collaborations and lead the coordination of regional criminal justice governance arrangements.

The Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) sets out those threats which, in the Home Secretary's view, are the biggest threat to public safety and must be given due regard by PCCs when issuing or varying Police and Crime Plans. It supports PCCs as well as Chief Constables to plan, prepare and respond to these threats by clearly linking the local response to the national response, highlighting the capabilities and partnerships that policing needs to ensure it can fulfil its national responsibilities.

A revised version of the SPR was published in February 2023 which provided strengthened detail around the action required from policing at the local and regional level to the critical national threats. The 2023 SPR sets out seven identified national threats. These are as follows: Serious and Organised Crime (SOC); Terrorism; Cyber;

Child Sexual Abuse; Public Disorder and Civil Emergencies. These remain from the 2015 version with the addition in 2023 of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), reflecting the threat it presents to public safety and confidence.

Given this annual report is for the year April 2022 to March 2023, it will not respond in detail to the revised SPR due to the timing of its publication. However, as PCC I am confident I have given due regard to the six threat areas identified in the previous SPR in my Safer West Mercia Plan and in my role holding my Chief Constable to account. VAWG, while not previously contained in the SPR, nonetheless is a key and pressing issue on which I will update in this report and will ensure is prioritised in future iterations.

Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) form a critical part of the national policing network to protect the public from SOC. There are still improvements to be made in this area, which I will ensure are delivered within the West Mercia area. The West Midlands ROCU undertook a review



into its operations and size during 2022/23 which resulted in efficiencies of around £2 million. I will continue to ensure that the ROCU offers the best service for the communities of West Mercia tackling organised crime alongside the local force and the National Crime Agency. I saw for myself a wide range of ROCU operations at a 'deep dive' hosted by them in October 2022.

Although West Mercia is a 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 2022/23 the national threat level from terrorism remained at SUBSTANTIAL. Throughout the year, through RGG and my local counter terrorism briefings, I have sought reassurance that the system and processes work effectively to counter the threat and ensure the safety of West Mercia's communities.

In September 2022, myself and the other regional PCCs had an in-depth deep dive into the use of 'Schedule 7' – the powers that allow officers to search and question people who pass through UK borders. I was closely engaged in renewing my oversight and scrutiny to ensure that the powers are being used fairly and proportionately within the region.

In March 2023, myself and the regional PCCs held a third 'deep dive' session with WMCTU focusing on the regional threat and risk picture, the management of terrorist offenders and the lift and shift of Special Branch functions into counter terrorism policing. We were pleased to see that changes have been made to ensure a positive impact on the service to West Mercia's communities.



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 their police force and I 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 2021/22, 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.

70% of residents feel West Mercia Police understands issues in their community [West Mercia Crime and Perceptions Survey 2022/23]

As part of the Charter commitments, local policing teams have committed to approaching all 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 on a regular basis. Across West Mercia the top three community concerns identified relate to safer roads (32%), crime (22%) and ASB (11%). These priorities have been used to inform local activity across local teams, and at a strategic level to inform my future holding to account activity for 2022/23.

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.



I was therefore pleased that Neighbourhood Matters was launched by West Mercia Police in 2021, 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. My priority is to maximise this development for the benefit of communities.

The messages people receive are targeted and based on their location and preferences selected by an 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 29,000 people have signed up for alerts; this is an additional 12,000 people compared to 2021/22. West Mercia currently rank 1st out of 30 forces for sign up volumes as of February 2023.

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 been successfully launched by the force and welcomed by the public. 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.

Communities have told me that they 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 2022/23 saw a further 125 officers taken on in West Mercia. These additional officers will provide increased visibility for communities.



I welcome feedback from communities from correspondence that comes into my office. In the space of a few months I received a large number of correspondence about the delays people were facing in getting their firearms license. This resulted in me investing £200k to get backlogs down and ensure the force is providing a service that is both safe and timely for the public.

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 scheme, which is part of my statutory duty, has undergone many changes over the last 12 months, informed in part by the HMICFRS Custody report published in April 2022. The report called for clear improvements which the force is managing with an action plan. The action plan has been shared with all members of the ICV scheme who

also receive ongoing updates from custody to ensure the improvements are being delivered. Any concerns raised by ICVs are escalated to the Head of Custody for resolution.

Alongside this, my office has devised a new reporting form from ICVs which has now been embedded and ensures I have more robust oversight of custody activity, including custody record checks. My ICV co-ordinator has assisted in internal dip sampling and custody inspection activity to continue to enhance the force's custody provision.

Although membership of the scheme has reduced slightly over the 12 months, recruitment drives have encouraged new applications ensuring a stable number of members that are more representative of the communities I serve. I am pleased that over the course of the last 12 months I have recruited 10 new volunteers to join my scheme.

The commitment of my volunteers is evidenced by the increase in visits in 2022/23. During 2022/23 the ICVs carried out 222 visits; a 10% increase compared to 2021/22. In total, 47% of detainees consented to meeting with the ICVs.

Ethical policing

89% of residents said they trust West Mercia Police (WMP), 89% believe WMP treat everyone fairly regardless of who they are and 84% believe that WMP act with integrity [Quarter 3 West Mercia Public Perception Survey 2022/23]

During 2022/23 the force has seen a sustained increase in the number of misconduct cases against officers and staff, rising from 107 in 2021/22 to 134 in 2022/23. The increase has been linked to a range of factors including an increased national focus on officer conduct and growing confidence in the wider workforce to report poor behaviour. I scrutinise and monitor the force's approach to tackling misconduct through my quarterly performance meetings with the force's Professional Standards Department (PSD), reviewing recorded

conduct matters, suspensions and the outcome of disciplinary matters.

In January 2023 I formally held the Chief Constable to account in respect of misconduct, misogyny, and vetting; ensuring that West Mercia Police is addressing the recommendations identified in local and national HMICFRS reports and is on track to check all officer details against national police databases by March 2023 as directed by the Home Office. My budget for 2022/23 included an uplift of staff into PSD to ensure that the right checks are being carried out on all officers, staff and others working with or for the police, to root out any individuals not suitable for such a trusted role in our community. My budget for 2023/24 will further strengthen the force's capabilities through the introduction of new monitoring software to assist in early identification of potential corruption, criminal and misconduct offences.

It is important that when the public speak to the force or I we react, and we put it right when it needs to be put right. Whilst the number



of complaints has decreased in 2022/23, our communities deserve to know that their concerns will be dealt with quickly and appropriately. As well as close liaison with the force's PSD to respond to correspondence from the public, I review performance in respect of complaints as part of my quarterly performance meetings with 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, as well as an assessment of how I hold the Chief Constable to account for the complaints function.

Since February 2020, I have had responsibility for carrying out complaint reviews which were previously referred to the force. The number of reviews has grown from 98 in 2021/22 to 116 in 2022/23. 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, that the complaint review process brings, enables me to identify strategic themes and organisational learning for the force. The findings from the review process have been used to inform training inputs within PSD and to implement new processes to improve the service provided to the public.

Public engagement

I have consistently worked to ensure that I am the voice of the public in policing. I am therefore pleased that the public continue to engage with my office, raising concerns and queries that allow me to help and identify solutions if necessary. This year saw 1,667 pieces of correspondence logged. Many of which led to engagements in areas that saw a number of concerns, or phone calls with correspondents who were disappointed with the service they received.

Supported by my Deputy PCC and two Assistant PCCs, there have been 199 engagements. This includes a variety of meetings, such as with the force, partners, public and other organisations. I am carrying out a piece of work around community mapping to ensure I understand the diverse and widespread communities of West Mercia and all possible ways of engaging with them have been explored.

In the last year I have issued more than 141 public comments or articles in order to ensure local communities are aware of my views, decisions and updates that are of interest to those living in West Mercia.

In the last year I have continued to see an increase to the amount of interaction on my social media platforms. Over the year, on Facebook I saw an increase of 158 followers and 174-page likes, on Instagram I have seen an increase of 85 and on Twitter there has been a continual increase with 219 followers. I also use YouTube and LinkedIn, which are both seeing a steady increase since I started using the platforms.

Following West Mercia Police joining Neighbourhood Matters, I too have joined the messaging system to allow communities to receive information about my work as PCC and what I am doing in their area. There are 12,368 people signed up to the platform.

I also continue to issue a monthly resident's newsletter, which has 1,903 people signed up to it. This sits alongside a bespoke MPs newsletter, which is issued to the 13 MPs that cover the West Mercia area. This is to ensure they are aware of information that may be relevant to constituents they engage with.

An audit was recently carried out by the Home Office to ensure my website is fully compliant with accessibility legislation. Where possible, all documents and pages can be read with a screen reader. My website is continually audited to ensure it contains the relevant statutory information and, for transparency, all appropriate decision notices, financial information, office information, strategy documents and FOI disclosures are published.

In the last year, just over 23,572 different users have visited my website, an increase on the previous year. There were 32,285 individual sessions and 67,752 page views.

My commitment is that I will build on the amount of engagement I have across all platforms.

In order to capture the engagements via social media, the website and other platforms, I continue to 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 work in partnership with others to run campaigns such as: 'Pin your poppy', which saw communities take part in creating poppies to pin onto one of six Unknown Tommy statues; Safer & Stronger Communities, in partnership with Telford & Wrekin Council; and awareness raising of nitrous oxide with Mark Garnier MP and BBC Hereford & Worcester.

Public consultation

Similar to the previous year, I carried out two consultations around the setting of my 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 once again involved getting out and about talking to people on the streets, particularly for those who didn't have access to the online surveys.

The earlier survey allowed me to capture people's views at a very early stage, which I then used to inform the decisions I made around the budget and how the money would be spent.

In addition to the Town and Parish Council and Confidence surveys, I will be launching a 'Community Conversation' consultation which will aim to capture views on a wide range of subjects.



Our resources

The 2022/23 total revised net revenue budget for West Mercia was £260.5m, 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 £7.784m.

The position on 'Office of the PCC' and 'Force' spends in 2022/23 are shown below:

Area of spend – under/(over) spending	£m
Policing	6.299
Office of the PCC	1.488
Total net underspend in 2022/23	7.717

During 2022/23 we, as a community, moved from a time when we were largely restricted due to a pandemic, but are now facing different restrictions as financial strain from cost-of-living pressure is placed on the public. This has impacted communities across the country, including West Mercia, and will influence the challenges policing faces in every conceivable way.

The Government is now facing the challenge of not only needing to address the debt gap but deal with the rising cost of inflation, which reached a 41-year high of 11.1%. This inflation has been driven by surges in the cost of energy and food.

The increases in energy and food prices have been worsened by Russia's war in Ukraine. The UK is now facing much higher energy price caps and rising costs in food – which is placing strain on families, businesses, and public services.

These cost pressures have already had an impact on current year budgets. The pay award of £1,900 to all officers and staff is equivalent to a 5% increase, which is significantly higher than the 2% which was budgeted. It is also outside the upper limit of 3%, which was modelled as part of risk assessment in the 2022/23 budget. The force has had to manage the impact of these additional costs carefully through the year.

In 2022/23 the force successfully recruited an additional 144 officers, funded from the Home Office as part of the government core settlement.



This is an additional 19 above the original target. The officers have been going through a significant amount of training as part of their induction, before being deployed to operational activities, of which most roles are in Local Investigations and Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

During 2022/23 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 £1.6m of funding has been accessed from the Ministry of Justice and Home Office on top of the core funding of £2.5m that we receive. 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.

The Outturn Report on the financial position in relation to the budget is showing relatively small underspends across all categories of expenditure.

The highest being £2.479m underspend on the purchase of goods and services from external bodies. Considerable investment has been placed in information and communications technology (ICT) to improve the aging infrastructure. Slippage in the delivery timetable, compounded by staff vacancies reducing the ability to deliver all the planned work in year. There were also savings from the change and transformation programme. The majority of which is due to capitalisation of Project Manager costs related to specific projects has been higher than originally anticipated, reducing the burden on in year revenue costs.

There was also employee costs savings of £0.988m for police officers and £1,671m for police staff. This is due to a combination of factors around the profile of when additional officers were recruited, higher than estimated leavers in a year, less employees joining pension scheme, length of time to undertake vetting of new starters and decisions around whether vacant posts needed to be recruited to given other budget pressures. Pay



awards have impacted the level of underspend reported, and overtime costs have been higher as a result of offsetting some of the reported underspend.

Underspends have also been generated through reduced cost of borrowing as capital programme has been lower than estimated, reducing the need to pay interest and make provision for repayment. Also delays in the delivery of a number of commissioned activities with providers, through third party payments, has reduced expenditure in year. Requests for funding to be rolled forward for several schemes have been made.

The force had a plan to deliver £6.037m of savings as part of ensuring delivery of a balanced recurring budget. Savings of £6.091m were delivered. Whilst nine of the identified savings, totalling £0.345m, in the plan were either not delivered in full or were not viable, alternative in year savings have been

delivered.

Use of reserves

At the start of the financial year, West Mercia had a balance of £18.345m of reserves. During the year, £2.139m of reserves were utilised to fund one off projects. These include:

- £1.125m to support the force budget for 2022/23.
- £0.225m to support the investigation into maternity deaths at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital Trust.
- £0.279m for one off investment in the estates.
- £0.389m on supporting my commissioning activities with external partners.

During the year, an additional £1.842m has been transferred from revenue budget into reserves, from unspent allocations to provide additional flexibility to the PCC to support the 2023/24 budget implementation given the impact wider economic conditions and inflationary increases are



having.

As reported above, the outturn is an underspend of £7.784m, although £0.852m relates to not drawing down reserves. Therefore, there is a balance of £6.932m from the outturn position to allocate to reserves.

The PCC is looking to use £3.8m of this to support the revenue budget in 2023/24 to give the force the flexibility to control its costs in a planned and efficient way, and to ensure that it can deliver a balanced budget. There are also several elements from specific underspends that support reserves. In total, £2.3m is being transferred from the underspend. This includes:

- £0.400m of underspend relating to Youth Justice Service going to a ring-fenced reserve.
- £0.612m of underspend from Road Safety team transferred to the road safety reserve to fund future initiatives.
- £0.818m of underspends relating to commissioning activity which is transferred to the

commissioning reserve.

- £0.473m of underspends relating to the estates planned programme which is transferred to the infrastructure reserve.

This leaves £2.0m, which I have allocated to offset the capital costs, reducing the need to borrow and the impact that this will have on the revenue budget over the medium to long term.

Due to the requirement to account for provisions in the balance sheet, an additional £1.2m was allocated from the underspend report. Now that this sum has been recognised in the balance sheet as a liability, I have reduced the insurance and legal claims reserve, freeing up additional resource to support key initiatives in the year to support my Safer West Mercia Plan.

The balance on reserves, to be carried forward into 2023/24, is £7.5m of general fund reserves (less than 3% of the revenue budget) and earmarked reserve of £17.6m. 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 2022/23 there was a total of £16.035m of capital expenditure, this includes:

- £2.1m which has been spent on our estates. This includes the start of construction of the new police station for Redditch. There was also work undertaken to upgrade the Hindlip site including the Dog Section.
- There was expenditure of £8.0m in ICT projects to transform them to continue the investment required to make them fit-for-purpose for the future.
- £1.5m has been spent on transformation and change projects, such as fleet telematics to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the assets that we use and support the delivery of

effective front facing services.

- £2.8 relates to the purchase of police vehicles to replace those vehicles that have reached the replacement criteria.
- The remaining £1.635m has been invested in replacement of essential ICT equipment, 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 2023/24 budget includes £28.6m of planned expenditure.

Looking forward

The setting of the 2023/24 budget has provided a significant challenge to West Mercia Police and I to be able to continue to operate effectively within the finances available, and to deliver the services that the public expect, ultimately putting them first. I have set a budget of £260.485m, which is



the funding envelope available. An increase of expenditure of £25.1m. Undoubtedly the impact of inflation has meant that the force have had to deliver a significant number of efficiencies in how they look to spend the available budget, but the budget includes £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. I am also pleased that I have been able to fund the recruitment of an additional 40 police officers during the financial year. I am also committed to ensuring that the total investment in new officers over the last three years is now providing the professional police service expected by the public. I have obtained commitment from the Chief Constable that most 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 commission 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.

Further examples of joint commissioning or partnership funding include:

- Joint commissioning with Worcestershire County Council for IDVA and local DA support services contracts.
- Joint commissioning with Herefordshire County Council and Worcestershire County Council of the DRIVE DA perpetrator programme.
- Working with regional NHSE/I and PCCs to re-commission the Adult SARC for a further six years.
- Working in partnership with all four top tier local authorities to jointly commission the Men & Masculinities and MyTime – DA perpetrator interventions across West Mercia.
- Working with all Local Authorities across West Mercia to implement the Safer Communities programme.
- Regional co-commissioning of the DIVERT pre-arrest service.

- Working in partnership with responsible authorities within the Serious Violence Duty to facilitate the commissioning of services via the Home Office grant.

In 2022/23 I invested approximately £10.9m across more than 100 commissioned services and projects I support, targeted towards supporting victims to cope and recover, as well as reducing offending and re-offending throughout West Mercia.

The allocation of funds for 2021/22 includes:

- £5.5m allocated to victim services, including £0.854m on the Victims Advice Line operated by the police.
- £1.3m was spent on early intervention and prevention diverting people away from crime, including £0.364m on Rural Crime and We Don't Buy Crime officers in the police.
- £0.977m was spent on community-based programmes, including CCTV monitoring, night-time economy support and youth outreach programmes.
- £0.229 on road safety initiatives.



The remaining investment was directed towards schemes to further reduce re-offending such as drug and substance misuse projects.

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 to Fit and Fed boxing holiday club, providing youths with a safe environment to encourage health and fitness.
- £2,400 for Be Bright Be Seen to support local cyclists, old and young, across the south of Herefordshire and ensure they are safe on the roads.
- £3,000 for Generation Z to provide a safe zone for vulnerable/disadvantaged/socially excluded young people in Hereford along with the

prevention of young people getting into minor crime or drug misuse with good support, positive activities and opportunities to get creative and expressive.

- £1,000 to Bike Track for a bike track which will be a positive diversion for youth ASB in the local area of Kington, Hereford.
- £2,407 to Hope Cople for the purchase of one speed indicator device (SID) to be moved around the parish.
- £3,200 to Young Driver Experience for young people to have the opportunity to learn basic skills about driving a car and car maintenance. As well as understand the importance of being safe drivers as they start to learn to drive, understanding the impact of road traffic collisions through consequences of their choice. Ultimately to enjoy being safe drivers for their future.
- £672 for speed reduction in Lyonshall Parish to fund solar panels for SID devices.



North Worcestershire

- £2,200 for Knife Crime Youth Engagement to visit local schools and colleges to engage with young people and deliver Anti Knife Crime presentations which also includes information related to County Lines activity.
- £2,000 for the Parish of Wolverley and Cookley to install a vehicle activated sign to address the issue of speeding.
- £1,500 to Steer Clear - following the successful implementation of Steer Clear, a workshop will roll out to high schools for delivery to all students in years 9 and 10 in an assembly type situation with a view to providing education and diversion to reduce knife related crime in young people 10 to 17 years old.
- £4,440 for Night Time Economy and Licensing to increase confidence for vulnerable members of the community when patrolling the Night Time Economy by providing them with a personal attack alarm or drug/alcohol awareness pack as appropriate.

- £5,000 to Lords Taverners (shared with South Worcestershire) for Wicketz Worcestershire - a community cohesion programme targeted at 8–19 year-olds, using cricket to engage difficult-to reach young people.
- £1,851 for VAS in Bewdley to purchase and install a fixed solar powered vehicle activated device.
- £2,875 for Maverick Sounds (Your Ideas Rap Project) to provide diversionary activities for youths involved in ASB and other criminal behaviour as well and those vulnerable to exploitation. To break the negative cycle of criminality through music.

South Worcestershire

- £2,500 for Wicketz Worcestershire which is a community cohesion programme targeted at 8–19 year-olds, using cricket to engage difficult-to reach young people.
- £3,550 to South Worcestershire Primary Schools Tag Rugby Programme. The aim of this project is to strengthen relationships

between local policing teams and children within the community and widened that to a further relationship with other elements of the community.

- £2,500 to Rural Crime Prevention and Community Reassurance for a thermal imaging camera to reduce the number of rural crimes in vulnerable communities and increase public protection, reducing threat, harm and risk.
- £1,946 for Crime Prevention & Victim Reassurance to provide additional support for safeguarding victims following a crime risk survey to their homes. These crime prevention items provide additional reassurance and help to reduce anxiety while in their homes.
- £600 to Steer Clear for education and diversion to reduce knife related crime in young people 10 to 17 years old.
- £2,410 for the installation of VAS in Upton upon Severn.

- £1,550 to Ripple for the purchase of VAS in the village.
- £2,390 for Safer Village (Bishampton & Throckmorton Parish) to purchase a speed indicator device and Bluetooth data protection unit.
- £1,045 for speed awareness in Droitwich Spa, providing VAS for Celvestune Way in Droitwich.
- £1,100 to Broadway for the purchase of a mobile vehicle activator sign.
- £2,371 for road safety equipment - 12 'Police Officer Parking Buddy Kiddie Cut Out Pavement Signs'.

Shropshire

- £5,000 for Shrewsbury & Oswestry Crucial Crew to provide up to 50 schools in the Shrewsbury and Oswestry area with the opportunity to attend a Police and Crime Commissioner's sponsored safety education event with 13 safety scenarios for up to 1,500 children.

- £7,000 for intervention and prevention around youth offending in football. This pilot project seeks to introduce a diversionary process with the police and Shrewsbury Town Football Club working in partnership. It will deliver targeted interventions with these young people to prevent them being criminalised and developing into a life of crime.
- £3,000 for Project Heart to help teenagers who are exhibiting a need for special support.
- £1,930 to Young Cadets - working with a wide range of year 6 pupils within the school setting covering topics that include ASB, communication, road safety, missing people, security and forensics.
- £3,000 for traffic calming in Brockton, Much Wenlock to purchase a vehicle activated sign and pole to fix it onto.
- £1,000 for the town of Market Drayton to reduce speeding traffic and help fund the purchase of two VAS, one for each entrance of the town.

- £1,511 to Selattyn & Gobowen for the purchase of two VAS, one for each entrance of the town.
- £2,725 to Ellesmere Speed Awareness for the purchase of VAS for A495 & A528 Grange Road by Ellesmere Town Council.
- £1,005 - Mobile Vehicle Activated Sign - Purchase a Radar mobile speed sign for use along the B4368 from Munslow to Broadstone.

Telford & Wrekin

- £3,500 for Black History month by delivering workshops in schools to improve community cohesion within increasingly diverse communities, through raising awareness and enhancing social engagement across ethnic boundaries.
- £3,200 to Freedom Fitness Youth Project - the project is made for 11-18 year olds struggling with low mental and emotional wellbeing who may be vulnerable to crime and gangs. This provides them with practical support by way of physical activity helping them cope with

pressures they face on a day to day basis, therefore diverting them from crime.

- £2,000 for the Queen's Jubilee Celebration - a cultural family fun day event celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the commemoration of the Windrush Generation influence in the community and surrounding areas over the last 70 years.
- £2,000 for Crimestoppers to increase awareness in young people of the dangers of knife crime and youth violence. Educating them on how to report issues anonymously if they feel they or an associate are at risk or if they have witnessed a crime.
- £4,780 for Anti-Knife/Sharps Crime to deter and detect knives and sharp bladed objects. To instill public confidence working in partnership with a number of late-night venues/nightclubs.
- £3,500 for Wellington to purchase three additional solar powered, speed indicator devices (SIDs).

- £2,753 to Lawley for speed indicator devices to SIDs for speed awareness.

Contact your Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion:

01905 331656
opcc@westmercia.police.uk

 @WestMerciaPCC
 West Mercia PCC
 WestMerciaPCC

John Campion
Police and Crime Commissioner
OPCC, West Mercia Police
Hindlip Hall, Worcester
WR3 8SP



This document is available in other formats,
please contact 01905 331656 for further assistance.