Strategic Policing and Crime Board

Date of meeting: 19th February 2019

Police and Crime Plan Priority: Reducing Crime and Harm

Title: Tackling Serious Acquisitive Crime

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PURPOSE OF PAPER

1.   The purpose of this paper is to describe West Midlands Police's (WMP's) approach to tackling Serious Acquisitive Crime (SAC), captured within the Police and Crime Plan priority 'Reducing crime and harm'. The paper provides:

- An overview of SAC trends.

- WMP's overall performance in investigating and bringing offenders to justice.

- An overview of WMPs approach to preventing SAC.

- Highlights of the key challenges facing WMP in addressing SAC.

2.   For the purpose of this paper, the definition of SAC are those offences of Burglary, Robbery, Theft of Motor Vehicle and Theft from Motor Vehicle, as defined by the Home Office.

SAC TRENDS

3.   Between 2017 and 2018, the force has experienced a consistent rise in traditional SAC crime types, particularly robbery, burglary and vehicle-related crime (as detailed in the

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table below). To date in 2019. We have seen some reductions to bring us back to expected, seasonal levels of burglary.

	2017	2018	% change
Burglary (all)	27,566	29,818	8
Robbery	7,261	8,085	11
Theft of Motor Vehicle	8,558	10,311	20
Theft from Motor Vehicle	21,080	20,315	-4
Serious Acquisitive Crime	**64,465**	**68,529**	**6**

4. In addition to driving up overall levels of Total Recorded Crime (TRC), the complexity of these crimes has also intensified. SAC crimes are increasingly characterised by higher levels of violence and a greater proportion are being committed by organised criminals.

5. There is also growing recognition in the concept of the 'commodity' as being central to current SAC demand, in terms of those assets being exploited to gain power, control and money (Inc. vehicles, drugs and personal items). As detailed above, organised criminality is fuelling illicit finance markets. WMP and partners are committed to tackling these markets to try and reduce SAC demand.
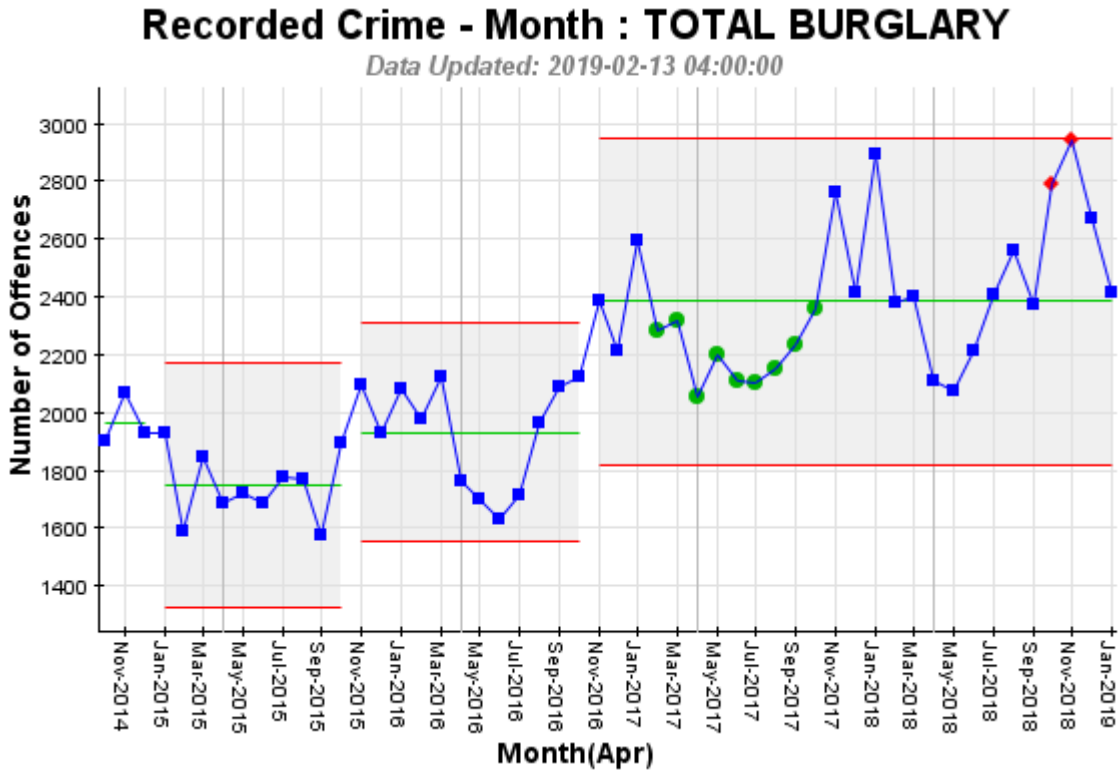
6. An example of this is the 'vehicle' as a high value commodity which is leading to increases across the range of serious acquisitive crime including burglary (car key burglary), robbery (car jackings and home invasions) and theft of motor vehicle. The drivers for this demand are multifaceted and include:

    *   The vehicle as a high value commodity in its own right.

    *   The vehicle as an item which is being broken down as part of a wider criminal enterprise.

    *   The vehicle being utilised in the commission of other offences.

    *   The exploitation of young people to steal vehicles for money.

Burglary

7. During 2018, the force experienced an increase in residential burglary, characterised by an unseasonal rise in the summer (July and August) and record levels being

recorded in November. It is assessed this unseasonal increase was driven by the vehicle as a commodity, due to the proportion of car key burglary offences.

8. Since then, burglary levels have fallen and January 2019 saw the average return to normal levels in this typically peak month. It is assessed that this reduction is primarily due to force wide targeted activity detailed later in this paper.
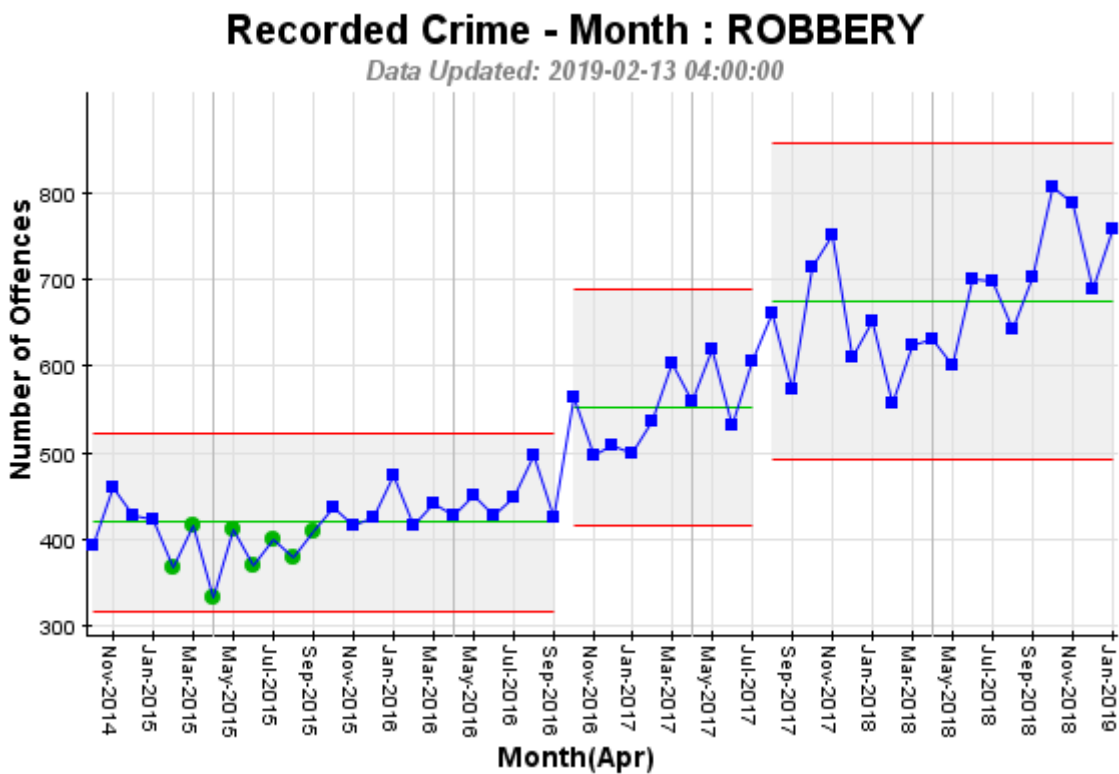
Recorded Crime - Month : TOTAL BURGLARY
Data Updated: 2019-02-13 04:00:00

Process chart displaying monthly levels of burglary

9. Birmingham West (BW) NPU remains the largest contributor to the volume of burglary offences and also has the second highest percentage increase between 2017 and 2018 at 14.2%. Details of the measures put in place by BW NPU to combat this increase are documented later in this paper.

Robbery

10. Recorded robberies increased by 118 offences per month during 2017, now averaging 670 offences per month. Between January 2018 and January 2019, there has been a 5 percentage point increase in the number of robberies (car jackings) where vehicles have been targeted as the commodity (rising from 11% to 16% of all robberies).

11.   The force has also experienced an increase in the level of violence associated with recorded robberies including the willingness to use weapons.

Recorded Crime - Month : ROBBERY
Data Updated: 2019-02-13 04:00:00

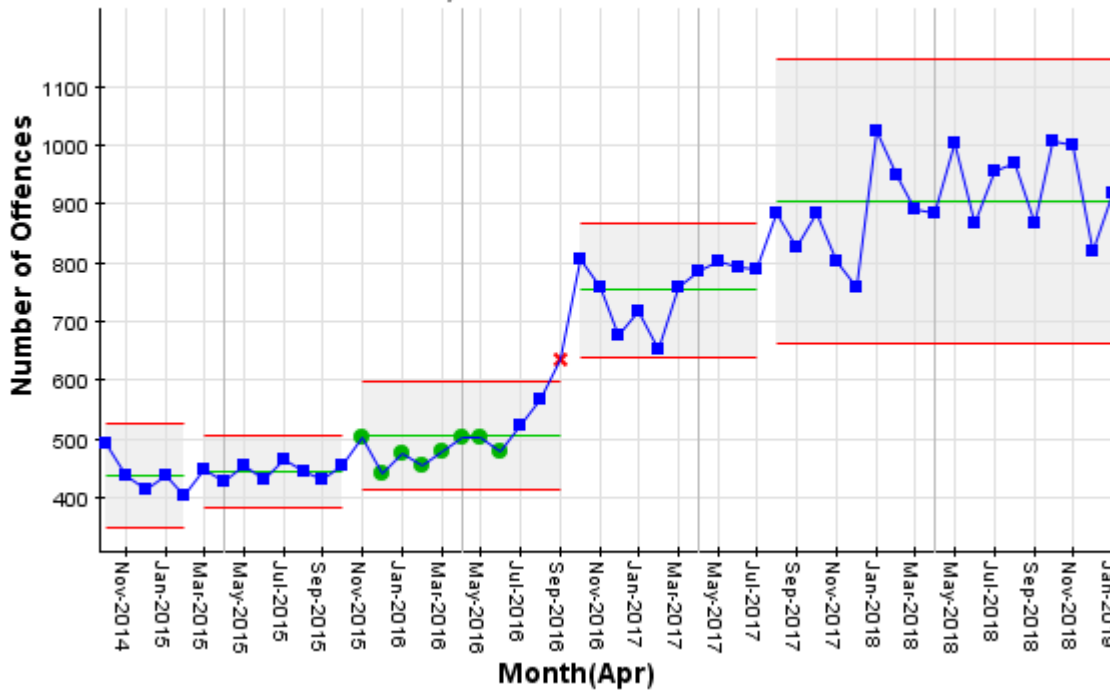**Process chart displaying monthly levels of robbery**

12.   Increases have been recorded across all NPUs, with BW the largest contributor, followed by Birmingham East (BE). In total, there were 8,085 offences reported in 2018, with both Birmingham NPUs accounting for 54% (4,377 offences).

Theft of Motor Vehicle

13.   Recorded thefts of motor vehicles (TOMV) increased by 155 offences per month during 2017, now averaging 830.

14.   The force is experiencing an increase in high-value vehicles being stolen by organised criminals which are being utilised to facilitate further offending or are stolen for their parts.

Recorded Crime - Month : 48 - Theft of Motor Vehicle

Data Updated: 2019-02-13 04:00:00

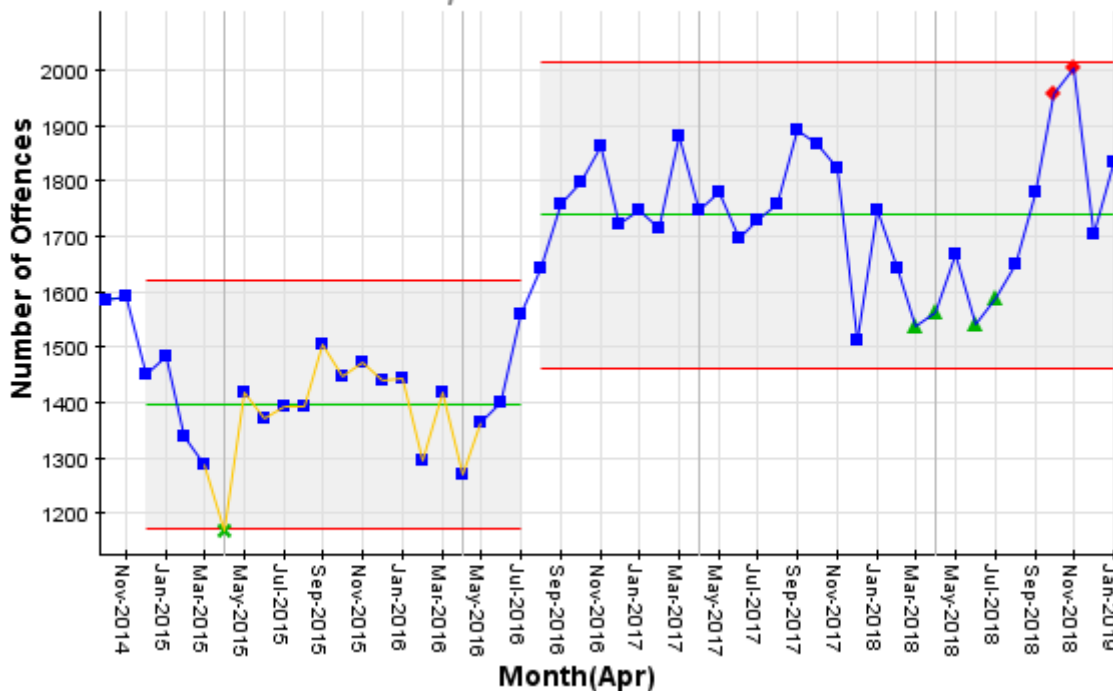**Process chart displaying monthly levels of theft of motor vehicle**

15. Increases have been recorded across all NPUs with the exception of Solihull. Birmingham West remains the largest contributor, with Wolverhampton and Coventry recording the largest percentage increases.

Theft from Motor Vehicle

16. Theft from motor vehicle (TFMV) has reduced overall between 2017 and 2018. The monthly average reduced during 2017 by 28 offences, now averaging 1,713.

17. This reduction in recording is evidenced cross all NPUs with the exception of Wolverhampton and Walsall. Birmingham West remains the largest contributor.

18. An increasing percentage of TOMV offences relate to parts themselves being stolen including number plates as well as more traditional items, specifically tools.

Recorded Crime - Month : 45 - Theft from Vehicle
Data Updated: 2019-02-13 04:00:00

Process chart displaying monthly levels theft from motor vehicle

Force Governance Structure

19. The force governance structures[1], particularly Force Tactical Delivery Board (FTDB) chaired by the Deputy Chief Constable, provide a framework for the identification and prioritisation of SAC threats as well as the development of collaborative tactical plans ('Missions'). This enables a more effective and accountable response in order to drive improved performance against SAC.

20. Since early 2018, robbery, burglary and organised vehicle crime have consistently featured as force tactical priorities, with SAC also representing a strategic long term priority for the force. During the past 12 months, numerous SAC based missions have been commissioned via the FTDB, some of which are detailed later in this report.

21. The current force wide focus on SAC has been driven by Senior Leaders across the organisation via the monthly Force Leadership Conference (FLC). This meeting has driven a greater focus on the 'end to end' offence journey, particularly for burglary and robbery. This has involved significant stakeholder engagement with all departments to identify opportunities and make improvements at each point of the process, from the

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[1] Strategic Tasking, Force Tactical Delivery Board, Daily TRM meetings

initial call to service through to the criminal justice outcome. This has resulted in quicker response times, improved forensic outcomes and higher levels of detections for burglary and robbery.

22.   In support of force wide governance structures, a weekly SAC meeting commenced in November 2018 to encourage collaboration between FCID, Forensic Services, local place based geography, Intelligence and Offender Management. The purpose of this meeting is to review current SAC activity, discuss investigative progress on cases and look for opportunities to develop and action intelligence.

INVESTIGATING AND BRINGING OFFENDERS TO JUSTICE

SAC Outcomes

23.   At the conclusion of an investigation all recorded crimes are finalised with an outcome. The traditional outcomes (1-10) including Charge, Take into Consideration (TIC)[2] and (Conditional) Caution are viewed as contributing towards 'bringing an offender to justice'. A list of all available outcomes are displayed in Annex A to this report.

24.   Between 2017 and 2018, the outcome rate (1-10) for burglary increased from 5.5% to 7.2%. It is assessed this is as a result of increased focus by the force on increasing the skills of detectives, to maximise forensic opportunities and offences taken into consideration (TICs).

25.   Between 2017 and 2018, the outcome rate (1-10) for robbery reduced from 13.0% to 9.1%. In response to this reduction, the force has commissioned an 'end to end' analysis of robbery to recognise the challenges and identify the opportunities for improvement. It is widely acknowledged that the best way to improve detections for robbery is attending the call for service quickly to increase the likelihood of capturing the offender. The force has subsequently placed greater emphasis on initial response including the prioritisation of all robbery incidents as a P1 (immediate) and greater emphasis on circulating offender descriptions to increase the chances of identification and arrest. FCID continue to monitor robbery outcomes as part of normal business processes.

26.   In terms of TOMV the outcome rate (1-10) has marginally reduced from 2.4% to 2.0% between 2017 and 2018. For TFMV, the outcome rate (1-10) has increased from 1.3%

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[2] The offender admits the crime by way of a formal police interview and asks for it to be taken into consideration by the court. There must be an interview where the suspect has made a clear and reliable admission of the offence and which is corroborated with additional verifiable auditable information connecting the suspect to the crime.

to 1.6%. This indicates vehicle crime outcomes have remained relatively stable since 2017. Due to the challenges identified in terms of detecting vehicle crime including limited forensic opportunities, the focus for the force is on prevention.

Prioritising Outstanding Offenders – Crime Severity Scores

27.   A method of crime analysis is to focus on the volume of crime with all offences counted as equal. This methodology does not take into account the severity and harm associated with a multitude of crimes and will count murder the same as shoplifting (as a single offence).

28.   The Office for National Statistics (ONS) have created a Crime Severity Index (CSI) for use by police forces. This was built on the basis that different offences should carry different weights, based on their determined severity (more serious crimes carry a higher weighting).

29.   WMP has continued the development of these indices and the methodology has been adapted to prioritise those offenders based on harm, threat, risk and opportunity. This includes offending history and the severity of a suspect's current crimes for which they are 'wanted' as it is assessed that this provides a richer picture than volume of crime alone.

30.   The data from the CSI is captured on a weekly basis and placed on the 'Force Investigation Outcomes Dashboard' (performance portal) for all departments to view. This allows for the prioritisation of policing resource to apprehend those individuals generating the most harm.

31.   In the future, this will be replaced by the Data Driven Insights (DDI) programme which will be expanded to include an intelligence overlay.

PREVENTING AND INVESTIGATING SERIOUS ACQUISITIVE CRIME

Subject Matter Experts and Aligned Investigative Resources

32.   FCID have a number of dedicated Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) aligned to SAC, who are responsible for acquiring and maintaining up to date knowledge through horizon scanning, understanding of best practice and application of evidence based policing approaches.

33. Each SME has designed a 4P toolkit (Pursue, Prevent, Protect, Prepare) of options which offer a range of short, medium and long term tactical options to reduce SAC.

34. The department also has a number of specialist teams who focus on investigating the most harmful crime.

High Harm and Vulnerability Team (HHVT)

35. The High Harm and Vulnerability Team (HHVT) within FCID have thematic alignment to SAC (including burglary and robbery) which ensures they are driving activity in key SAC areas. For example, the HHVTs focus on robbery enables a better understanding of offending patterns, intelligence and the identification of linked series which drives investigative activity across the force. A recent example of the effectiveness of these thematic HHVTs was the recent conviction of a man from Birmingham who was found guilty of a number of force wide 'car-jackings' and received a sentence of 18.5 years.

Force Priorities and Vulnerabilities Team (FPT)

36. The Force Priorities and Vulnerabilities Team (FPT) provide proactive investigative support to the force as part of FCID. The team are governed through force tasking processes and operate in support of the force's strategic and tactical priorities.

37. The team is responsible for locating and detaining subjects who pose the greatest risk of harm to the communities of the West Midlands. Through intelligence development and the identification of evidential opportunities, the FPT targets subjects with a view to securing substantial criminal justice outcomes. The team also works in partnership with partners including the banking industry and SaferCash to reduce SAC across the West Midlands.

38. To support the force's effort in tackling SAC, the FPT lead investigations into the theft of automatic-telling-machines (ATM) and bank robberies. In November 2018, the FPT secured convictions against four career criminals who committed a series of robberies across the West Midlands region whilst armed with weapons. Through a combination of evidence gathering and proactive targeting, the four offenders were sentenced to a combined total of 47 years imprisonment.

Forensic Services

39. Forensic Scene Investigators (FSIs) attend every crime where there is a likelihood of forensic retrieval, which regularly includes SAC. FSIs will conduct elements of primary investigation including examination of enhanced modus operandi (MOs), the availability of CCTV or witnesses and details of any forensic recoveries when linked to burglary.

40. Forensic intelligence and evidence recovered at crime scenes offers some of the best opportunities to bring SAC offenders to justice. New forensic 'hits' are monitored on a daily basis and when a volume crime suspect is identified, they are prioritised and allocated for investigation.

41. Following forensic examination, FSIs offer crime prevention advice, describe the Victims' Code and signpost victims to portals such as WMNow.

42. As well as normal business processes, forensic services are also guided by the force priorities as identified at the FTDB. For example, prioritising forensics samples retrieved from burglaries.

43. WMPs approach to tackling SAC is rooted in the development of a clear understanding in the nature of the threat, the perpetrators, their sphere of operation and their scope of offending (from local to national).

44. This enables WMP to provide a tailored response utilising specialist and geographically aligned resources to tackle the identified threat.

KEY APPROACHES TO SERIOUS ACQUISITIVE CRIME

45. The following section highlights a number of operations and initiatives which have been initiated to tackle the growing SAC threat.

Project Monalee

46. Project Monalee was commissioned in March 2018 with the strategic aim of reducing and preventing burglary and theft of motor vehicles, but was later broadened to include robbery. A five point plan was developed by the force lead as follows:

- Burglary, robbery and vehicle crime are everyone's problem.

- We will make the West Midlands a hostile environment for criminals to operate, using all lawful means and in partnership.

- We will relentlessly pursue serious organised crime that drives the volume of criminality.

- We will 'target harden' against this threat.

- We will help victims protect themselves from this threat.

47. Project Monalee was one of the first initiatives to identify the 'vehicle' as a commodity. In particular, it identified that a new market for criminals was being exploited, particularly by serious organised crime groups, but also by an increasing volume of opportunist criminals in terms of the criminal exploitation of vehicle salvage. In essence, legitimately purchased 'insurance write-offs' were being purchased and rebuilt using parts from stolen vehicles of the same manufacturer and model, and then rebuilt and resold with a legitimate identity.

48. Monalee led the '#ShopAChopShop' communications campaign to root out illegal chop shops driving demand for stolen vehicles. The campaign resulted in a significant uplift in intelligence concerning premises, businesses and individuals involved in rebuilding vehicles using stolen parts.

49. However, Monalee recognised that the problem cannot be resolved by WMP alone. The force has subsequently become a key stakeholder in the NPCC National Vehicle Crime Working Group which has adopted the salvage market as its main area of focus. WMP are also a key stakeholder in the recently established Home Office Vehicle Crime Task Force led by the Policing Minister.

50. Considerable industry engagement has also resulted from this work including engagement with leading online market places to target rogue vendors' sites through a direct relationship with WMP. This also includes the voluntary prohibition of cash transactions by one of the country's largest vehicle salvage auction sites, following a direct approach from WMP.

51. Whilst Monalee as a project has been incorporated into business as usual processes within FCID, a Chief Superintendent lead continues to drive national engagement with partners and industry.

Operation Cantil

52.   Operation Cantil is an intelligence led 'mission' commissioned by the FTDB to tackle organised vehicle crime. The operation was initially created in September 2018 in response to an escalation in car key burglary but due to its success, was later broadened to tackle wider organised vehicle crime.

53.   Whilst led by specially trained Roads Policing colleagues, the mission represents cross departmental partnership with FCID, Offender Managers and NPUs. Described as a sophisticated targeting strategy, this intelligence led approach has improved the force's ability to identify and apprehend offenders as well as to predict and prevent future offending.

54.   It is assessed that the operation has significantly contributed to the reduction in burglary (specifically car key burglary) identified previously in the document. To date, the operation has resulted in the arrest of 1,000 offenders, over 300 where the offenders have been arrested in vehicles stolen from burglaries since the operation began. A significant number of offenders have been arrested for other burglary related offences including a group of Eastern European offenders who are suspected of committing hundreds of burglaries across the region.

55.   Over 550 stolen cars have been recovered and more than 300 police pursuits have taken place. More than 200 of those arrested have since been charged, including suspected burglary and vehicle crime offenders. As of 01/02/19 the extent of cash, drugs and property seizures combined exceeded £5m.

56.   The mission has also significantly enhanced the intelligence picture in terms of those individuals and networks operating across the region. In particular, analysis has highlighted a trend amongst young men and teenagers, often with no previous criminal convictions, who are being recruited by seasoned criminals to offend on their behalf. These young men are often being persuaded with the lure of cash or other material possessions.

57.   Despite its success, WMP recognise that operations such as Cantil alone will not solve organised vehicle crime. As identified with project Monalee, work muct continue alongside key partners including the OPCC, industry and national colleagues, to target activity on those who cause the most harm.

Operation Brigadier

58. Operation Brigadier is a specific SAC operation targeting foreign national offenders committing crime for high value gold and jewellery on a local and national scale. These often involve offenders travelling between the UK and their home country to move stolen cash and jewellery to avoid detection from the authorities.

59. This transient population represents a key challenge for the force as the offenders are often unknown, with no trace of DNA or fingerprints in the UK. In response, the force has utilised wider force capabilities to identify these suspects.

60. This approach proved successful, with five offenders identified as orchestrators of these offences, being charged with conspiracy to commit burglary between 2015 and December 2018.

61. Furthermore, FCID have pursued relationships with Romanian Police in order to develop and explore a strategy to secure asset recovery from these offenders, who are believed to have been using the proceeds of crime to fund property development in Romania.

Operation Electron

62. Operation Electron commenced on BW NPU in November 2018 to tackle burglary and is an example of a local operation developed in response to a force priority. Whilst the NPU was experiencing a sustained increase in burglary, the number of named offenders outstanding for burglary offences was reducing and there was a lack of actionable intelligence being submitted and disseminated.

63. Operation Electron was developed to address this through a targeted intelligence collection plan including specific intelligence requirements, supported by an internal communications strategy.

64. The initiative has resulted in the number of burglary dwelling intelligence logs doubling from approximately 60 per month to 115 per month in December and January. Each log was reviewed during a weekly meeting and tasked out for swift intervention. Since the start of the operation, over 30 warrants have been executed by NPU staff, assisted by force resources.

65. A notable success story involves the targeting of a well-known criminal family. In November 2018, four simultaneous warrants were executed (combination of drugs/Sec 83/Theft warrants) targeting the family and wider associates. This resulted in several arrests for drug offences and Fail To Appear warrants. Since then, there has been a notable reduction in burglary offences and intelligence suggests that the police response has disrupted the family and their offending behaviour.

66. Future warrants are planned targeting SAC offenders and the operation now forms part of the long term strategy in BW NPU to contain burglary offending.

The Crime Free Programme (FCID prevent strategy for burglary)

67. The Crime Free Programme is an intensive multi-agency rehabilitation programme which provides burglary dwelling offenders with the opportunity to change their offending behaviour. It is achieved through a supportive mentoring network delivered by police, probation and other partner agencies over a three year period as an alternative to prison.

68. The aim of the programme is to reduce the number of burglaries committed by these offenders, increase victim satisfaction through restorative justice, increase positive outcomes and improve understanding of the trigger factors for offending. At present, this programme is only available to those convicted at court, following a guilty plea.

69. To date, six individuals from the region have participated in the programme. Of these, four remain crime free, one did not commit further offences but continued to test positive for drugs and one went on to commit a shoplifting offence.

70. The programme has resulted in 262 burglaries being solved, with a large amount of stolen property being recovered and returned. Satisfaction from victims is measured through a bespoke questionnaire at the end of the process. Of the 169 victims surveyed, 94% were satisfied with the outcome, believing that a rehabilitation programme was better than traditional prosecution.

71. Despite small numbers, the Crime Free Programme is an example of how the force is trying to prevent future offending and prioritise restorative justice solutions.

Communications

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[3] Power to enter premises and search

72. All of the above initiatives to tackle SAC are supported by both internal and external communications. These communication channels not only reinforce force wide activity but also facilitate the delivery of crime prevention advice and community reassurance. An example is the ShopAChopShop campaign outlined in paragraph 47 and crime prevention advice distributed via WMNOW.

Events

73. The West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner held a vehicle crime summit in April 2018 with representatives across industry, including vehicle manufacturers to identify how various stakeholders could work together to reduce vehicle crime. In July 2018, WMP hosted a National Problem Solving Day for Vehicle Crime with representatives from Forces around the UK, motor manufacturers, the insurance industry and government agencies. A follow up event is currently being planned in conjunction with the OPCC.

CHALLENGES FACING WMP IN ADDRESSING SAC

74. Whilst the force is committed to preventing and detecting SAC, the level and complexity of demand has grown and there are a finite number of resources to respond to SAC alongside crimes such as Modern Slavery, County Lines and Homicide.

75. This is compounded by intelligence which suggests that SAC is being driven by organised criminality and exploitation. It is therefore fundamental to the success of our prevent programmes that we work with key partners to address the root causes of criminality and that this work is not seen as the role of police in isolation. Operation Cantil demonstrates that some first time offenders are in extreme poverty and paid for the theft of high value cars with food. The longer term solution requires a sustained partnership approach to deprivation.

76. However, the resourcing and financial challenges also being experienced within partner agencies and third sector organisations, presents ongoing challenges in terms of addressing the root causes of SAC criminality.

77. Due to the surge in Homicides specifically during the past 12 months, there has been a requirement to supplement homicide teams with existing FCID resources, therefore

reducing the number of investigators in geographical areas focused on SAC priorities. This continues to be reviewed and re-balanced where appropriate by the Senior Leadership Teams.

78. In terms of partners, engagement continues with CPS colleagues to ensure SAC offenders are brought to justice swiftly.

79. Our challenge to the vehicle industry continues, as criminals are becoming increasingly sophisticated and technologically aware in their endeavours to both steal and dispose of vehicles.

80. As demand, crime and threat evolves, the challenge for WMP is to be able to flex resources to meet the ever changing and reshaping demand.

Author: FCID

Outcome	Description
1	Charge or summons
2	Caution - Youth (Including conditional caution)
3	Caution - Adult (Including conditional caution)
4	Take into consideration
5	The offender has died
6	Penalty notice for disorder
7	Cannabis warning
8	Community resolution
9	Prosecution not in the public interest - CPS Decision
10	Formal action against the offender is not in the public interest - Police decision
11	Prosecution prevented - named suspect is below the age of criminal responsibility
12	Prosecution prevented - named suspect is too ill (physically or mentally) to prosecute
13	Prosecution prevented - named suspect identified but victim or key witness is dead or too ill to give evidence
14	Evidential difficulties victim based - named suspect not identified
15	Named suspect identified - Victim supports police action but evidential difficulties prevent further action
16	Named suspect identified - Evidential difficulties prevent further action (no victim support)
17	Prosecution time limited expired - Suspect identified
18	Investigation complete - No suspect identified
NC1	Non Crime closure
20	Further action will be taken by another body
21	Suspect identified but not in the public interest for the police to investigate