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National Policing Priorities Statement

2024-25 Q3 Update

Introduction

In 2021, the Home Office developed a range of National Policing Priorities with the intent that each police force must achieve significant reductions or improvements in each priority area. The purpose of these measures is to complement existing local priorities set out by the Police and Crime Commissioners Police and Crime Plan.

National Policing Priorities

1. Reduce murder and other homicides.
2. Reduce serious violence.
3. Disrupt drug supply and county lines.
4. Reduce neighbourhood crime.
5. Improve victim satisfaction, with a focus on victims of domestic abuse.
6. Tackle fraud and cybercrime.

Reduce murder and other homicides

For the year ending February 2025, West Midlands Police (WMP) recorded 31 homicides, a 30% decrease from the previous year. However, one-third of these cases were linked to domestic abuse, representing a 25% increase, and highlighting the persistent challenges in tackling this issue.

The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for the West Midlands, Simon Foster, remains committed to addressing domestic abuse and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) through proactive measures across the force area. As a key priority, VAWG will feature prominently in the PCC's upcoming Police and Crime Plan for 2025-2029. Recently, the PCC signed a letter urging the government to take stronger action to prevent and respond to domestic abuse and VAWG.

Significant steps have been taken to combat domestic abuse, including the introduction of a dedicated domestic abuse desk within the WMP force contact centre, staffed by specialist officers. WMP is also strengthening victim support by integrating independent domestic abuse specialists from Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid and Coventry Haven Women's Aid into 999 control rooms. These experts offer specialist advice, provide support, and help identify missed opportunities to safeguard victims. WMP is one of five forces leading this new approach as Raneem's Law comes into effect, aiming to improve police responses and reduce the harm caused by domestic abuse.

Reduce serious violence

In the year ending February 2025, the West Midlands recorded an 8% decrease in violence against the person offences, reflecting positive progress in tackling serious violence. However, the region remains a hotspot for knife crime, with the second-highest rate of knife and sharp instrument offences among police force areas in England and Wales. As of September 2024, there were 165 offences per 100,000 people, underscoring the ongoing challenge and the need for sustained, targeted interventions.

Several initiatives and campaigns are actively addressing serious violence across the region. Among them is a knife crime ambassador pilot project at a school in the Black Country, where selected pupils receive educational sessions on the dangers of carrying knives. Delivered in a sensitive yet impactful way, this initiative reinforces the anti-knife crime message and is expected to expand across the force area.

Additionally, Operation Guardian, a specialist taskforce focused on tackling knife crime and youth violence, continues to make key interventions. During a recent patrol in Walsall town centre, officers made several arrests and recovered multiple sharp instruments, including a Rambo knife, demonstrating their commitment to reducing knife-related violence across communities.

Disrupt drug supply and county lines

For the year ending February 2025, WMP recorded 8,134 drug offences, a 7% increase from the previous year. However, drug trafficking offences saw a significant 13% decrease. Tackling drug-related harm remains a key priority for the PCC, who chairs the West Midlands Combatting Drugs and Alcohol Partnership.

During County Lines Intensification Week, a nationally coordinated operation, WMP officers targeted drug networks, shutting down active drug lines and reinforcing their commitment to tackling county lines exploitation. As part of the operation, officers executed dozens of warrants, made 86 arrests, seized large quantities of crack cocaine and heroin, destroyed nearly 1,400 cannabis plants, and dismantled four deal lines, demonstrating their ongoing efforts to disrupt the drug supply.

WMP also engaged with schools and other educational establishments, speaking to both adults and children to raise awareness of county lines. These efforts aim to prevent drug exploitation by educating young people on the dangers of drug networks and helping them recognise the signs of criminal activity.

Reduce neighbourhood crime

The PCC continues to prioritise rebuilding community policing. Recently, he promoted the new Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee across the West Midlands, reinforcing his commitment to ensuring communities receive the policing they deserve, preventing crime, tackling offenders, and enhancing public safety.

Shoplifting is a significant neighbourhood crime that affects both public safety and business security. In the year ending February 2025, shoplifting offences rose by 31%. However, since October 2024, incidents have been steadily declining. To combat neighbourhood crime, several targeted policing operations are in place. WMP coordinate Operation Regroup, a monthly high-intensity policing initiative focused on different areas of Coventry LPA. Patrols in retail parks provide visible reassurance, engage with business owners, and distribute crime prevention materials.

Additionally, the PCC, in partnership with WMP, has launched Operation Fearless, a major initiative aimed at reducing crime and improving community well-being. Erdington was the first area to benefit, with significant results already seen. In January alone, officers made 36 arrests, including eight suspected shoplifters and two individuals carrying knives. They also executed eight warrants and conducted over 60 stop and searches, leading to 15 positive finds.

Improve victim satisfaction

Supporting victims remains a top priority for the PCC. Recently, more than £100,000 was allocated to organisations across the West Midlands that assist victims and survivors of “hidden” harmful practices, including female genital mutilation, so-called honour-based abuse, forced marriage, and human trafficking. Ensuring victims can access the right support when they need it most remains a key commitment.

Emergency and non-emergency call handling continues to perform exceptionally well. As of February 2025, 999 calls are answered in just three seconds, with an abandonment rate of only 0.01%. Additionally, 98% of 101 calls are answered within the service level agreement. These improvements represent a significant step in strengthening public confidence in WMP.

Tackle fraud and cybercrime

The PCC is committed to ensuring that WMP takes strong action to prevent and tackle fraud and cybercrime across the region. In the year ending February 2025, Action Fraud received 16,244 reports of fraud and cybercrime within the West Midlands region.

That same year, the PCC introduced the region's first-ever force-wide public health approach to tackling fraud. Placing a strong emphasis on prevention, he highlighted the need for effective action and has brought together partners under a comprehensive strategic plan to combat and prevent fraud across the West Midlands.

In partnership with WMP, the PCC also launched the Money Mules Campaign to educate young people about the risks of becoming "money mules." Designed to reach over 4,500 young people, the initiative raises awareness of the dangers of being exploited by criminals to transfer money between bank accounts. This proactive approach aims to reduce fraud and protect vulnerable individuals from criminal exploitation.