



Office of the  
**Police & Crime  
Commissioner**  
West Yorkshire

## WEST YORKSHIRE POLICE AND CRIME PANEL

24<sup>th</sup> April 2020

### COVID-19 – Briefing for the Police and Crime Panel

#### Introduction

Following agreement with the Chair of the Police and Crime Panel as to the focus of the meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2020, this reports aims to provide an overview of the activity of the PCC/Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner and how it has changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. This overview will look at all areas of the Police and Crime Plan and additional activity, provide an update for each category with understanding of the current situation and any anticipated possible scenarios that may require a change.

Please be aware that this is a changing picture, and will continue to be so whilst the current measures are in place. Other updates are being provided to Panel members outside of the PCP meeting structure.

#### Background/Context

On 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 the Government published its Coronavirus action plan and this was followed by guidance from PHE for first responders, including the police. In response on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020, WYP established a Gold group looking at how the virus would impact on West Yorkshire Police both operationally and for the staff and constant updates are provided from this meeting.

On Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March the government increased the isolation advice and on 23<sup>rd</sup> March the current lockdown period started. The guidance for first responders from PHE was last updated on 24<sup>th</sup> March and is available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-interim-guidance-for-first-responders/interim-guidance-for-first-responders-and-others-in-close-contact-with-symptomatic-people-with-potential-2019-ncov>

In addition to national guidance and reports from the government and PHE, we receive regular guidance and advice from the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) and information from the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) as part of their named Operation Talla in response to Coronavirus.

#### Current Activity

Interim arrangements to replace standard governance structures during the Coronavirus pandemic have been agreed between the PCC and the Chief Constable

Who	What	When	Notes
PCC / CC	Daily contact to discuss exceptions	Daily call in the diary	Includes weekends (DPCC/DCC to cover when necessary)
OPCC Exec / CC or DCC	Bilateral discussion to focus on Covid19	Weekly on Thursdays aligned to follow the PCC's	Record of the meeting and any resulting actions taken.

		weekly meeting with the Policing Minister	PCC will look to publish an update following the meeting each Friday (proactively to PCP and partners) on OPCC website
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To facilitate the weekly Bilateral discussion an update is provided by WYP which details the highlights from the previous week based on the daily updates and includes the following items

- National Picture
- Significant legislation changes
- Coronavirus Activity
- Coronavirus Enforcement
- Critical Functions
- Further measures taken by WYP
- Public order/Public safety
- Resourcing
- Absences

The PCC is linked in with the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Strategic Coordination Group which sits daily across West Yorkshire to ensure a coordinated response from local public services to the Covid-19 situation. This ensures the PCC can escalate any WY-specific matters to the Policing Minister and Secretary of State for Justice, APCC and Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) as appropriate.

**Governance of Commissioned Services**

All PCC commissioned services have been contacted in order to understand any service disruption that may occur and to ensure services receive any support that may be required. We have received plans and/or assurances that are updated weekly by our contracted providers and those delivering high risk provision.

Each commissioned service was sent a copy of the PCC’s pledge which was Mark’s reassurance for organisations he funds amid COVID-19 outbreak (see Appendix 1).

Following a request from Central Government funders during late March, weekly information related to the following areas is now being collected and provided to the Ministry of Justice (MOJ): support services, sexual violence support services and domestic abuse support services. One to one calls with providers regarding the changes and the way forward have been welcomed and should ensure a joined up approach to the new data requirements.

To further support providers and organisations who we provide grants to, extensions to reporting deadlines have been agreed

During early April, a virtual meeting with Domestic and Sexual Abuse (DSA) board members and providers- was arranged to provide an opportunity for the PCC commissioned service, the DSA Board members and WYP to discuss the increased threat of domestic and sexual abuse and to look at how we could work collectively during these challenging times. Areas of discussion included changes to service provision, demand, emerging need and planning.

Continuing throughout the period are the following:

- Weekly check in calls with Restorative Justice and Victims Support contract providers

- Daily reports of Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) provision for West Yorkshire and Weekly check in meeting with Yorkshire and The Humber (YaTH) SARC contract manager and commissioners
- Weekly check in calls with the new SARC relocation project group
- Monthly COVID-19: Alcohol & Drugs Peer Skype Calls with Public Health England

### **Further actions with regard to Safeguarding**

Whilst Covid 19 has interrupted some scheduled meetings between the OPCC and safeguarding partners, the PCC's Safeguarding Adviser is maintaining contact with the Local Safeguarding Partnerships and Boards, offering the support of the OPCC and sharing information and updates.

The OPCC have created a dedicated web page on the OPCC website for 'safeguarding young people' providing links to resources and local safeguarding information and support for both communities, and professionals.

A COVID 19 focused West Yorkshire Safeguarding Communications Group meeting with partnership and local authority comms and media leads to work together, share plans and activities, strengthening our opportunities to get key messages and reassurance to communities

### **Governance with regard to Criminal Justice**

The PCC has continued to link closely with West Yorkshire Police to provide support around CJ issues, facilitating conversation across the partnership and seeking out solutions to local and regional issues. This has included work to troubleshoot issues across all of the elements, including court opening and operating arrangements, changes to charging protocols (CPS) safety within custody suites, and the implementation of Covid 19 legislation amongst other issues.

The Local Criminal Justice Board network have been utilised to identify issues that cannot be resolved locally and these are escalated during the PCC's regular ongoing conversations with Ministers. An interim Local Criminal Justice Board (LCJB) was held on Thursday 9th of April, with engagement from all key players at strategic level. This group will continue to meet on a fortnightly basis to ensure that issues are progressed as far as possible.

Understandably, Courts within the county have been rationalised into a Hub court, sitting at Leeds, where currently only urgent matters are being progressed. Whilst this will have a significant impact on victims and witnesses the PCC has been reassured that the WYP Witness Care Unit are able to continue working to full capacity, despite Covid 19 measures.

Despite a number of challenges, the PCC, with the Courts and CPS, have been keen to support the work of WYP on Video Enabled Justice, with testing being undertaken this week and next to facilitate Skype for the hearing of remand cases.

Assurance has also been provided that defence solicitors are able to advise their clients remotely through a Skype system which WYP have put in place, working closely with the Law Society, negating the need for any attendance at custody suites.

With support from the PCC, WYP have developed a triage methodology for entry into custody suites for visitors such as interpreters and appropriate adults, which has now been rolled out across Yorkshire and the Humber (YATH) region as best practice, and have agreed that Independent Custody Visitors will continue their vital role, utilising this triage method, albeit with an appropriately reduced footfall.

The PCC has worked hard to ensure that the OPCC are responding daily to the concerns of the public around all of these matters, and in particular WYP's activity with regards to the Covid 19 Bill. The Chief Constable has been encouraged to re iterate to his officers and staff the need to work with the public wherever possible and internal press teams have continue to send out reassuring joint messages. The PCC is supportive of the legislation and the protection it offers our police, NHS and other key workers, as well as the safety of the public in general.

We contribute to the national strategic group meetings to discuss current and potential recovery issues relating to our criminal justice system. It is the PCC's vision that whilst this work will be led locally through the well-established WY LCJB structure, the YATH Reducing Reoffending Board, which I established last year along with our Regional Probation Director, and fellow YATH PCCs can address issues at a regional level, and set us back on the road to the new norm, learning from our experience along the way

### **Police Response to COVID-19**

As a response to the current situation, West Yorkshire Police raised a new Operation, Op Jinmen

### **Gold Strategy Operation Jinmen**

- Minimise the risk to the public by assisting Public Health to delay the spread of the virus and support measures set out by Government.
- Maximise where practicable the safety of our staff by providing advice and appropriate PPE where necessary.
- Ensure business continuity plans are in place to enable the police to continue to deliver a service to the public.
- To reassure the public by supporting Public Health guidance and Public Health messages.
- To ensure that community tension and intelligence/information is being effectively managed through strategic co-ordinating groups and existing structures.
- To support local resilience partner agencies and local communities to mitigate the impacts of the virus.
- Maintain staff and public confidence in the approach of West Yorkshire Police in protecting our staff and community and adopting a calm and moderated posture.

To support this strategy, there is a full webpage on the internal WYP intranet to keep all officers/staff updated as well as the public facing pages on the WYP webpage which is available here: <https://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/coronavirus>

As well as the normal performance regime, there is a new daily activity reporting mechanism, which records call volume and crimes / incidents linked to COVID-19. The daily figures focus on the following:

- 999 Calls
- 101 Calls
- All Incidents attended
- Emergency Incidents attended
- Priority Incidents attended
- Custody Throughput
- Total Recorded Crime
- Business and Community Burglaries
- Criminal Damage
- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Domestic Abuse Incidents

- MISPEERS
- Hate Incidents
- Online CSEA crimes

Alongside the daily activity tracker, all offences that are based on the new legislation are monitored.

## Implementation of new legislation

### Coronavirus Legislation Update: A Brief Overview

There are two sections to the new Coronavirus legislation.

The first piece of legislation is the Coronavirus Act 2020; this relates to offences where there are reasonable grounds to suspect a person as being potentially infectious. This provides WYP with the powers to direct a person to screening/assessment and makes it a criminal offence if they fail to comply.

Fixed Penalty Notices cannot be issued for these offences.

The second piece of legislation is the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) 2020.

This legislation places restrictions of the movement of people during the pandemic, includes the closure of some businesses and places restrictions on those allowed to stay open across eight different offence codes. There is no requirement for WYP to suspect a person is infectious.

For communities, the main offences to be aware of are:

- Contravene requirement on restriction of movement
- Contravene requirement to not participate in a gathering in public of more than two people.

Fixed Penalty Notices can be used for Health Protection offences.

Further details on the Health Protection (Coronavirus Restrictions) 2020 can be found on the CPS website here: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/coronavirus-health-protection-coronavirus-restrictions-england-regulations-2020>

As a police force the priority is to prevent large gatherings. If individuals or groups do not follow the government's requirement to socially distance, the WYP response will follow a four-step escalation process that adheres to NPCC guidance regarding the four E's.

- **Engage** – We police by consent. The initial police response should be to encourage voluntary compliance.
- **Explain** – Stress to them that this is a national public health emergency. Explain that they are putting their own and other people's lives at risk, and they are contributing to placing the NHS under even more pressure.
- **Encourage** – Ask them if they would please comply with your request. Inform them of the potential consequences should they fail to do so.
- **Enforce** – You may use your powers under the new legislation

When the legislation came into force, all frontline staff received an input at their briefings and a full briefing pack was included on the Coronavirus website which includes various aide memoirs with regard to how to interpret the legislation along with how each should be recorded on the crime recording system.

A specific area of focus for the PCC has been safeguarding and this has been a primary consideration with regard to enforcing the legislation and the response from WYP. Each officer was asked to consider the following:

Officers have been advised to consider a number of prompts when dealing with members of the public and different scenarios, for example:

*It may not be safe for everyone to be at home. Consider whether there are any safeguarding issues at play.*

*If home is not a safe place for the person to return to, we need to solve the problem in partnership. In these cases, do not utilise this legislation. Instead, revert to normal process and legislation dealing with vulnerable people.*

Alongside the original guidance from the Chief Officer Team with regard to policing approach, there have been frequent updates to remind officers about the WYP approach, an example of this was distributed prior to the Easter Bank holiday weekend which included advise such as:

*Whilst the government have not yet officially confirmed the extension of the lockdown, it is very likely that they will and that this current situation will persist for some time to come.*

*Such an extension may lead to some tensions in our communities who were expecting this period of lockdown to be over.*

*We have a difficult task to maintain our legitimacy with communities. This means being seen to act proportionately – our response not being too much or too little.*

*Although enforcement is our last option, we must be out there, being active in our communities to ensure that the regulations are complied with. Your efforts to encourage compliance will save lives and protect our NHS.*

As previously discussed, the policing of the legislation is scrutinised by the Gold group of Op Jinmen on a daily basis.

Each crime type is highlighted with the number of incidents / crimes taking place in each district. The details for each incident is scrutinised and appropriate guidance given where learning opportunities exist.

On 15<sup>th</sup> April the NPCC released provisional data from all police forces in the UK which included the numbers of fines given to persons breaching the new legislation.

The press release states that fines for breaches of government public health regulations issued by police officers in England and Wales equate to less than 0.01 per cent of the eligible population in England and Wales – with 3,203 fines issued in England between March 27 and the April 13.

West Yorkshire has issued 121 fines (to date) in this time period and this compares well with other areas such as the West Midlands (139) and North Yorkshire (150) although the NPCC does note that *this data is provided in quick time and needs to be viewed with caution.*

The press release and associated data can be accessed via the NPCC website here: <https://news.npcc.police.uk/releases/police-chiefs-keep-reporting-crime-to-us-during-coronavirus-outbreak-we-are-still-here-for-you>

## Public Engagement

Given these exceptional circumstances, an Engagement and Communications plan has been produced for the PCC/OPCC. This plan sets out how we continue to communicate and engage with our communities and to reassure and stay in touch with people during this global pandemic. It recognises that the PCC would usually be out and about, meeting with people, engaging with community projects, undertaking NPT visits, holding surgeries, attending casework meetings and taking part in national and local conferences with partners in addition to his other diverse activities and responsibilities. Clearly with social distancing and the current Government guidance in place we need to find new ways of working whilst continuing to provide the service our communities need and deserve.

Communities continue to have views and opinions on all aspects of crime and community safety and based on their contact so far we also know they are concerned about the how the current COVID -19 outbreak is impacting on policing our communities. We recognise we can't talk to people face to face so we need to find new ways to stay in touch and ensure individuals across West Yorkshire can contact the PCC when they need to, we are also aware of the increased need to support those who more vulnerable during the lockdown. We also recognise that our communities and partners will need reassurance and to be kept up to date with the evolving situation. Public reassurance and signposting is also key as is joint messaging with partners through, for example, the Local Resilience Forum.

### Engagement with the PCC - New and changing methods

- Face to Face contact via Skype for surgeries and meetings including casework
- Themed or non-themed web chats
- Online Community Conversation Surveys
- Social media polls and themed question and answer sessions
- Pre-recorded videos and audio clips
- Joint partnership communications in press release form around emerging issues (WYFEAT)
- Constantly monitoring/assessment and updating all forms of social media
- Safeguarding Vulnerable people by increased communication, online campaigns, increased support/interventions
- Phone or Skype media interviews

**Listening to you** - In the challenging weeks ahead we want to do all that we can to support our communities and partners, offer reassurance and answer any appropriate questions they may have.

### **How do we do it?**

- Reassurance, informing the public and communities, and signposting to services that can help our most vulnerable, using methods outlined above
- Keeping track of all key updates (especially on policing powers) and informing and updating our communities and partners what it means for them
- Ensuring all our channels on social media and public facing website are kept up to date
- Ensuring the PCC is visible, accessible and clear about what he can and does do to support communities through this crisis using new methods that people are turning to during social isolation
- Updates to Communities and our partners, around commissioned projects and Safer Communities Fund (SCF) projects which support communities and victims.

## Some work to highlight to date

**Launch on 14 April of an Extra Ordinary SCF Grant Round ‘Keeping our Communities Safe’** – with £150,000 made available to support projects which will Safeguard vulnerable people and target Domestic and Sexual Abuse, Child Sexual Abuse or Exploitation, Mental Health, Drugs and Alcohol and Fraud.

We are looking for projects which will:

- detail new or additional methods of help/support including online and telephone support
- support community based solutions,
- identify innovative ways to prevent crime and ASB and reduce demand on emergency services
- provide resources which support communities to safeguard themselves and those they care about.

Only projects which relate to the PCCs priorities will be considered, projects must be able to deliver amid the COVID-19 lockdown restriction period and month grants will be given at end of May 2020.

**Current SCF projects** - we are reviewing the status of current projects and allowing currently funded projects to postpone delivery or work more flexibly to support delivery. A new SCF newsletter will be produced and the PCC will maintain contact with projects via Skype/telephone to ensure we continue to access service users. The details of projects still running are being updated weekly and shared on the PCC’s website.

**Engagement with the Third Sector** –the PCC has supported the third sector since his appointment in 2012 and has agreed to continue (March 2020) to provide just under 30k to CNET, North Bank Forum, Third sector Leaders, VAL and Nova for the next two years. Further work is also being done to better align the third sector with work of the VRU. The Third Sector Advisory Group will continue to meet via skype and regular inputs are being received and shared to support our communities on the PCCs website (COVID-19 information page).

**Increased engagement with Young People** – the PCC has a very active and engaged youth advisory group, again the group will continue to meet via Skype and undertake their usual role. However, we will be actively recruiting and looking to engage new members. We will also be launching some competitions through the group to support engagement on key safeguarding messages.

**VRU Engagement** – we are continuing to support the VRU and reviewing the current Communications and Engagement strategy to review activity over the coming months. Details of past and upcoming work have been submitted as part of the current Home Office Bid and include the online recruitment of a Community Advisory Group to support community feedback and inform decision making.

**Communications, Press Releases, Website and Social Media** – the PCC moved swiftly to create a dedicated Coronavirus Support Page on his website which brings together key information and guidance from the Government, NHS and wider West Yorkshire and national partners. Key issues highlighted within the page include health, support for victims, funding opportunities, volunteering opportunities, advice on the Coronavirus legislation, local support information and much more.

The PCC has also utilised social media to support and disseminate key information from the Government, NHS and partners. Regular social media messages concerning emerging issues such as domestic abuse, online safety, scams and mental health are being issued regularly.



Press releases providing reassurance on the police response as well as highlighting the support to communities have regularly been released and publicised.

A weekly bulletin has also been launched to replace the newsletter for the time being which also contains key emerging information. This bulletin is sent to MPs, Councillors, Neighbourhood Watch Groups, partners, members of the public that have signed up to receive it and many more. All communication methods are under constant review in terms of any further emerging issues or advice from the Government and NHS.

### Impact on Crime and Community Safety

As highlighted in the 'Current Activity' section on above, in order to inform on the policing priorities, WYP has instigated a daily reporting mechanism, which records call volume and crimes / incidents linked to COVID-19. Daily investigation by WYP supports early identification of changing trends, supporting a prompt response.

The daily data, as at 16 April 2020, identifies:

- Lower than usual 999 calls to WYP, down from an average of around 1200 calls per day to less than 1100, resulting in lower volumes of emergency response calls
- Fairly stable volume of 101 calls per day, around 2100, but more incidents being attended
- Arrest levels have remained consistent but recorded crime has reduced considerably, by around a fifth, with large reductions in acquisitive crime
- Domestic abuse incidents have started to increase slightly, with most days seeing volume that is above the average at this time of year, rising from an average of 175 to 190 each day
- There has been a significant reduction in the number of missing people reports

The NPCC bulletin on 12<sup>th</sup> April looked at the changes in crime across the country and the below figures look at the percentage changes from this bulletin and how this compares in West Yorkshire

Provisional data from police forces in England and Wales shows a reduction in crime during Coronavirus outbreak and that the vast majority of the public are following government regulations enacted in response to the crisis.

Total Crime has reduced by **24.4%** in comparison to the national reduction of 28%

**Serious Assaults** have fallen by **29.2%** and **personal robbery** has fallen by **34.8%** with a national reduction of 27% in both. **Rape** has fallen by **12.4%** in comparison to a larger national fall of 37%.

Falls have also been seen in **residential burglary** (**42.8%** compared to 37% nationally) and **vehicle crime** (down **33.3%** in comparison to a 34% drop nationally) and **shoplifting** (down **58.2%** in comparison to 54 % nationally)

**Calls to 999** are down by **15.8%** in comparison to a 14% drop nationally and there has been a **6.5%** drop in **101 calls**, although nationally the percentage was higher at 13 %.

It should be stated that the way this information is produced is relatively new and no decisions are taken based solely on these trends. This information is produced to evidence changes which is then used to instigate further research.

### **Organisational Impact and Staff Welfare**

Since the implementation of lockdown, staff welfare and organisation impact has been high on the agenda for the daily phone calls between the PCC and the Chief Constable and is a standing item on the weekly bilateral meeting.

In both the OPCC and WYP, those with underlying health conditions were asked to self-identify so that the correct measures could be put in place.

Currently, Ploughland House is closed and all staff based at this office are working from home. This has caused some changes to the way certain meetings have been conducted and also means that some meetings have been cancelled due to the prioritising of other items.

In order to facilitate joint working, the PCC hosts a weekly meeting between all staff at the OPCC and each member is invited to exception report on their area of business. This meeting is held by Skype as each staff member has access via their IT equipment to work from home.

The PCC produces a weekly bulletin to keep each member of the office updated and this ensures that colleagues are kept informed as promptly as possible.

Alongside these meetings, frequent contact is made with each person either via telephone/video conferencing or email. The welfare of all staff is of utmost priority.

For WYP the updates from the Gold group ensure that all staff are aware of any changes due to the current situation. Each change made is put onto a dedicated Coronavirus section on the internal intranet and backed up with an email to all staff to ensure that each employee is aware.

The Chief Officer Team in West Yorkshire frequently produced short videos to speak to police members, these videos are posted on the website and are played at briefings to ensure that all staff have updates and encouragement from the senior leaders on a regular basis.

### **Other Updates**

The OPCC has received regular updates from the APCC, including guidance with regard to the postponement of the PCC elections (Appendix 2) and regular updates from the College of Policing (an example of which is at Appendix 3).