

1. Overview

Agenda Item and Title	Covid-19 Response
Directorate	All
Exec Sponsor	DCC Baker
Author	Paul Ross
Attachments	Appendix 1 – Sickness Abstraction

2. Request

The request from Police, Fire and Crime Panel re. COVID 19

The effect on the allocation and use of policing resources and the type of community activity entered into by the Police as part of addressing the emergency. Note also an interested in Domestic Abuse levels throughout the County / City and the effect on people with mental health issues and calls for support in helping those individuals.

3. Content

Covid-19 has already had a substantial global impact, historic in both scale and scope, and consequently far reaching effects impacting on every region, business and community of the UK. It has affected every aspect of policing from community policing to investigations, force incident rooms and specialist investigations and has similarly affected our partners.

The force's policing response to the pandemic formally commenced through the establishment of Operation Jafar on the 18th March. The overall responsibility for the operation sitting with the Chief Constable, but governed through a Gold/Silver/Bronze command structure led by Gold Commander ACC Barnett. The Gold group has met three times a week, until 12th June, and is now meeting weekly and the membership includes the SCO Chief Executive. A Gold Strategy was developed and approved which set out the core components of the forces approach including strategic aims and objectives, policing style to be adopted, policing powers together with the relevant governance approach.

Mechanisms for national, regional and local connectivity and co-ordination have also been established. Locally multi-agency coordination is through a Strategic Co-ordination Group, established by the Local Resilience Forum and chaired by the County's Director of Public Health, and with representation from Staffs Police (ACC Emma Barnett). There are 6 well established and effective sub-groups working with a police representative on each. Notably the pan-Staffordshire Safeguarding, Vulnerability and Partnerships Group is chaired by C/Supt Jennie Mattinson and supported by the SCO. There is also weekly regional Police Service connectivity through Chief Constables and Gold(ACC) leads.

Strategic Aim

The force's primary aim, set out in the strategy, continues to be to maintain a policing service in Staffordshire that:

- Preserves life and protects property
- Prevents crime and disorder

- Keeps the Queen's Peace

The force setting out to preserve life and protect the public by working in partnership with Public Health, other agencies and communities to provide a co-ordinated response to contain cases of infection; delay the onset of cases in Staffordshire; mitigate the impact of cases on the communities; and plan for recovery. Consequently nine strategic objectives were established in order to meet this aim;

Strategic Objectives

1. Minimise the risk to the public;
 - By ensuring delivery of a policing service that meets our primary aim.
 - By assisting PHE and LRF parties to counter, delay and mitigate spread of the virus and manage the impact.
2. Maximise health and safety of officers and staff including by provision of information and guidance plus PPE and by taking steps to delay onset of infection within Staffordshire Police.
3. Minimise disruption to policing services by enacting of business continuity plans and necessary prioritising of critical functions to be delivered to meet our primary aim.
4. Maximise reassurance and information to the public by supporting public health guidance and sharing partnership action and changes to the policing model.
5. Minimise risk to community cohesion by identifying, managing and acting on intelligence, information and community tension.
6. Maximise trust and confidence in Staffordshire Police through policing delivery, communication and engagement.
7. Ensure resilient leadership and command of this operation with decisions underpinned by the NDM and code of ethics.
8. Continue to support national policing operations and sustain the forces commitment to the Strategic Policing Requirement wherever possible.
9. Minimise risk of prolonged disruption through planning for recovery and returning the force and communities to normality as soon as practicable.

There has therefore been a natural focus, in the main on the here-and-now response to the pandemic. The impact on the communities we serve, our staff and policing overall has been significant and has transformed the way we operate in some areas. In essence this has meant a focus on;

- Understanding and projecting available staffing levels/abstractions
- and monitoring and managing this position against a Graduated Withdrawal of Service Plan which set out to identify and maintain critical functions; Response & Neighbourhood, Force Contact, Firearms, Level 2 Support and Custody. Drawing on the Special Constabulary, volunteers and staff in non-critical functions when required
- Understanding and projecting demand/ calls for service
- Developing a dynamic policing response to and enforcing the prevailing 'lockdown' restrictions and the subsequent 'unlocking' of these in accordance with the defined policing style and 4 E's approach through a Compliance Plan (revised to reflect each change in regulations)
- Protecting police officers and staff
 - o Ensuring the availability and stability of supply of suitable PPE and cleaning materials
 - o adapting workplace and working practices to ensure social distancing and
 - o implementing testing arrangements and updating HR guidance, within national guidance frameworks
- latterly on unlocking implications and recovery, including wider organisational learning

As a consequence the Operation has been intelligence led supported by daily 'situation-reports' supplemented by (now weekly) strategic forcewide situation-reports, covering and informing the Gold meeting and decision making/commissioning process.

Forcewide Situation-Report Content

<p>1. Current Overview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Positional Summary - Community Impact Assessments - HR Overview - Force Priorities - Patterns/Trends - Events - Heightened Community Tensions and Protests 	<p>2. Performance and Focus Areas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compliance - ASB - Arrests <p>3. Partnership Summary</p> <p>4. Predictive Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unlocking Horizon Scan - Resourcing and Demand <p>5. Performance Summary</p>
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Resourcing & Demand

Police Officers and staff resource monitoring has been provided daily through People Services and the Knowledge Hub to inform prioritisation of resources aligned to activity set out in the Gradual Withdrawal of Service Plan [Summary and Status in Table 3 below]. Appendix 1 sets out the position by Directorate over the 3-month period regarding abstraction related to sickness and that which is Covid related. Total sickness abstraction peaked at 20% on 31st March, of which 14% (493) was Covid related and as a consequence a small number of force teams [including custody, Forensic Services, MASH and Occupational Health] reached the amber-category status; non-critical activity was suspended (training etc) and resources were deployed from non-critical areas to support/meet key on-going demands and calls for policing services. However by 15th April the total sickness-abstraction rate had reduced by half to 10% and has continued to fall both due to a fall in the infection rate, but also due to active management by force HR and Occupational Health, understanding and responding to individual circumstances to enable staff to ‘return to work’, supported by a systematic approach to staff testing, initially through arrangements with Health colleagues, as soon as it became available.

Table 1: Op Jafar Gradual Withdrawal of Service

Op Jafar		
Gradual Withdrawal of Service Four step process		
Status Blue	Business As Usual	No functions disrupted other than normal deviations and levels of sickness.
Status Green	Moderate Temporary Impact	There are some occasions where demand is exceeding capacity, or, there are abnormal levels of sickness and absenteeism. Whilst there may be some fluctuation creating minor impacts these are understood and can be absorbed through usual policy and procedure
Status Amber	Moderate Sustained Impact	Crucial activities cannot be sustained Levels of sickness require re-deployment of non-critical activities for sustained period of time. There is a requirement to increase capacity in order to meet on going demands and calls for Policing services
Status Red	Severe Impact	Inability to meet demand Significant levels of sickness/absenteeism. Officers and staff being deployed from ‘desirable’ critical services. The number of unattended calls for services is extremely high
Status Critical	Critical Impact	Demands on Policing are beyond the capacity to deliver ‘essential’ critical activities (either for a temporary or sustained period). In order for the Force to meet local and national requirements, local services must be restricted to events relating to ECHR article 2 rights.

Policing Approach - Covid Regulations

Policing Style

The force set out its policing style initially through the Gold Strategy and the tone and style has remained consistent throughout the operation viz.

Staffordshire Police will work closely with partner agencies to prepare and react to the challenges brought by Covid-19. We will engage in proportionate preparations to seek to reduce the impact of the virus on the communities of Staffordshire, our staff and our ability to provide a policing service. We will act promptly and proportionately to any reports of crime or disorder associated with the virus and monitor community tension, acting in partnership with any affected communities where necessary. We will ensure that we keep our staff aware of the risks of infection and how they can protect themselves and, should it become necessary to change our policing model, inform the public on any changes to the service they can expect to receive.

Staffordshire police has adopted an approach to compliance that has sought to obtain the cooperation of local communities to self-regulate and nurture the relationship between the police and the public recognising the importance of striking the right balance, tone and style. This is one of proportionality and legitimacy actions with an emphasis on the first 3 E's of the national '4-E' approach – Engage – Explain and Encourage, with Enforcement as final resort [the Force has issued and had accepted 54 Fixed Penalty Notices for Covid breaches to 24/6, which is amongst the fewest nationally]. The force has also sought independent advice from an IAG as well as academia regarding the policing of the regulations as well as being scrutinised by the SCO.

The Chief Constable has continued to emphasise and reinforce this position through weekly staff tele-conference engagement sessions and regular blogs and messaging, more recently against the complex background of Black Lives Matter protests; recognising the need to balance the conflict between appropriate policing of lawful protests (and assembly; larger scale outdoor gatherings etc.) and the Covid restrictions with the consequential impact on policing legitimacy and ultimately community tension/cohesion etc.

'I am confident that our policing style and engagement with the community and their confidence in us will see us through what I think are going to be some testing times. The best approach to rely on now is what we are good at – a service that listens to and talks with the community it serves and which looks to protect the vulnerable and uphold the law for the vast majority. As ever, prevention is the key and we need to be on the front foot with intelligence, proactive and targeted patrols, and with visible and confident engagement in communities.'

[CC Morgan's Blog (extract) – 3rd June 2020]

Generally the complexity and lack of clarity/notice of national 'unlocking' changes has led to difficulties and has allowed little time to ensure consistency and clarity in national (& local) restoration approaches regarding compliance policing and consequently ensuring equity and the legitimacy of approach.

Independent Advisory Group

Staffordshire Police approached the recently formed (IAG) at the beginning of April 2020, with a request that the IAG assist Staffordshire Police (SP) to build insight into the needs, wants and assets of the communities served by SP, specific to the virus and to law and order, including sections of Staffordshire communities who may be (or hitherto may have been) underrepresented in the normal decision making processes. The purpose is to enable review and challenge, in order to gain insight that will be used to help shape the services that SP deliver to others, in order to build and maintain trust and confidence.

[IAG Interim Report 1 extract - 8th June 2020]

[GENERAL FEEDBACK] - There is general consensus from the IAG that the Staffordshire Police Compliance Plan and approach is appropriately proactive and proportionate. The strategy maintains visibility help deter crime and can serve as a reassurance to the public that the police are continuing to deliver a contextually responsive service and are providing this to the best of their ability in unprecedented and challenging circumstances

The “Explain, Engage, Encourage and Enforce” approach is proportionate in encouraging public compliance to deliver the Government-mandated response, working towards achieving (as far as possible) the control of the virus-spread, and in addressing some of the individual and group behavioural responses. If Staffordshire Police can be seen using a proportionate response in exercising their authority rather than moving to enforcement actions early, (an approach reportedly taken in some other Forces and manifested in the higher number of fines elsewhere which have drawn some criticism), this can surely only be beneficial for the police and public. It is reassuring to see that the focus has been around education rather than prosecution, which would be onerous, not cost-effective and of little benefit to achieving multiple positive outcomes.

Service Delivery

Community Impact Assessments are completed weekly across the force by each NPT’s including tension assessments and overall reviews of prevailing and emerging crime and incident patterns and trends within constituent communities. This includes assessments of Covid breach and ASB incidents, and more recently protest and mass gatherings.

Service has therefore been maintained both due to active resource management/prioritisation and as a consequence of a reduction in demand/calls for service and a fall in typical pre-Covid crime. The table below sets out a comparison in a number of key demand/crime areas comparing the Covid-period to date in 2020 (March 16th to June 14th) to the same period in 2019.

Table 3: Jafar Positional Summary – Demand/crime comparison 2020 to 2019 (16th March to June 14th)

2019 Compared to 2020		Key Points	
Total Crime (Storm)	37% ↓		
Domestic Incidents	3% ↓	ASB (incl CV19)	77% ↑
Rape	42% (Increase in the most recent week relates to a rise in delayed reports. 11 out of the 17 reports were committed pre Covid) ↓	Mental Health	24% ↓
Domestic Burglary	37% ↓	Grade 3 incidents	32% ↑ (Increase related to Covid Tags and new Covid codes)
Vehicle Crime (all)	25% ↓	Custody	43% ↓
		Missing Persons	40% ↓

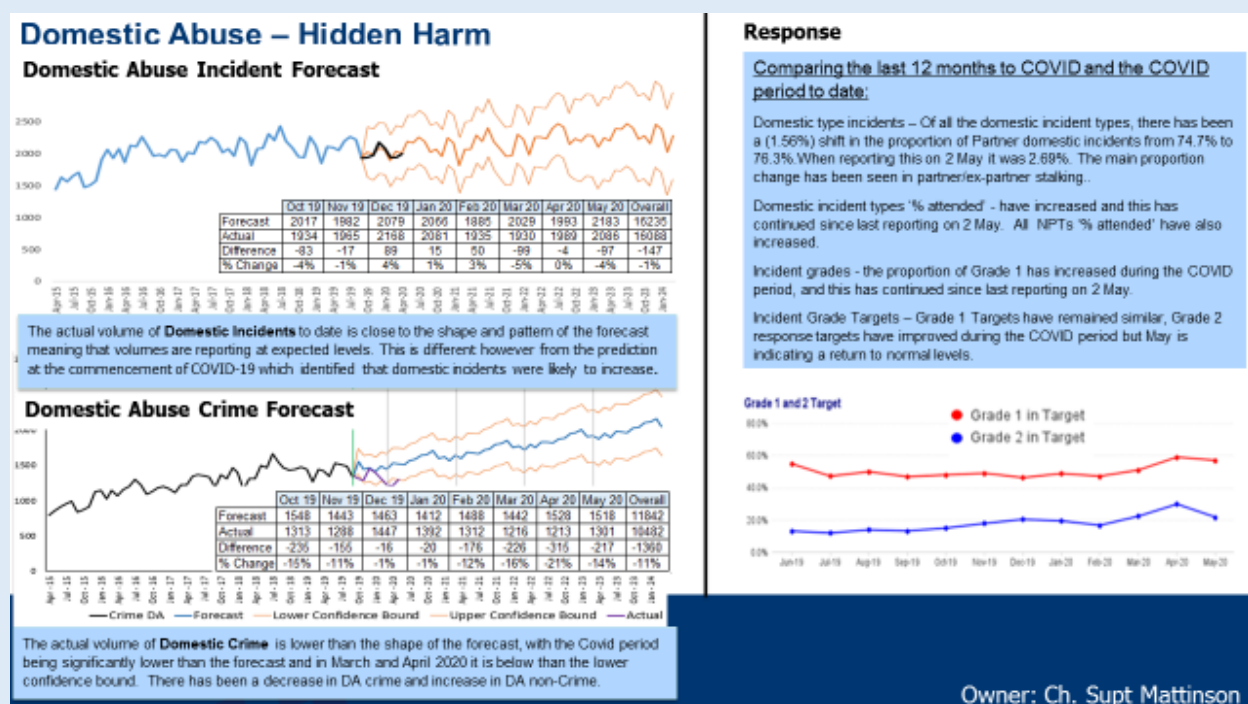
Domestic Abuse

The SCG structure saw the development of a safeguarding, vulnerability and partnership sub-group. This addressed concerns over a number of strands of vulnerability – one being Domestic Abuse. The aim of the group was to coordinate activity to mitigate victims being isolated and/or harmed as a consequence of them being in lock-down with the perpetrator – also recognising that the lockdown would lessen/prevent ‘traditional’ contact/referral opportunities with specialist support services.

Together with partners, including New Era, Glow, Pathway and Staffordshire Women’s Aid the force and SCO have ensured that contact and ‘escape’ facilities remained available, promoting this through the #YouAreNotAlone campaign and leading on work (now progressed nationally) to develop Safe-Places through pharmacies.

Despite a prediction that we might see an increase in DA overall the number of incidents has remained static over the Covid period, however this does mask a more complex picture within the data which shows DA crime falling and non-crime increasing as illustrated in the chart below. To understand this in more detail and offer reassurance that the reduction in crime is not driven by victim isolation NPT teams and partners have contacted all ‘silent’ repeat domestic abuse victims.

In addition lockdown has in itself been a protective factor where the victim and perpetrator do not live together.



[Helen, as chair of SGB DA sub-group may want to refine/edit and add further insight here]

Mental Health

During the early Covid period demand for mental health support reduced. Subsequently in both Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent there has been a slow increase in demand in some areas for mental health support services but not at the level that would be expected or comparative to norms as of yet.

Whilst demand is reduced services are reporting that patients appear to be presenting as more acutely unwell than would have been expected in a pre-Covid environment. There is also a rise in admissions attributed to a reduction in the availability of ‘least restrictive options’ within the community and also families reporting that they are not receiving the same support offer from mental health teams.

Both Local Authorities report a higher referral rate than last year during the night-time service with weekends being particularly busy. This appears to be driven by an increase in assessments required for 16 & 17 yr olds. Both Local Authorities also report a shortage of Section 12 Doctor provision post-midnight.

Within children’s mental health services there is a substantial waiting list and referrals continue to come through with an expectation that this will continue to increase. In order to help with this recruitment is being

bought forward and offers of support are being investigated.

Following the learning gained in responding to the challenges of the Covid-period partners working in the mental health arena have created a new steering group to help them deliver changes at the required pace to more effectively cope with the changing demands.

Unlocking & Recovery

From an 'Unlocking' perspective, as the regulations are relaxed, the force will continue to understand and plan for the impact of unlocking in terms of anticipated rises in crime and demand combined with the traditional rise in ASB, violence and calls for service during the summer months.

Recovery, recognising that this will be 'recovery' to new ways of working, will gather pace and be embedded into the force's planning cycle. The LRF has established a Recovery Coordinating Group (RCG) chaired by the Chief Executives of both Stoke and Staffordshire Councils and DCC Baker will be the force representative as lead for the force recovery planning; the force has already agreed to take the lead on both developing (realising) learning around the new partnership-working approaches and to better understand community tension and cohesion issues as transition to the 'new-world' progresses.