



Safer Communities and Health

Vision

To become a Region of healthy and safe communities, where the crime rate is low and falling, where people are free from the fear of crime whether at home or when out and about, and where respect for each other and for institutions and trust between people is the norm.



West Midlands Priorities for Action

- Reduce crime rates by supporting local delivery and ensure there is a focus on tackling the underlying determinants
- Proactively strengthen and develop partnerships at regional, sub-regional and local levels to promote community safety
- Reduce the number of road traffic accidents
- Promote partnership work to address domestic abuse both in the planning and delivery of services
- Promote social justice, social cohesion and opportunity for all; including a shared understanding of behaviours that are acceptable or unacceptable
- Promote good urban design to provide an environment which discourages crime and anti-social behaviour.

Key Facts: In the West Midlands

- In 2005-06 there were 521,179 recorded crimes in the region. At 98 offences per 100,000 population this is below the rate for England and Wales¹
- Recorded crime rates for the main categories of offences are the same as, or slightly lower than, the rate for England and Wales²
- Alcohol misuse is a major preventable cause of violence. In 48% of all violent crime (and in 60% where the perpetrator is a stranger) alcohol was believed to have been a factor³
- Men are significantly more likely to binge drink than women (men 36%, women 19%), the highest prevalence of binge drinking is seen in 18-24 year olds⁴
- In 2005-06, there were 16,946 drugs related offences in the Region, the same rate per 100,000 people as England and Wales⁵. The rates of burglary, vehicle theft and violent crime are the same as for England and Wales⁶. Yet 1 in 6 people in the Region, a higher proportion than the country, have a high level of worry about burglary, car crime and violent crime⁷
- In 2005, there were 3,021 deaths on the roads in Great Britain⁸. In general road safety is improving. Police figures of serious injuries due to RTAs show a decline that is not mirrored in hospital A&E statistics⁹
- Alcohol consumption is implicated in 1 in 6 of all serious road injuries and deaths¹⁰

- 16% of violent crime is believed to be linked to domestic abuse; the true scale of domestic abuse is unknown since it is often unreported. 1 in 4 women will suffer domestic abuse at some time in their lives and all too often children are involved¹¹
- The risk of household crime and crime against the person in the Region is no different from that in England and Wales¹²
- Local Area Agreements have concentrated on reducing crime particularly burglary, vehicle arson, criminal damage, assaults and violence. Strategies have also focused on prevention, including reducing offending and re-offending and the reduction of the fear of crime. Domestic abuse, drug and alcohol related crime, hate crime and anti-social behaviour are also identified as priorities. Many also cover the reduction of speeding and safer roads.

Background

Crime

Freedom from crime and violence and from fear of violence is an essential pre-requisite for health and well-being¹³.

There has been much progress in reducing levels of crime; overall crime is now 35% lower than in the mid-90s. However, the fear of crime has not shown a similar decline; and in parts of the Region levels of visible crime and disorder remain high. Much, therefore, remains to be done; far too many people are still exposed to the risk of violence both in and out of the home and in the workplace.

Safety and Health

Community safety and health are mutually self-reinforcing. A safe environment encourages people to take a more active part in the life of the community and thereby become healthier, and in turn, better health encourages wider participation in efforts to promote community safety. Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships bring together police, local authority, the police authority, fire and rescue services and the NHS. They are responsible for working with local communities to deliver the agreed targets on crime reduction. They also develop the Safer, Stronger Communities block of the Local Area Agreement, ensure collaboration across agencies, and harness local opportunities for local communities to be involved and for their concerns to be taken into account.



Drugs and Alcohol

Alcohol related violence and the disorderly behaviour of binge drinkers in town centres late at night is a matter of concern to many communities. Targeted community and police action can help increase levels of perceived safety. Drug and substance misuse criminalises many young people and is a major cause of criminal violence. A partnership approach to addressing excessive alcohol and drug use would help in the overall aim of reducing crime. It is important that the local Drug and Alcohol Action Teams address these issues across the spectrum from education to enforcement and provision of services.

Anti-Social Behaviour

Anti-social behaviour is a major concern for communities. Local Authorities are required to take steps to increase the perception that parents take responsibility for their children's behaviour.

Road Safety

Deaths on the road have declined but at least in part this is because of increased awareness of the risks and consequent risk avoidance. More can be done through education, road design, traffic management and smarter enforcement to enhance road safety and thereby encourage people to use healthier and environmentally better means of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport. It is important that transport policy is influenced by the education, health and enforcement imperatives.



Abuse and Violence

There are many types of abuse and violence but domestic abuse continues to be a big problem. It remains largely hidden and so the reported statistics underestimate the scale of the problem. Women often suffer years of abuse before agencies become aware, children are involved in 3 out of 5 cases and of these, many are present in the same room during the violence. Older people's abuse is also an issue. Many Local Area Agreements have recognised this. The Voluntary and Community Sector have a key role in both the development of strategies and provision of services.

Social Cohesion

Local communities, individuals, organisations at all levels, public sector agencies and central and local government can work together to build strong secure communities where socially responsible conduct is the norm. Tackling challenging families, school based programmes to promote good behaviour and reduce truancy, promoting healthy recreational activities for young people in a safe and secure environment, strengthening communities, effective enforcement and community justice, and support for families by improving the general level of parenting skills can all assist in promoting social cohesion and reducing race related crime and crime targeted at minority groups (see Housing and Health chapter). Intergenerational activities can also help promote social cohesion.



Role of the Partner Agencies

All public sector agencies, other business and community organisations, large and small, as well as voluntary bodies and individuals have a role to play in combating crime, violence and anti-social behaviour and promoting safety.

Health service organisations, such as Primary Care Trusts as well as the hospitals from which they commission services, will benefit from reduced crime and safer communities. Businesses also stand to benefit from reduced crime and the increase in participation in civic and commercial activities that result from an enhanced feeling of safety. Promoting respect results in the staff of all organisations facing less violence from clients; care staff and other public sector workers can work more effectively in the community and in patients' and clients' homes. It is therefore in their interests to engage fully and meaningfully with local partnerships. Partner agencies including the health services can contribute by:

- Participating and engaging fully with other local agencies and voluntary groups
- Contributing to the setting of challenging targets in Local Area Agreements
- Sharing information, knowledge and intelligence with other agencies (e.g. sharing A& E violence data with police to enable targeted intervention on alcohol)
- Encouraging their community staff to work with local agencies to identify and deal with early indicators of potential problems.

Case Study: Wolverhampton Taxi Marshalling

Let's get everyone home safely! is the message from the Wolverhampton City Centre businesses and agencies.

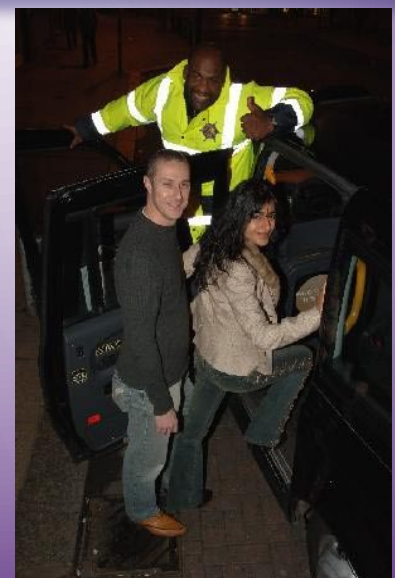
Wolverhampton is well known across the Region for its nightlife with a mixture of bars, restaurants, theatres, live music venues and clubs, visited on a weekend by up to 20,000 people.

The City Centre company, West Midlands Police, City Council and Knightsafe24 have been working closely together over the last few months to enhance the safety of the City Centre to ensure people enjoy their night out and return home safely. As well as checks on CCTV coverage, enhanced lighting schemes within the city centre and an improved radio link, the partnership is now ready to launch a trial taxi marshalling scheme.

The scheme operates from the main high street running through the City Centre and the hackney carriages collection point. A private hire collection point is located on a popular City Centre car park. Two marshals operate from each location between the hours of 11.30pm and 3.30am on Fridays and Saturdays. The marshals' primary responsibilities are to:

- Offer a safe waiting area until a taxi arrives
- Have a link to taxi companies and drivers
- Have a direct link to the police.

Taxi marshalling will operate until the end of October 2007.



Main Partners

WMRA Partnerships
NHS West Midlands
AWM
Health and Safety Executive
CSIP

WMLGA
NHS Trusts
GOWM
Police Forces

Crime and Disorder Partnerships
Local Authorities
Voluntary and Community Sector
Sustainability West Midlands

Weblinks

<http://www.alcoholconcern.org.uk>

<http://www.drugs.gov.uk>

<http://www.nta.nhs.uk>

<http://www.drugscope.org.uk>

<http://www.dh.gov.uk/accidents>

<http://www.rosipa.com>

<http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk/partnerships2.htm>