

LEICESTERSHIRE SAFER COMMUNITIES STRATEGY BOARD

26TH JUNE 2020

LSCSB UPDATE: LEICESTERSHIRE POLICE

Purpose of report

1. This report provides a summary of the operational work and response that Leicestershire Police have undertaken in response to the current COVID-19 pandemic within Leicestershire.

Background

2. Under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 Leicestershire Police are a Category 1 core responder. The Chief Constable Chairs the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The LRF's aim is to plan and prepare for localised incidents and catastrophic emergencies. They work to identify potential risks and produce emergency plans to either prevent or mitigate the impact of any incident on their local communities.
3. Within the local partnership arena, a Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Strategic Coordination Group was established, initially chaired by the Director of Public Health for Leicestershire and Rutland. It met for the first time on 13 February 2020.
4. As the pandemic developed, its impact locally was declared a major event due to the anticipated impact across a number of sectors. As is often the case under such conditions, the Police (DCC Nixon) assumed the Chair of the Strategic Coordination Group. C/Supt Ball assumed Chair of the Tactical Coordination Group that is responsible for implementation of the tactical plans.

Notable developments and challenges:

5. The pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges for our communities and our officers and staff. We have been required to react, often at very little notice, to significant developments. These have included the closure of schools, licensed premises and shops and the introduction of significant new legislation, whilst many of our staff have moved to working remotely from home. The challenges have been significant and varied. The ability and willingness of our staff to respond and adapt to these challenges has been most impressive.
6. It is also worthy of note that the requirement to respond to the pandemic coincided almost exactly with the launch of a new Target Operating Model that went "live" on 11 March 2020. This model in effect had returned many resources to a local neighbourhood-based footprint. We would always expect a period of potential instability when implementing a new operating model and so this provided an additional element to consider throughout our response to COVID19.

7. The challenges presented by responding to the COVID19 pandemic are numerous and ongoing. Some key issues of note include:

Maintaining Core Business

8. Our strategic objectives include the requirement to maintain critical areas of business, as well as to maintain law and order. A weekly performance meeting was introduced to manage performance in three key areas:
- Dealing with incoming demand (calls / emails);
 - Responding to priority incidents;
 - Investigating criminal matters.
9. The type of demand has varied throughout the period. Traditional crime demand has fallen with significant decreases in serious violent crime (reduced by around 50% compared with the same four week period in 2019) as well as burglary (reduced by 48%). Domestic abuse incidents have increased slightly. We have been able to respond to these changes, and to maintain our effective operational response. Our response to 999 calls and to emergency incidents has remained excellent throughout and response times have consistently been better than pre the new Target Operating Model.

Leicestershire Police comparative data 8th March – 24th May 2019 and 2020

Summary of indicator data						
Q	2019	2020	Change	% change	% change (all forces)	
▲						
101 calls	82369	73799	-8570	-10.4%		-13.7%
999 calls	35377	29057	-6320	-17.9%		-15.8%
Online crime reports	3878	2472	-1406	-36.3%		70.3%
Total incidents	57874	56852	-1022	-1.8%		-5.4%
Immediate inc.	8033	7224	-809	-10.1%		-11.8%
Priority inc.	15796	18232	2436	15.4%		1.5%
Inc. w/o deploy	24489	21791	-2698	-11.0%		-8.6%
ASB inc.	3474	5974	2500	72.0%		61.2%
Domestic abuse	3420	3473	53	1.5%		2.0%
Mental health	1799	2101	302	16.8%		-9.9%
Transport inc.	7587	4449	-3138	-41.4%		-37.7%
Public safety inc.	22417	25390	2973	13.3%		-2.7%
COVID inc.	0	10286	10286			
MISPERs	1554	1179	-375	-24.1%		-28.2%
Total offences	21729	18176	-3553	-16.4%		-20.8%
Murder etc	4	7	3	75.0%		-5.2%
Serious violent	372	262	-110	-29.6%		-23.0%
Rape	261	168	-93	-35.6%		-26.4%
Fraud	0	0	0			-15.9%
Cyber	405	262	-143	-35.3%		1.5%
Dom burglary	1195	707	-488	-40.8%		-30.7%
Theft MV	2301	1445	-856	-37.2%		-31.6%
Business rob	7	16	9	128.6%		-41.6%
Shoplifting	1317	689	-628	-47.7%		-45.8%
CSA/CSE	2513	2012	-501	-19.9%		-19.0%
COVID offences	0	1052	1052			
Assault on EW	91	186	95	104.4%		22.1%
Detentions	3333	2879	-454	-13.6%		-9.0%
Arrests	3497	2953	-544	-15.6%		-10.5%
S136 detentions	0	1	1			-1.3%

10. It is worthy of note that throughout the period we have been faced with serious and major crime investigations, including murder. We have maintained our collective ability to mobilise regional resources through East Midlands Specialist Operations Unit and we have retained our very high standard of service delivery in these cases.
11. Throughout the period, as would be expected, there has been a marked drop in demand associated with the Night Time Economy, thereby releasing significant resource for alternative policing activity. This is subject to ongoing evaluation so that we might see what opportunities this presents for the future.
12. Similarly the additional demand on policing resources for sporting fixtures and key community events have ceased in demand during the lockdown period. This resource has been reinvested in conducting high visibility community patrols and provided resilience for those officers and staff who have had to self-isolate or shield during the lock down period. It is worthy of note, that our Special Constables who are drawn from across our local communities have committed just under 10,000 additional policing hours during the lockdown period alone.
13. One of the main challenges of maintaining services has been associated with the wider Criminal Justice system. These are national issues that involve the accumulation of a backlog of cases as courts have been closed. We continue to work closely with our Criminal Justice colleagues to resolve these matters. Some proposed solutions have significant resourcing implications for policing (such as the use of Virtual Courts by default) and as such discussions remain ongoing.

New Business and Public Expectation

14. It has been necessary to respond to new business associated with the implementation of COVID-related legislation. This has generated significant additional demand as the public contact us to report breaches of regulations. Peaks in reporting have been particularly pronounced where the weather has been fine. Nationally, the Single Online Home website was amended to provide specific COVID-related reporting. This is likely to have taken some burden from the non-emergency 101 telephone number. Overall, at its peak, we were dealing with on average over 1000 COVID-related incidents per week. In addition the volume of emergency and non-emergency calls regularly exceeded the volumes we would normally see on New Year's Eve. This additional demand more than balanced out the reduction in traditional crime and traffic incident demand.
15. In order to inform our understanding of public expectation, we undertook a survey of over 1000 existing contacts on Neighbourhood Link. We asked them whether they felt that we should deal with COVID reports as a priority over other matters. The result was a fairly even split – a third saying definitely not, just less than a third saying that we should and the rest not sure. Over 80% felt that we were doing a good or excellent job in responding. The varied public support for police action in these matters demonstrates the fine balance to be achieved in policing this new and changing legislation.

16. We have been very mindful of the wider community impact and community confidence associated with the new legislation and have followed the “4 E” approach – to engage, explain and educate. Enforcement has been undertaken as a last resort. The emergency legislation allows for us to issue Fixed Penalty Notices as a means to enforce where people are not complying with restrictions. To date we have issued over 400 Fixed Penalty Notices. In comparison with other forces nationally, this places us just above mid-table based per 1000 head of population. Around two thirds of these have been issued to people in breach of the prohibition of movement. We are monitoring the allocation of Fixed Penalty Notices across the Force area to assure ourselves that we are applying the legislation in the intended way. Since the easing of some restrictions around movement that was announced on 10 May and implemented on 13 May, we have seen a significant reduction in the number of Fixed Penalty Notices issued.
17. In the early stages of the partnership response to COVID19, our existing provision for mental health was amended in order to support the wider health response to the crisis. Mental health nurses were withdrawn from custody suites, and the operational hours for our Triage car and the partnership PAVE team were extended. We experienced a very significant increase in contact from service users whose normal access to services had been disrupted. In April, the Leicestershire Partnership Trust implemented the Central Access Point (CAP) - this provides a 24/7 point of contact for people in crisis and forms the basis for the future service modelling. Whilst mental health-related demand remains higher than average, it has started to reduce as we see more people accessing CAP.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), Testing and Staff Confidence

18. As the pandemic has developed, our response to the requirement for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has been consistent with that recommended by the national Op Talla team, in line with Public Health England guidance. It has been important to give officers and staff confidence that we are acting on the national advice as it develops. Unison and the Police Federation have been fully engaged with these discussions throughout. Through proactive procurement, we have ensured that we have maintained a level of PPE throughout.
19. Testing for key workers (or members of their households) who are displaying COVID19 symptoms became available in April. In response to this, over 100 police officers / staff have been tested, along with over 50 household members. There have been 21 positive tests. Very few individuals have required hospital treatment.
20. As medical knowledge around the virus is developing, issues have been raised associated with additional risk factors for individuals. These include risk factors associated with being from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities, as well as other factors such as gender (male), obesity, hypertension and other underlying health conditions. Whilst none of these factors have to date been included in Public Health England guidance, we are developing a risk assessment tool to assist in assessing future deployments. We will continue to respond to emerging evidence and recommendations.

Managing Absence

21. At an early stage, we recognised that the pandemic may have a significant impact on availability of resource and therefore our ability to provide a policing service. We swiftly developed a resourcing cell to provide detailed oversight of resourcing levels across all parts of the force throughout the day. This has enabled us to recognise and respond to areas of vulnerability. We developed sophisticated service resilience plans to maintain prioritised service dependent on resourcing numbers. Where resource numbers fell, we took measures to enact contingency plans. An example is that we have temporarily closed one of our three custody suites (Beaumont Leys). The volume of detained people has been reduced over the period and, as a result, we have been capable of managing by staffing just two of our custody suites. In all areas of business, our operational resilience has been maintained throughout.

Remote Working

22. Clearly, many frontline policing services require people to be physically attending the workplace. Others are capable of being delivered by people working remotely and there has been a clear direction from the Government to work from home wherever possible. Within Leicestershire, we were in a strong position to enable this due to the investment that we have previously made in our IT infrastructure. We rented additional laptops and have introduced digital methods of working wherever possible to enable this. This has included taking digital witness statements from victims and witnesses so that in appropriate cases they can be taken over the telephone. Business meetings via Skype have become the norm and have proven to be an effective and efficient solution in response to current restrictions.

Entering the recovery phase

23. We recognise that the pandemic has driven changes in working practices that may present opportunities going forward. As we move towards Recovery, we will be seeking to maximise on those opportunities. We are keen to extend our ability to work remotely, making best use of digital technology where possible. We also want to understand how we might work with partners to maintain the reduction in demand in some areas – such as the Night Time Economy, and to ensure that a “return to normality” does not simply accept a return to the previous status quo.

24. A Recovery Cell, led by T/ACC Smith, has been established to collate all such issues and to identify opportunities for incorporating best practice learnt into ongoing business delivery.

25. As the Government now moves to ease some of the social distancing and licensing restrictions across England, our operational planning has turned to focus on facilitating the economy returning to the new normal. Operation INTEGRATE has now been established to support Community Safety

Partnerships and Local Authorities to plan for and implement the easing of certain restrictions.

Recommendations for the Board

26. To note the update.

27. To note the implementation of Op INTEGRATE and the approach being taken by Leicestershire Police to begin to plan for and implement the recovery phase of the COVID-19 lockdown.

Officer to contact

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