

Greater Manchester Combined Authority submission of evidence to Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry in the Home Office's preparations for and response to Covid-19.

Please see below the Greater Manchester Combined Authority's submission of evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee inquiry in the Home Office's preparations for and response to Covid-19.

Domestic abuse and risks of harm within the home

- **The prevalence of these issues since the Government issued 'stay at home' guidance on 23 March;**
- **Measures or proposals to help support victims of domestic abuse and child abuse at this time;**
- **Measures or proposals to reduce or avert domestic abuse and child abuse at this time;**
- **Preparedness of responders and service providers to address the needs of victims during the pandemic;**

Greater Manchester has been concerned about a possible rise in domestic abuse since the Government issued their 'stay at home' advice. However at present, a rise has not yet been seen and reported incidents remain stable. Domestic abuse reports are being monitored closely and discussions have taken place with our domestic abuse helplines to try and understand why reports have not significantly increased. Greater Manchester is working on an awareness and reassurance communications campaign, focusing on emphasising that support is still available and advice on what to do if you are a victim. This campaign will also reinforce that domestic abuse and safety in the home are key priorities for Greater Manchester Police.

A meeting was convened with partners from the Greater Manchester Domestic Abuse Partnership Board and the Local Authority Domestic Violence Coordinators to consider issues and concerns that are presenting in relation to domestic abuse, as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Following this GM has been developing a risk register and action plan which will be owned by the Greater Manchester Domestic Abuse Partnership Board, chaired by the Deputy Mayor for Policing and Crime.

Partners have informed us that during the current crisis every effort is being made to continue to provide support to victims of domestic abuse. Their offers / planning include:

- Delivering services remotely via telephone call, online chats, video links etc. (where this is possible).
- Capacity planning for a rise in self-isolation/sickness within IDVA services, including exploring ways to upskill and train other staff to support this service.
- Repurposing some of the support provided by partners to assist with supporting domestic abuse victims.
- Considering local plans in place to support vulnerable children and young people and how these can be communicated to this group.
- Holding regular virtual meetings of their partnerships at a local authority level to enable concerns / issues to be raised.
- Operation Encompass is continuing and local authorities are considering the most appropriate response to this given the changing nature of the school environment,

meaning the model will be reassessed in each area to ensure referrals are picked up by the most appropriate agency at this time.

- Authorities are also closely monitoring any changes in trends within the referrals and where appropriate, the learning will be shared across the 10 GM Local Authorities
- STRIVE (low risks incidents) continues to be fully operational remotely through volunteer coordinators undertaking the telephone call backs, rather than the volunteers themselves

At a GMCA level work is taking place to support partners as much as possible. Some of the measures being put in place and considered currently are outlined below:

- Developing a DVA communications plan for services so people are informed about how they can report domestic abuse and access support.
 - This communications plan includes a radio awareness campaign that focuses on five key themes associated with an increased risk: Drinking, Being kind to one another, the perspective of children, Taking time-out and what support is available should an individual feel they need it.
- Organisations have also been asked confirm they are sharing information with their employees about how to access DVA support.
- Securing additional bed spaces for women fleeing domestic abuse which could potentially be accessed by local authorities if needed due to emergency accommodation being full.
- Representatives from the Greater Manchester VCSE sector have come together to developed a register of service provision for victims that is to be circulated to Community Safety Partnerships.
 - Whilst this register is not wholly focused on Domestic Violence and Abuse, it provides further awareness of what support agencies are available and are providing and could be a significant point of support to those who are at risk
- Informing partners what the GMFRS offer around target hardening and supporting MARAC referrals is.
- Research cohort analysis being undertaken to consider where vulnerable, locations, victims and offenders are which will be used to inform interventions for young people.
- GMP are issuing correspondence to DCS to ask them to feed in any specific concerns in relation to child safeguarding arrangements. They are also leading on a piece of work to understand where high risk households, or households with children (who may not be high risk at present) are, to determine whether they would be suitable for a face to face visit (as part of the revised NPS/CRC approach to managing DVA offenders).
- Home visits are still occurring with DVA perpetrators where no phone / technology is available, or complex needs are present.
- GP guidance for domestic abuse has been circulated to all GPs in GM and domestic violence coordinators.
- A weekly victims services reassurance and resilience forum has been established to enable organisations to flag any concerns and issues. This has representations from domestic abuse organisations.
- The GM Domestic Abuse Partnership Board is continuing to act as an escalation route for any local issues.

Police and Fire & Rescue Service

- **How Fire and Rescue Service business continuity plans are being designed to best safeguard the public and emergency service workers;**

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service have developed a COVID-19 Strategy. This strategy sits alongside the Integrated Risk Management Plan 2016-20 (IRMP), and the changes agreed as part of the GMFRS Programme for Change. It identifies the changes to service delivery that are in place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Strategic Priorities for GMFRS during the pandemic are:

1. Maintain a safe and effective Emergency Response
2. Ensure the safety and wellbeing of our staff and help to reduce the risk of infection
3. Prevent the impact of fire and other emergencies on our communities, adopting a risk based approach
4. Protect our communities from fire, adopting a risk based approach
5. Ensure effective business continuity arrangements are in place
6. Ensure our response is coordinated and integrated with other responding agencies
7. Monitor and report performance internally and to the Mayor
8. Maintain an awareness of the changing nature of the pandemic and associated guidance, and adapt our approach accordingly
9. Evaluate our response to the pandemic and identify lessons learned.

The biggest impact on the public is the change of the Safe and Well visits which are moving from a face-to-face and at home visit to a conversation had over the telephone. This has been done to reduce the risk of infection to firefighters and to the public.

However, a face to face visit will still be provided to the following people:

- Those subject to an 'urgent threat to life' via a potential arson attack. (Referrals will be accepted from GMP, domestic abuse organisations, or as a result of MARAC.) This will include the installation of equipment and protection measures where necessary.
 - People in our communities who are most vulnerable to fire. That is people whose risk of having a fire, being injured in a fire, or dying in a fire, is increased by one or more of the following - their physical or mental health, or social care needs; their lifestyle or occupations / routines; the physical and social environment in which they live.
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- **How Police business continuity plans are being designed to best safeguard the public and emergency service workers;**
 - **What trade-offs will have to be made by police if a significant number of officers are unable to work at any given time, and the potential impact of those decisions;**

Greater Manchester Police (GMP) has a strategic force policy that sets out the objectives and responsibilities in order to have robust business continuity plans in place that ensure the Force has the capability to not only respond effectively to emergencies but also to continue normal policing functions to agreed minimum service levels.

In order to ensure a formal, coordinated and consistent approach GMP has based its business continuity management on the guidelines issued by HM Government in the

Emergency Preparedness Manual 2005, the Business Continuity Institute and the International Standard for Business Continuity Management – ISO 22301

All GMP Business Continuity Plans are based on a threat/risk analysis as outlined in the GM Local Risk Register and the National Resilience Assessment (NRA).

A force-wide business continuity testing and exercising programme is in place which sets scenarios based on current identified threats and risks to ensure they are fit for purpose and also inform the development and updating of plans, pandemic is one example of a threat/risk that has been regularly used as a scenario to examine the impact and level of resilience resulting from the loss of large numbers of staff. The plans are designed around the premise that in an emergency situation GMP will continue to provide its critical functions outlined below;

1. Provide Command and Control Structures at Divisional, Branch and Force level and in the event of a major incident incorporate the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme principles (JESIP) and multi-agency coordination.
2. Respond to Grade 1 and Grade 2 incidents recognising harm risk and threat, and identifying and dealing with vulnerabilities and safeguarding issues.
3. Respond to and investigate serious crime.
4. To provide effective custody and criminal justice processing facilities.

At this time, GMP has not had to reduce down to this position as abstractions and demand have not necessitated this reduced level of service, albeit the reduced level of service would still consider vulnerability and safeguarding issues. Many working practices have changed such as home working and social distancing in the workplace.

Should a large number of officers be off at one time then decisions at Gold and Silver levels would be to reduce the service of lower grade incidents, such as minor crime or calls for assistance that are not deemed not to fall within the above four areas, but this would be a dynamic decision based upon the areas where officers were not available and skillsets available. Business Continuity Plans do address what skills are required as well as potential alternative resources that could be utilised to resource an area of business. Some specialist areas of business may have difficulty in organising alternative resources due to training implications. BC Plans do identify where this may be an issue and many have provision for mutual aid and support from neighbouring forces.

- **How Police forces will support each other if mobilisation tactics, or other forms of mutual support, are compromised by the imperative to limit the possible spread of the virus;**

There is a possibility that Greater Manchester Police (GMP) could be compromised indirectly – for example the collapse of a private contractor e.g. prison or telecoms group due to the impact of the virus. For the purposes of this question I am assuming that this is referring to the risk of person to person transmission.

GMP co-ordinate through a Regional Information Co-ordination Centre (RICC) where we have access to the availability of resources across our region should it be required. This

enables us to draw upon, where necessary, from other forces across the country. As it currently stands GMP implement a number of working practices to reduce the risk – such as splitting a number of officers across a number of vehicles where they would have previously been in a single personnel carrier, and the use of PPE.

GMP will also continue to consider if the deployment is actually necessary – a number of plans on a national level have been adapted to draw only on the affected force as we look to reduce travel and thus the onward transmission of the virus.

The co-ordination of intelligence and tension monitoring through the National Police Chiefs Council has enabled GMP to plan and adapt where necessary and to mitigate risks where possible. GMP will review what support they can safely provide - for example logistical or administrative aid reduces the physical movement of staff and therefore freeing local officers to deal with the front line requirements. Were the Greater Manchester region to enter a state of disorder, the clothing and equipment officers wear provide a measure of defence – such as the full face visor that is on an officer's helmet.

As it stands, GMP can still meet their mobilisation requirements.

- **The preparedness of forces to support Local Resilience Forums during a possible civil contingencies emergency;**

From a GMP perspective our joint working is well embedded, our Civil Contingencies team are co-located with AGMA at the GMP Force Headquarters. Our joint working has involved planning, testing and exercising with not just local resilience forums but other partners too. This work has been reality tested across a number of incidents including large scale fires and the flooding recently seen in the region. This joint working has included in debriefing incidents, training and contingency planning.