



CCTV and Concierge Service Annual Report 2022-2023

**Working collaboratively to reduce crime and anti-social behaviour in Sandwell.
Keeping Sandwell safe by being the 'Eyes and Ears' of the community –
providing reassurance, monitoring, response and evidence.**



Sandwell Council's CCTV control room has been providing CCTV and Concierge services to the residents of Sandwell since opening in 2010.

The CCTV control room is expected to comply with all relevant legislation, to support this and to offer assurances to our customers SMBC continues to comply with an accreditation scheme run by the National Security Inspectorate [NSI]. The NSI can accredit CCTV control rooms against the requirements of the Protection of Freedoms Act and the Surveillance Commissioner's Code of Practice – the key regulator in relation to CCTV systems. Sandwell Council continues to meet these requirements.

The Commissioner states that the scheme enables organisations to demonstrate that the systems they operate comply with the provisions of the Protection of Freedoms Act and the Surveillance Commissioners Code of Practice. The commissioner further states that by successfully engaging with the certification scheme, an organisation, and more importantly the public, may be reassured that surveillance camera systems which intrude upon their privacy are being demonstrably operated ethically and legitimately to an appropriate standard.

More information about how Sandwell Council's CCTV control room is operated and the standards it works to is detailed in a Code of Practice that can be found on the council website and should be read in conjunction with this output report.

http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/4932/cctv_code_of_practice

This report highlights the work that the CCTV and Concierge team do which has contributed to keeping Sandwell residents safe. Staff have continued to deliver excellent services to some of our most vulnerable customers, having helped to reassure and comfort tenants that receive Concierge services whilst continuing to work with partners offering CCTV services in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour. It is clear from feedback that the efforts of the control room staff are hugely appreciated

Sandwell Council is proud of the ongoing efforts and outputs produced by the CCTV Control Room and operators have continued to show great commitment to enable services to be delivered to Sandwell residents, partners and colleagues as a vital community safety resource.



The CCTV Control Room has a complement of 24 Operators working around the clock to ensure services are delivered in an efficient and effective manner. Two supervisors also work a bespoke shift pattern complimenting other departments, and partner agencies and leading the Control Room operations outside of regular business hours. There is also a dedicated CCTV and Control Room manager who is responsible for the overall running of the service.

Control Room Operators monitor over 570 cameras across the Borough covering high-rise blocks of flats with half of our 54 blocks currently being covered, as well as West Bromwich and Wednesbury town centres and Friar Park, Yew Tree and Princes End High Street. The service is also responsible for monitoring the council's deployable camera stock that is located across the Borough to help reduce ASB, crime and environmental crime in identified hotspots.

This financial year the team have monitored and responded to 6332 incidents of crime, ASB and tenancy breaches and a further 733 tenant queries including requests for services such as repairs. Over 62% of incidents were proactively captured by CCTV Operators with the remaining being reported by tenants and partners. Staff work with a wide range of partners including West Midlands Police, ASB Officers, Tenancy Management staff, Taxi Licencing, Environmental Health and other teams such as caretaking and cleaning services, counter fraud teams and the Environmental Protection Team.



Where possible Control Room Operators will resolve incidents at the time they are monitored by carrying out a series of actions. Such actions may include: issuing warnings and/or advice as appropriate via tenant intercoms; reporting litter, rubbish and dumped household items for removal by caretaking teams; passing information onto police colleagues for response or intelligence or to environmental protection officers and other partner agencies to support the CCTV services with pro-active patrols where appropriate.

Identified incidents are also passed on to council teams and partners for further appropriate action. Information can be passed on for intelligence-gathering purposes and the Control Room Operators, Manager and Supervisors play a key role in several multi-agency groups that make full use of the information gathered, so issues can be identified and dealt with appropriately.

Within the control room, several types of incidents are monitored including reports of vandalism; vehicle nuisance; drugs; alcohol-related issues; violence; misuse of communal areas in high-rise blocks; litter and fly-tipping; animal nuisance and noise. More serious incidents are also monitored and information has been shared with West Midlands Police in relation to crimes such as assault, weapons offences, robbery, murder, drug dealing, sexual assault, firearms offences and burglary during the year.

Information provided has been used in arrests and convictions, tenancy warnings have been issued and ASB enforcement action undertaken. Control Room interventions have also helped put fraudulently used council properties back into proper use, ensuring they are available to offer those in housing need. Staff have also reported domestic abuse and worked with teams to safeguard vulnerable tenants as well as being on hand to offer advice and reassurance to tenants through the Concierge Service.

The Control Room offers intercom and concierge services to over half of the council's high-rise tenants. Intercoms located on the front door panel of blocks allow Operators to control access whilst handsets in the tenant's flats allow them to have 24-hour contact with our Concierge service that they can use to report a range of issues.



The team also oversee the physical security of the majority of Sandwell's high-rise and low-rise blocks. The council has contracts in place to maintain secure door entry systems covering approximately 350 low-rise blocks as well as 54 high-rise. The team take queries about maintenance, repairs and servicing of the door entry systems as required.

Operators will contact tenants to issue warnings about their behaviour where appropriate however intercoms are also used regularly to make reassurance calls to tenants or to contact them to advise them that an issue they have reported has been dealt with.

Access systems have the facility to put blocks on 'control' allowing door entry calls to be re-routed through to the Control Room, this means nuisance callers can't disturb tenants during quieter hours.

With the tenant's permission, systems also enable taking control of tenant's calls when they have been identified as vulnerable and need additional help in terms of vetting calls to them where they otherwise may be coerced or bullied into letting undesirable visitors into the blocks.

This year Operators have dealt with over 148,000 intercom calls from the Control Room including nearly 30,000 calls made and received directly to or from tenant's flats.

Moving forward.....

Technology will always move forward and the Control Room needs to do so as well. The Control Room is in its 12th year and whilst regular maintenance programmes have ensured systems are fit for purpose and in working order, there are upgrades needed.

Work is currently being completed that will see the Control Room's infrastructure improved. This work will see networks, hardware, software and recording systems renewed which will allow Sandwell Council to consider expanding the current service.

Sandwell Council currently provide a CCTV and Concierge service to approximately half of the high-rise estates. The Council has listened to requests from residents in the blocks without this service to expand this provision and on completion of the Control Room upgrades will be in a position to consider plans to expand the service to all high-rise tenants and leaseholders.

The Control Room was very much involved in the Safer Street Round 4 bid which was successful and saw 12 new cameras installed in Bearwood High Street. These were commissioned and installed during the year and will go live early in 2023-24, providing additional security and CCTV coverage in this busy shopping area.

Control Room staff will continue to play a key part in local tasking groups to ensure that information that has been collated is used to forecast patterns and trends that will help improve operator responses to identified issues. The current partnership approach is being used to inform the tasking of control room operators and cameras.

Sandwell Council will also continue to develop, and train staff so excellent services continue to be provided. Ongoing reviews of operating procedures, Control Room performance and outcomes will be carried out regularly and continuous improvements will be made by way of training and staff development.

The council's commitment to compliance with all relevant CCTV legislation will continue. The Control Room is accredited by the National Security Inspectorate which has confirmed compliance with the Protection of Freedoms Act and the Surveillance Commissioners Code of Practice. The CCTV Control Room is also compliant with other relevant legislation such as the Data Protection Act, the General Data Protection Regulations, the Human Rights Act and the Regulatory Investigatory Powers Act.

Work has been completed and will be regularly reviewed that will evidence that all CCTV systems owned and operated by council staff meet these requirements. This will include CCTV not monitored in the control room but managed locally in offices and other locations where the public may attend. Sandwell Council will ensure that all CCTV systems are operating to the same standards.

Sandwell Council will continue to utilise its deployable camera stock in response to identified problems. A process is already in place that recognises locations that require further support from the CCTV team and its partners and these locations are identified through town tasking as anti-social behaviour and crime hot spots which would benefit from deployable camera provisions to tackle these concerns and environmental crime such as fly-tipping.

In short, Sandwell Council's Control Room will continue to deliver a proactive service alongside colleagues and partners. The all-year-round Control Room Operators will continue to monitor Sandwell Council's cameras and will be available to residents through the concierge service where this is currently provided.



Sandwell CCTV Control Room 2022-23 – A Selection of Outcomes

- Intervention through the use of deployable cameras in areas flagged as hotspots for crime or anti-social behaviour has in most cases seen incident rates decrease. Staff have used deployable camera stock to monitor hot spots and respond to serious incidents including drug dealing in the street; harassment; car cruising; vehicle theft, youth violence and firearms incidents
- Regular welfare calls are made to vulnerable tenants to check on their well-being. Operators have also assisted colleagues by making intercom calls to flats where tenants have been uncontactable and have helped arrange gas visits, welfare visits and repairs access for other council departments.
- The CCTV Control Room has continued to monitor vulnerable tenants where a recent case of 'cuckooing' had been resolved after our interventions. Cuckooing cases have increased across Sandwell this year and the team were involved in the development of a cuckooing video to raise awareness of this exploitative and damaging criminal behaviour. A link to the video is below:
<https://www.facebook.com/sandwellcouncil/videos/do-you-know-the-signs-of-cuckooing/912756693411488/>
- The CCTV Control Room helped tackle significant nuisance being caused at some high-rise blocks in Oldbury. Through CCTV images, the perpetrators were identified and partnership working saw action being taken that has seen a significant reduction in incidents.
- Supervisors have worked with caretaking and cleaning staff alongside Housing and ASB colleagues in response to reports of communal areas being

misused and reports of rough sleepers. Work is ongoing to support rough sleepers and eliminate the misuse of our communal areas.

- Information shared with the council's anti-fraud team has been used to uncover tenancy fraud and fraudulent benefit claims. Action taken has saved Sandwell Council considerable sums of money and helped put properties back to legitimate use. Feedback received from the Tenancy Fraud Team thanked the team for their assistance and confirmed that the information provided played a massive part in allowing a two-bedroom flat to be recovered, stopping a sublet situation. Estimated savings alone to the Tax Payer for this are stated to be approximately £93,000 (figures provided by the National Cabinet Office).
- Control Room Operators have worked with the police Locate Team and have used CCTV cameras to assist in searching for missing persons.
- Public assistance in relation to CCTV queries and requests. Regular calls are received from people seeking assistance in retrieving CCTV evidence for a range of reasons. Where appropriate and following recognised procedures, Supervisors have assisted in several of these requests.
- Control Room Operators & Supervisors assisted the Environmental Protection team in identifying incidents of fly-tipping across the Borough resulting in £400 fines for the perpetrators and have also passed on footage about dog fouling and breaches of Public Space Protection Orders.
- The Team supported the ASB Task Force Pilot enabling members to contact the team and report real-time ASB. 31 such reports were handled by the team during the year with 25 EPO deployments taking place. Building on this approach the team have also provided direct contact numbers to residents as appropriate when deployable cameras are installed.
- The Control Room also continues to receive compliments from colleagues, partners and Councillors praising the work undertaken. An example from a police colleague in response to our operators spotting suspicious behaviour was:
"Just to say it was a cracking piece of work from the operators regarding them noticing suspicious activity at 3 am and calling the police who responded and arrested and charged the suspects who were also carrying knives and drugs"
- Anti-Social Behaviour colleagues confirmed how helpful the Control Room is on a regular basis and specifically in relation to an incident where two housing colleagues were verbally abused, and threats made against their lives by a male who had been causing issues at a council property. Staff confirmed that the incident had been caught on CCTV and shared this with the council ASB team who obtained a Without Notice Injunction on the male the next day
- ASB colleagues in Wednesbury have also passed on their compliments about information and CCTV evidence collated concerning reports of prostitution and drug dealing at one of the council's high-rise blocks. Information collated by the CCTV team has resulted in Community Protection Warnings being issued to the perpetrators

- CCTV Operators captured images of two pickpockets that had been preying on vulnerable shoppers in one of the town centres. CCTV evidence of two individuals targeting a woman and stealing from her bag was shared with police colleagues for identification and further investigation.
- CCTV Operators were thanked by West Bromwich town centre police after CCTV images clearly identified a group of individuals who went on to carry out 2 robberies in the town. The Sergeant complimented the Operator on his camera work and the images he had captured stating the excellent camera work will significantly help in the search for the offenders.
- The CCTV Team managed to safeguard an elderly gentleman from potential cuckooing and abuse by identifying persons visiting the block who had a history of this type of behaviour. Further work saw the victim moved to a place of safety and enforcement action taken against the perpetrators.
- The CCTV team successfully intervened in a spate of arson where an individual was setting fire to bins on an estate. Control Room Operators spotted the person responsible, identified him and reported this to the appropriate authorities allowing partners to address this person's behaviour that has seen the bin fires stop.
- A thank you e-mail was received from caretaking staff, ASB colleagues and Environmental Protection Officers relating to the information shared which allowed staff to engage with and offer help to a rough sleeper. The individual was relocated into accommodation. This was an excellent example of joint work resulting in early help and intervention for a vulnerable person.
- The team received a compliment from a police sergeant who thanked the team for CCTV work that helped officers locate a male wanted for 2 serious assaults and a burglary and several other serious offences. Work carried out by CCTV Operators identified an address that police officers attended and arrested the suspect. The police stated that this would not have been possible without the CCTV team's vigilance and support.
- Compliments were received a van was monitored after Operators spotted some suspicious behaviour. Police were informed and attended and stolen goods were found.
- Operators also directed EPOs and ASB colleagues to an individual responsible for preying on a vulnerable person in their home, so injunction papers could be served. One of the individuals was spotted just off camera so facial recognition was difficult but despite this Operators recognised the perpetrator by identifying a pair of boots they always wore. The EPOs were called and managed to attend and serve the paperwork within 10 minutes.

These are just some examples of the work of the CCTV Control Room Team, that demonstrates the impact and contribution made to enhancing community safety. Further details of control room outputs during the year follow:



CCTV & Concierge Service Outputs YTD 2022/23

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'Working collaboratively to reduce crime and ASB in Sandwell. Keeping Sandwell safe by being the 'Eyes & Ears' of the community – providing reassurance, monitoring, response and evidence'.



Summary

Total Incidents recorded by the CCTV Control Room

7065

Proactive - Incidents captured by control room operators

3971

Reactive - Incidents reported to the control room

3094

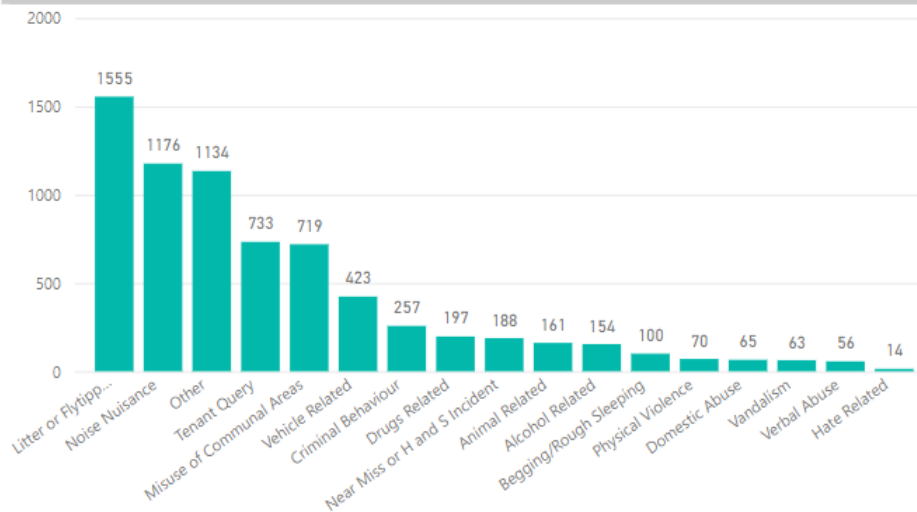
Intercom calls made and received [All towns Year to Date]

148837

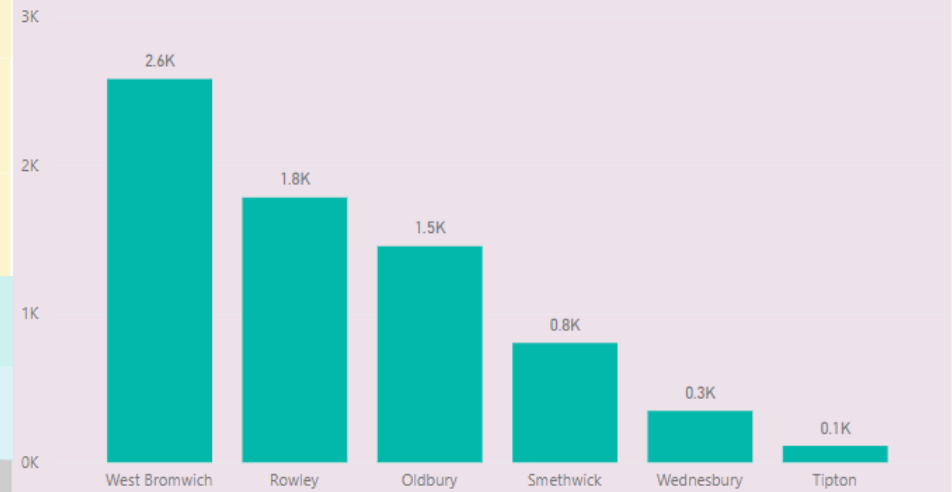
Footage passed to West Midlands Police [All towns Year to Date]

90

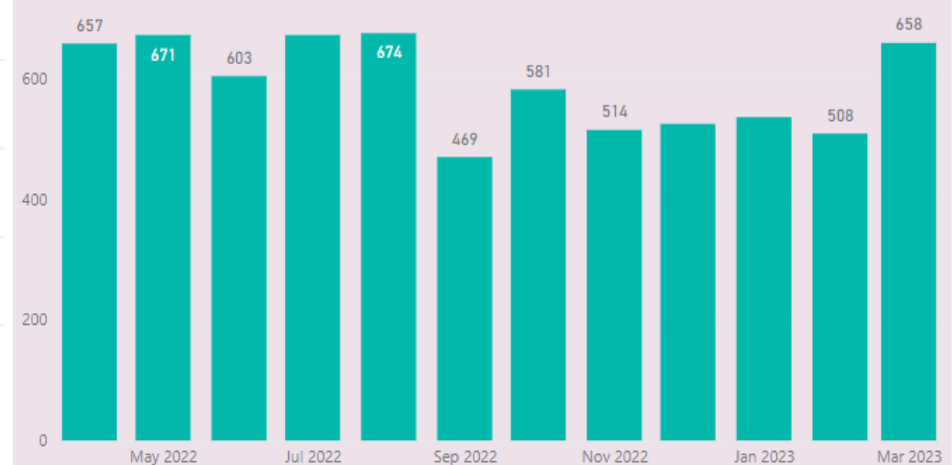
Incident Types



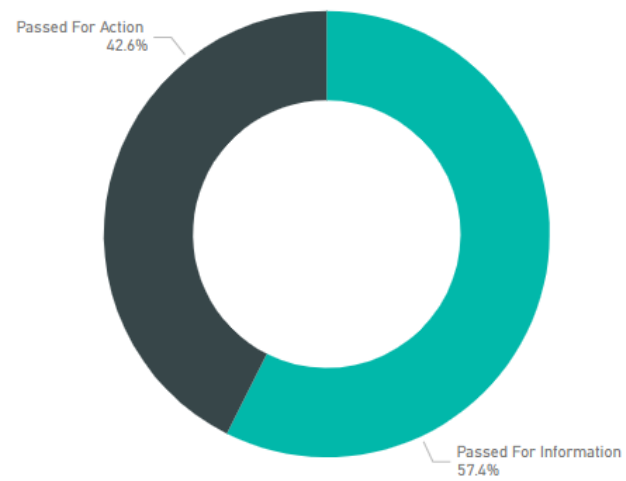
Total Incidents by Town



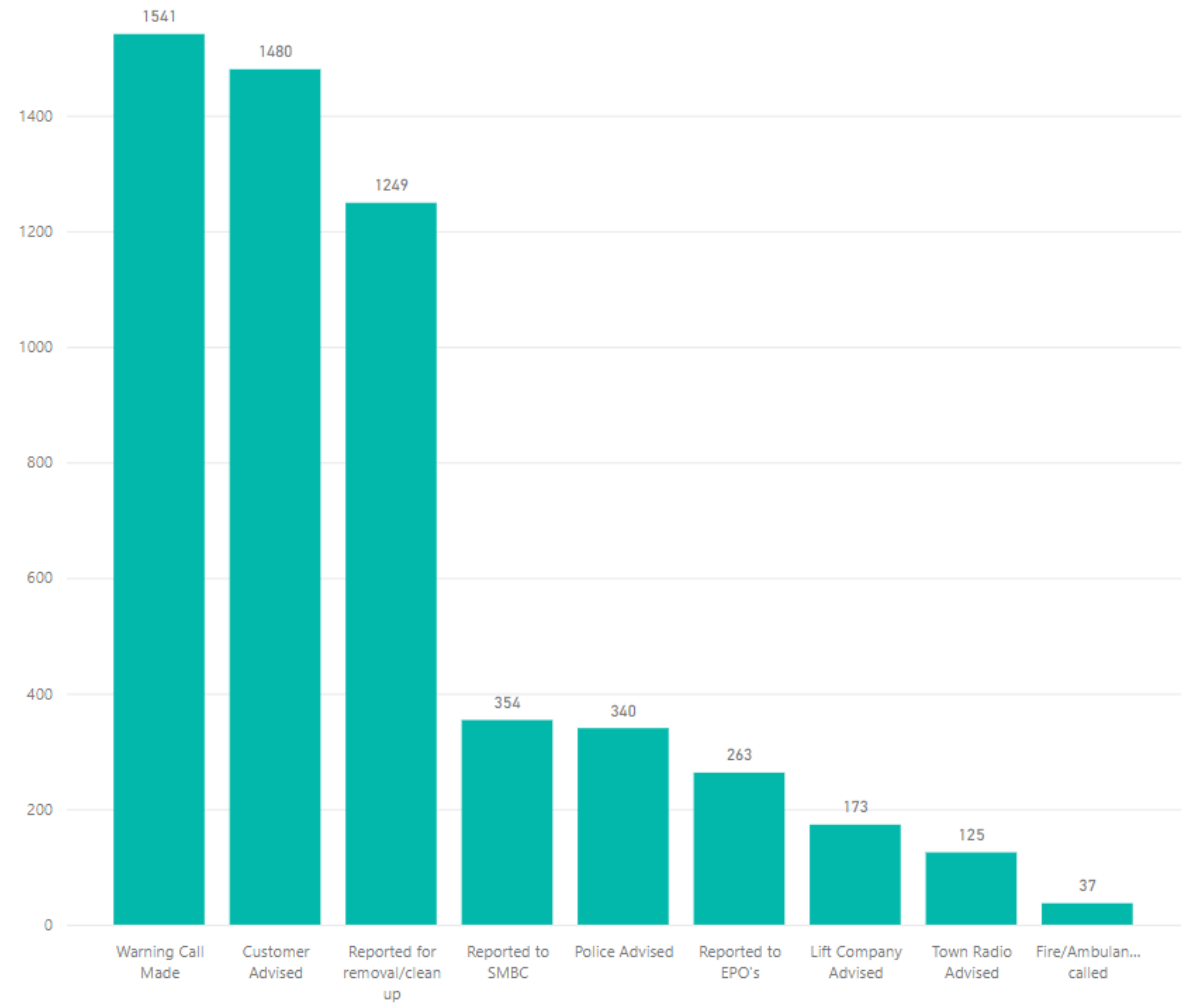
Total Incidents by Months



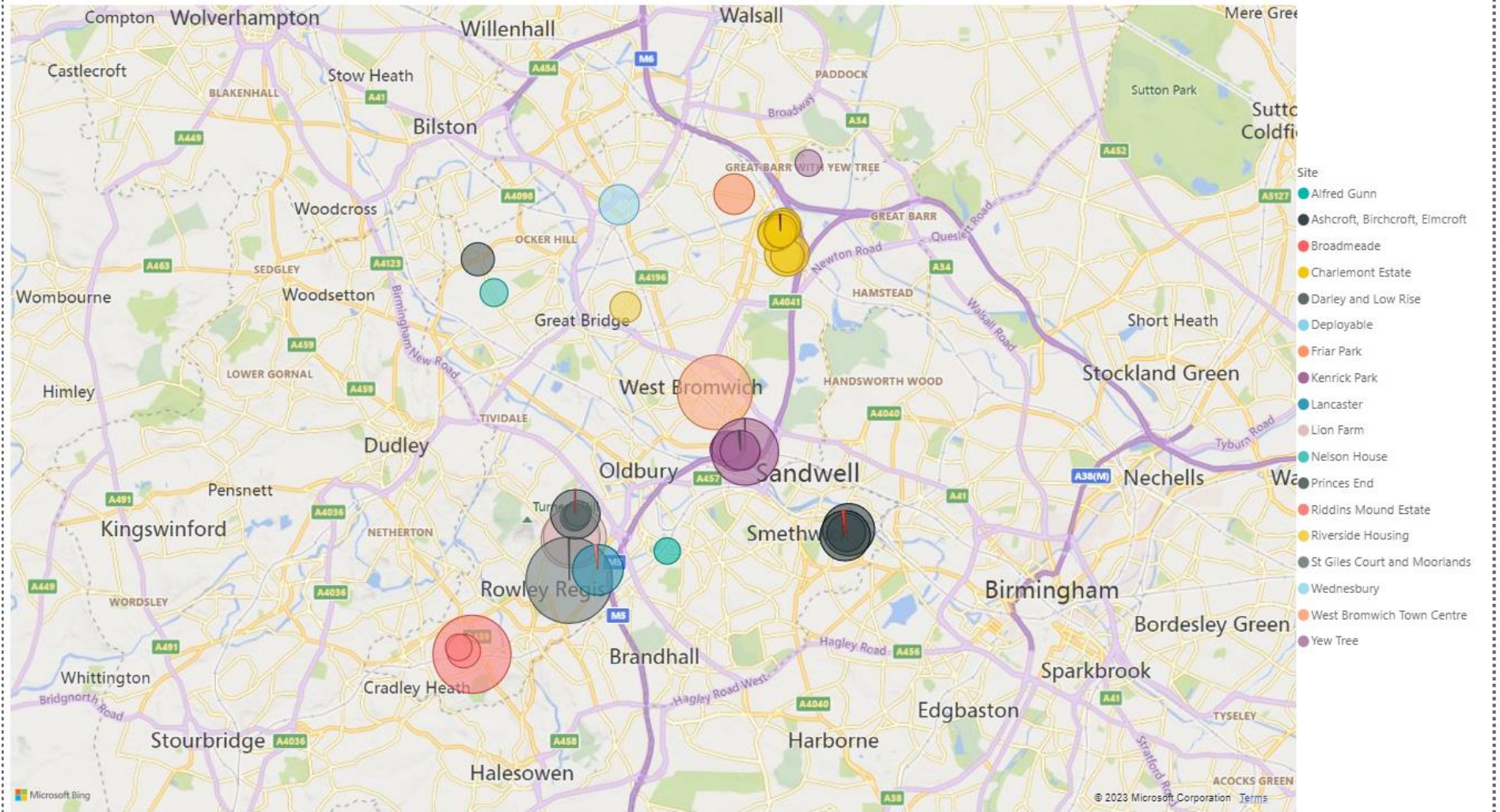
Incident Status



Response Type



Count by Post Code and Site



Contact Details in relation to this document

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End of report.