



## CCTV and Concierge Service Annual Report 2023-2024

**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 provides CCTV and Concierge services to the residents of Sandwell, this report captures some of the teams' outcomes and results.



The CCTV control room is expected to comply with all relevant legislation, 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 Biometrics and Surveillance Commissioner's Code of Practice – a 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 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](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/4932/cctv_code_of_practice)

## Introduction

This report highlights the work that the CCTV and Concierge team do which contributes 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.

Sandwell Council's CCTV operators continue to deliver excellent services to Sandwell residents, partners and colleagues as a vital community safety resource. A team of 27 control room staff work around the clock to ensure services are delivered in an efficient and effective manner.



Control room staff monitor over 550 cameras across the Borough covering high-rise blocks of flats, Bearwood High Street, Princes End High Street, West Bromwich and Wednesbury town centres, Friar Park and Yew Tree shopping precinct.

The service is also responsible for monitoring the council's deployable camera stock 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 6365 incidents of crime, ASB and tenancy breaches and a further 1046 tenant queries including requests for council services such as repairs. Nearly 4000 incidents were proactively captured by CCTV Operators with the remaining being reported to us by tenants and colleagues.

Staff work with a wide range of partners including West Midlands Police, Anti-Social Behaviour Officers, Tenancy Management staff, Taxi Licencing, Environmental Health and other teams such as caretaking and cleaning services, counter fraud teams and the councils Environmental Protection Team.



## CCTV monitoring

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; 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.

Incidents are also passed on to council teams and partners for further appropriate action. Information can be passed on for intelligence-gathering purposes and control room staff 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.

Information provided by the control room has been used to effect 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.

## Concierge services

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 oversee the physical security of Sandwell Council's high-rise and low-rise blocks. The council has contracts in place to maintain door entry systems covering over 350 low-rise blocks as well as 54 high-rise blocks of flats. 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. Intercoms are also used 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 can be enabled where operators can take control of tenant's calls when they have been identified as being vulnerable and needing 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 control room operators have dealt with 139,903 intercom calls from the Control Room. This figure includes over 24,000 calls that were made or received directly to or from tenant's flats.

## New schemes and technology updates

Technology continues to move forward and while the control room is in its 13<sup>th</sup> year, regular maintenance programmes have ensured systems have remained in working order. Significant upgrades have been carried out this year to ensure that the infrastructure remains up to date and fit for purpose as well as being future proofed. This work has seen networks, hardware, software and recording systems renewed which will allow Sandwell Council to continue to provide and expand these excellent services.



Sandwell Council currently provide a CCTV and Concierge service to half of the high-rise estates. The Council has listened to requests from residents residing in the blocks without this service and following completion of the control room upgrade works the council is planning to expand this provision to all high-rise customers.

Work is now underway to identify a suitable contractor that can deliver CCTV installations and door entry upgrades to high-rise blocks not receiving these services currently. Customers have been consulted and work has commenced which should ensure that over the next 2 years all of Sandwell Council's high-rise residents receive a CCTV and Concierge service.

The Control Room has also expanded in other areas too. On successful application for and receipt of Safer Streets Round 4 funding, Sandwell Council procured and commissioned the installation of 12 new cameras in Bearwood High Street. This scheme, installed in summer 2023 has already yielded results and has provided CCTV evidence that has helped deter crime and anti-social behaviour in this busy shopping area. Businesses, the public and partners continue to comment positively on the introduction of this new CCTV scheme.

Further funding has also been made available to Sandwell Council through the governments Levelling Up Fund that will see several improvements to public safety through a range of initiatives, including enhanced CCTV provision in Wednesbury.

The Town Centre and Friar Park are having new updated fixed CCTV cameras that will significantly improve the images being captured in both locations. Alongside this, new deployable cameras are being purchased that will be used to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour across the town.

### Information sharing and compliance.

Control Room staff 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.

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

Sandwell council's commitment to compliance with all relevant CCTV legislation continues. This includes the Data Protection Act, the General Data Protection Regulations, the Human Rights Act and the Regulatory Investigatory Powers Act. The Control Room also remains accredited by the National Security Inspectorate which has confirmed compliance with the Protection of Freedoms Act and the Biometrics and Surveillance Commissioners Code of Practice.

Work has been completed and is regularly reviewed to evidence that all CCTV systems owned and operated by council staff meet these requirements. This includes CCTV not monitored in the control room but managed locally in offices and other locations where the public may attend. Sandwell Council's Surveillance Governance group ensures that all CCTV systems are operating to the same standards.

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

Further information about our services and outcomes can also be found at the following webpage:

[www.sandwell.gov.uk/cctv](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/cctv)

Examples of Sandwell Council's CCTV control room outputs can also be found on the following pages.

## Sandwell Council's CCTV Control Room 2023-24 – A Selection of Outcomes

- Interventions using deployable cameras in areas flagged as hotspots for crime or anti-social behaviour has seen incident rates decrease. Staff have used deployable camera stock to monitor hot spots and respond to serious incidents including street drug dealing, youth violence and firearms incidents.
- Regular welfare calls 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.
- Staff have continued to monitor vulnerable tenant's and further cases of 'cuckooing' have been resolved as a result of these interventions. Cuckooing cases are on the increase across Sandwell and the team continue to be involved in raising awareness of this exploitative and damaging criminal behaviour.
- The CCTV Control Room continues to tackle nuisance being caused at some high-rise blocks where rough sleepers are misusing communal areas. Through captured images, individuals are identified and partnership work takes place to ensure the relevant support is put in place to support rough sleepers and eliminate the misuse of these communal areas.
- Operators have assisted police with 'action days' across the Borough where CCTV has been used to compliment police activities on the ground. This has resulted in drugs being removed from the streets, knives being found and confiscated as well as arrests being made for a range of crimes.
- The team have supported the Boroughwide Nuisance Bikes Action Plan with breach of tenancy action taken after CCTV footage was shared with colleagues in the anti-social behaviour team showing bikes being ridden in a dangerous and anti-social manner.
- CCTV footage has also been used to bring together prosecutions under Operation Hercules – the police and Council response to car cruising and street racing. CCTV evidence has helped Sandwell Council support the renewal of the Black Country car cruising injunction and the successful prosecution of offenders.
- Police colleagues passed on their thanks and praised the team after some excellent camera work captured images of individuals responsible for a large-scale public disorder. Police retrieved the footage from the CCTV team and were very complimentary about the work operators had done and how helpful operators were when reviewing and preparing the footage for release.
- Control Room Operators have also worked with the police Locate Team and have used CCTV cameras to assist in searching for missing persons.

- The team continue to offer 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, the team have assisted in several of these requests.
- Control Room staff have assisted the Environmental Protection team in identifying incidents of fly-tipping across the Borough resulting in £400 fines being issued to perpetrators and have also passed on footage about dog fouling to support breaches of the Public Space Protection Order.
- The Control Room continues to receive compliments praising the work undertaken. An example from a police colleague in response to operators spotting suspicious behaviour was: *“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”*.
- Similar feedback has also been received from police colleagues in Bearwood in respect of the new CCTV installation and the services that can now be offered. An example of this being where West Midlands Police seized 435 cannabis plants worth up to £435,000 during a drug raid on Bearwood High Street after CCTV operators flagged up suspicious behaviour in the location.
- Anti-Social Behaviour colleagues also report 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. The incident was caught on CCTV and shared with the council ASB team who obtained a Without Notice Injunction on the individual the next day.
- Anti-social Behaviour team colleagues in Wednesbury also passed on their thanks in relation to information and CCTV evidence collated concerning reports of prostitution and drug dealing at one of the council’s high-rise blocks. The information supported in Community Protection Warnings and an injunction being issued to the perpetrators.
- Thanks have also been received from colleagues in the Counter Fraud Team for assistance provided in relation to investigations into subletting, right to buy fraud and abuse of the single person rent discount. The information provided has been vital in helping to prove a complicated series of frauds that had been committed against the council resulting in convictions and savings of over £150,000 this year.
- The Team have also supported the Operation Eternity work with the new ASB Locality Officer and police colleagues in Great Bridge

**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:**





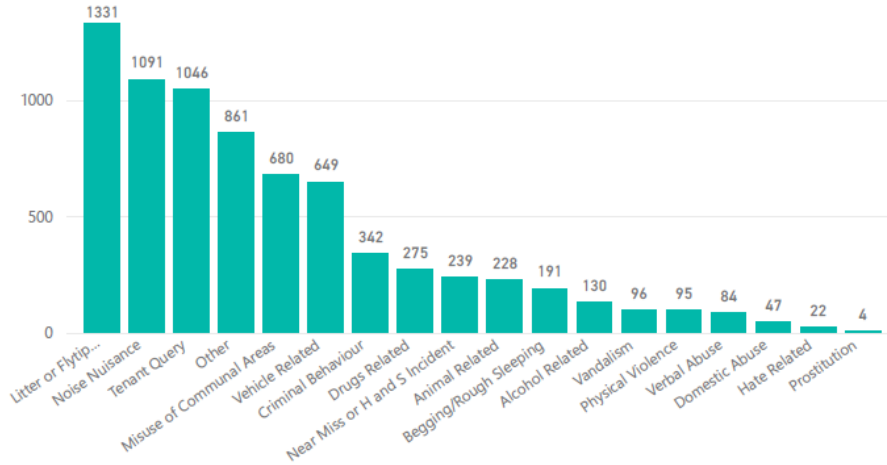
## CCTV & Concierge Service Control Room Outputs 2023/24

'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'.

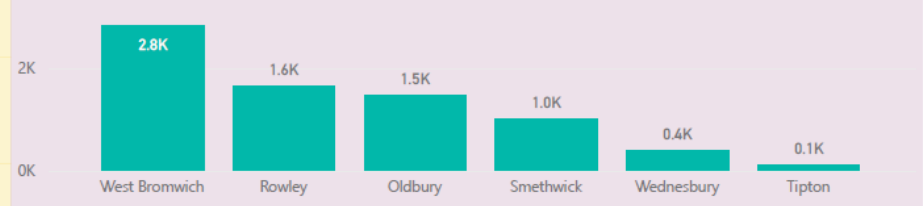


## Summary

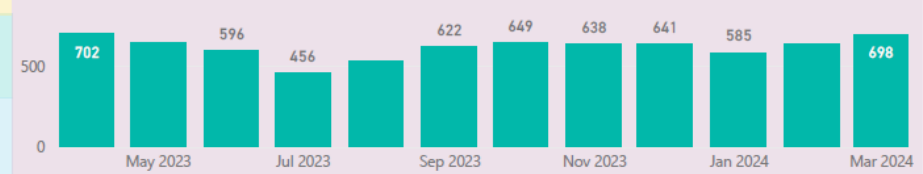
Total Incidents recorded by the CCTV Control Room	<b>7411</b>
Proactive - Incidents captured by control room operators	<b>3981</b>
Reactive - Incidents reported to the control room	<b>3430</b>
Intercom calls made and received [All towns Year to Date]	<b>139903</b>
Footage passed to West Midlands Police [All towns Year to Date]	<b>146</b>
<b>Incident Types</b>	



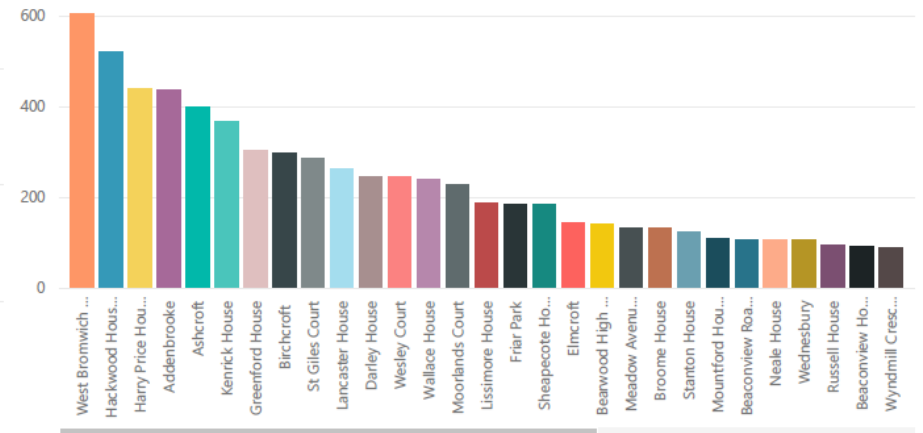
## Total Incidents by Town



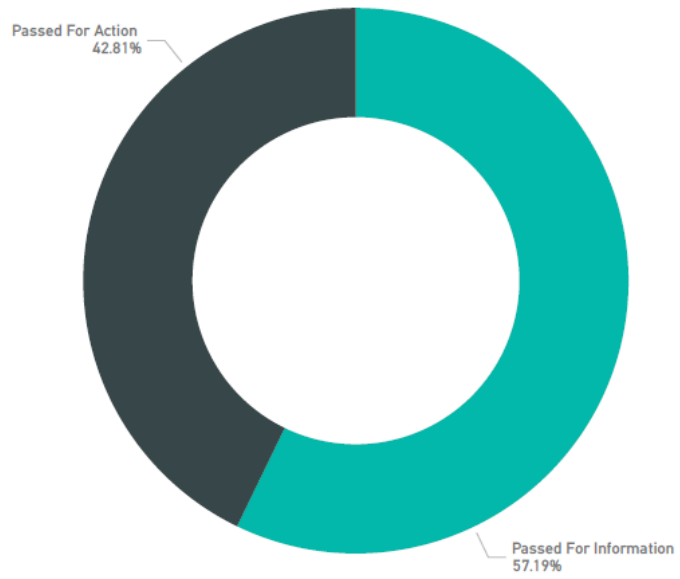
## Total Incidents by Months



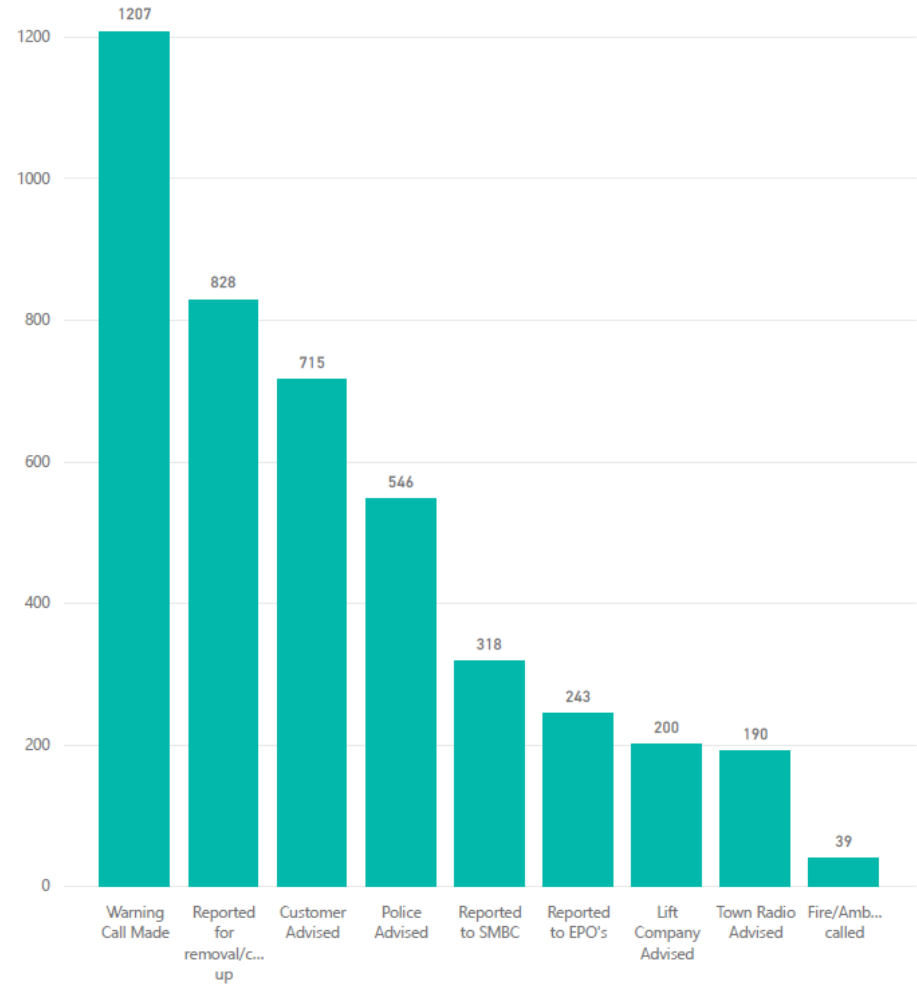
Count by Block and Block



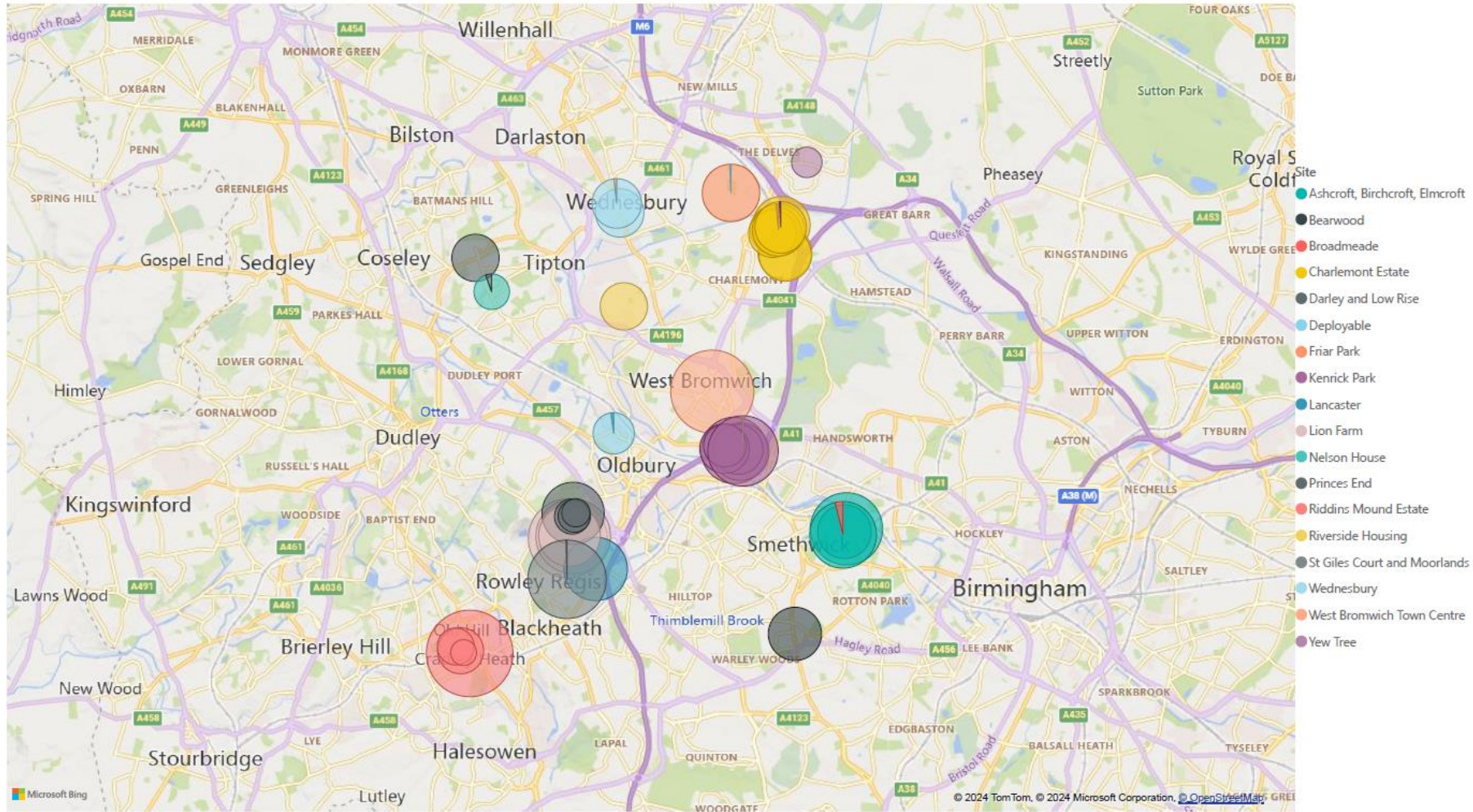
### Incident Status



### Response Type



Count by Post Code and Site



## **Contact Details in relation to this document**

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[www.sandwell.gov.uk/cctv](http://www.sandwell.gov.uk/cctv)

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