



Police and Crime Plan Priority: Responding to National Threats

Title: Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU)

Presented by: Detective Chief Superintendent Richard Baker

Purpose

1. The purpose of the report is to provide members of the Strategic Policing and Crime Board with information and an overview of progress against the Police and Crime Plan priority – Responding to National Threats. This report will cover the work of the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) including performance, governance, partnership working and report on the threat from Serious and Organised Crime (SOC). This report is listed for discussion.

West Midlands Regional Organised Crime Unit (WMROCU)

2. West Midlands Regional Organised Crime Unit (WMROCU) works tirelessly with our partners in the National Crime Agency (NCA), the four regional forces of Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Mercia and West Midlands and other law enforcement agencies (LEAs), to reduce the impact and increase the disruption of serious and organised crime across the region and beyond.

National Serious Organised Crime Strategy

3. The Governments Serious Organised Crime Strategy launched in autumn 2018 has set a long term approach to tackling the SOC threat that encompasses a whole system approach, from local to national.
4. There are four overarching objectives within the Serious Organised Crime Strategy:
 - Relentless disruption and targeted action against the highest harm;
 - Building the highest level of defence and resilience;
 - Stopping the problem at source; and,

- Establishing a single, whole system approach.
5. The NCA assessment of SOC threat identified the following areas as priorities for 2019/2020:
 - The identification and disruption of high-harm and high-impact criminals and organised crime groups, diminishing their capability, infrastructure and influence. In particular, those who:
 - Exploit the vulnerable through CSAE, trafficking, servitude, fraud and other forms of abuse;
 - Dominate communities and chase profits in the criminal marketplace, using violence and/or criminal reputations in the supply of drugs and firearms;
 - Undermine the UKs economy, integrity, infrastructure and institutions through their criminality.
 6. The Regional Strategic Priorities closely mirror those of the NCA so that the region can contribute to the national objectives; we work under the aligned pillars of Vulnerability, Commodities and Prosperity; the Strategic Priorities are shown within Figure 1.
 7. The NCA embed staff within each ROCU and share a close working relationship. The NCA attend and update our monthly regional tactical tasking and coordination meeting taking actions and inform on their operational activity in the region and national projects, attend weekly internal ROCU meetings and our quarterly strategic governance groups. ROCU are able to access NCA resources when necessary to support the challenges in tackling SOC.
 8. The 2019/20 strategic priorities for the West Midlands Regional Organised Crime Unit (WMROCU) were set by the ROCU Executive Board and incorporated into the regional control strategy shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 - Regional Control Strategy 2019/20

Threat from Organised Crime Groups (OCGs)

9. West Midlands Police (WMP) manage the largest proportion of OCGs within the West Midlands region, over half at 54%, the remainder are managed by the other three regional forces of Staffordshire, West Mercia and Warwickshire. Figure 2 illustrates the percentage of OCGs by their primary crime type for WMP.

OCG Crime Type	%
Drug Activity	60.5%
Organised Theft	10.5%
County Lines	8.1%
OIC & HT	5.8%
Sexual Offences	4.7%
Violent Criminal Activity	4.7%
Money Laundering	3.5%
Commodity	1.2%
Economic Crime	1.2%

Figure 2 - Table detailing OCG percentages by crime type; refers to active OCGs recorded on OCGM as at Oct 2019

10. As at October 2019 our OCGs are predominantly involved in Drugs activity (63.5%) some of which includes ‘County Lines’. Violent Criminal Activity also covers the threat of Firearms; with Violence and Money Laundering a common further crime type for OCGs engaged in the importation and supply of drugs.

11. The ROCU works closely with the WMP lead for SOC and the Regional Policy Officer for the PCC. This collaborative working has led to the production of a

quarterly performance document which provides trend analysis, management information and operational highlights of the work undertaken by ROCU.

12. ROCU have commenced work to understand the SOC threat in a consistent manner with regional forces implementing MoRiLE (Matrix of Risk in Law Enforcement) which is the nationally recognised prioritisation tool for SOC used by LEAs. This will create a regional SOC 'Threat Grid' which will feed into the NCA's national 'Threat Grid'. The ROCU also attend Organised Crime Group Management and monthly Force Performance and Tasking meetings to be aware of emerging threats.

Disruptions and Performance

13. The national performance of ROCUs are measured through 'disruptions' against SOC. A disruption is achieved when intentional activity leads to an OCG or individual being unable to operate at its usual level of activity, or where the risk posed by a National Control Strategy (NCS) threat or vulnerability is diminished, for a period of time. Disruptions assess the impact of law enforcement activity; ROCUs can claim disruptions for all SOC activity and can either **lead** on disruptions or provide **support** (without ROCU support the disruption could not be achieved); whereas forces can only claim for OCG disruptions.
14. The ROCU record disruptions against OCGs in line with the national ROCU performance framework. Drugs remain the crime type with the most ROCU led disruptions; although OCGs are often involved in multi-criminality this reflects our opportunities to tackle them most efficiently. Firearms are the second highest crime type for disruptions claimed.
15. The ROCU have led on 450 SOC disruptions over the last 12 months and supported forces and LEAs with a further 855 SOC disruptions. ROCU performance highlights from the last 12 months include:
 - Over 900 arrests made, over 240 convictions with sentences of 1,700 years delivered;
 - Over 400 persons safeguarded;
 - 58 firearms recovered; 46 other firearms weapons recovered, eg, grenades and nearly 600 rounds of ammunition;
 - Over 75kg of cocaine and 20kg of heroin recovered, 3500 cannabis plants recovered;
 - Approximately £1.5 Million of assets seized by the ROCU.
16. ROCU performance is scrutinised by the Regional ROCU Executive Board to ensure that the ROCU is held to account for delivering an efficient and effective response to SOC in line with the control strategy. The highlights and key themes

from the performance document are then presented to the regional Chief Constables and Police and Crime Commissioners on a quarterly basis.

WMROCU Capabilities

17. There are a number of ROCU capabilities that provide support to pursue, prevent, protect and prepare against the threat of SOC.
18. In April 2019 the ROCU introduced a single point of entry (SPOE) or gateway into the ROCU from external users. This has consistently identified that WMP are the greatest users of ROCU capabilities. Over three quarters of demand originates from WMP, with the ROCU seeing between 400 to 500 requests for support each month.
19. As well as multiple SOC investigations that are both led and supported from within the ROCU, other notable capabilities include our Economic Crime Team who are supporting in excess of a hundred financial investigations pursuing organised criminals who gain from their involvement in crime. In the last twelve months WMROCU have recovered £950,000 through confiscation orders granted and seized over £550,000 in cash.
20. ROCU also have a Regional Disruptions Team that deploy to support LEAs with short term operations, often working collaboratively with partners. The Government Agency Intelligence Network (GAIN) which is a further ROCU capability, coordinates information and activity across partners such as Trading Standards, Immigration Enforcement, Border Force, and HMRC.
21. The Regional Cyber Crime Unit (RCCU) is also tackling the threat from SOC on the web but also complete a vast amount of cyber prevent and protect work with numerous presentations to schools, colleges and universities as well as community groups, particularly focused upon the elderly as well as the business community – reaching thousands of people through their communications.

Emerging SOC Threats

22. SOC is increasing in volume and complexity, advances in use of technology and the way in which crime is being committed are evolving, OCGs are exploiting any opportunity for financial gain on a global scale.
23. Communities feel the impact of SOC through violence and intimidation at a local level, including inter-OCG and USG feuding. The lines between USGs and OCGs are becoming more blurred, with USGs causing increasing harm.
24. There is a strong connection between drugs supply and firearms use. Use of violence is common to both protect and enable criminal business interests.
25. A large proportion of SOC investigations now uncover an aspect of vulnerability; within Drugs and County Lines, Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking and Exploitation of adults and children, be this sexual, labour or criminal. Appendix A

outlines some recent WMROCU operations and the intrinsic links between SOC and vulnerability.

26. We anticipate that OCGs will seek to exploit any vulnerabilities that emerge from new arrangements at the border that may result from the EU exit.

WMROCU Funding

27. The Home Office Spending Review did not provide continuing funding past March 2020 for a number of Police Transformation Funded posts that are critical to continuing capabilities within the ROCU. In October 2019 WMROCU presented the funding shortfall to the Regional Governance Group for consideration by regional Chief Constables and Police Crime Commissioners. These matters may not be resolved until after the next election.

Summary

28. SOC affects more UK citizens, more often, than any other national security threat. Although an international issue, SOC causes harm to local communities and costs the UK economy at least £37 billion annually.¹
29. Assessments indicate that both the volume and complexity of SOC are increasing and will continue to evolve as a result of advances in technology and international conflict. This changing threat will continue to bring new challenges.
30. The ROCU is an integral part of the national policing framework, operating as regionally collaborative police units employing a range of specialist policing capabilities to disrupt organised crime.
31. WMROCU, working collaboratively with our regional forces and LEAs at a local, regional, national and international level, are well placed to reduce the impact and increase the disruption of SOC across the region.

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¹ HM Government – Serious and Organised Crime Strategy, November 2018.

Appendix A – Case Studies

Operation Fahrenheit – Serious Organised Aquisitive Crime

1. Operation Fahrenheit was a proactive investigation led by a regional force but supported by WMROCU, into an OCG committing ATM attacks over an eighteen month period across four regions. The operation saw five subjects convicted of conspiracy to commit burglary and they received sentences totalling over 32 years. The defendants were also issued with Serious Crime Prevention Orders (SCPOs) to commence at their release from custody, and will last a further five years for three of the subjects.

Operation Ballet – County Lines

2. Operation Ballet was a regional operation against County Lines. Five members of a gang who ran drugs into Malvern and Ledbury from West Bromwich, admitted a charge of conspiracy to supply Class A drugs in April 2019. The latest round of convictions from April 2019, saw combined prison sentences handed down to offenders topping 100 years. The principal nominal received a 9 year custodial sentence.

Birmingham Textile Company

3. WMROCU through the Regional Disruptions Team co-ordinated the execution of a Modern Slavery warrant in conjunction with partner agencies; Gang masters & Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), Hope 4 Justice, West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS), Home Office Immigration Enforcement (HOIE) and West Midlands Police in respect of a textile company based in Birmingham.
4. As part of this 31 persons were spoken to, with 2 adults and 1 child were safeguarded. Workers included a 16 year old Romanian female who had been working 30 hours a week for £6.50. She had also arrived in the UK in 2018 but has not been in any form of education. A second female had arrived in the UK in March 2019 with her daughter. Her daughter is not registered with any health provider or known as living here. These two persons and their family members were referred to Birmingham Children's Services requiring additional support. 5 other employees were arrested by immigration and further intelligence was gained.