

**TACKLING
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LIVES**

2009 Tackling Drug Supply Awards Case Studies

Acknowledgements

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1 Introduction

The annual Tackling Drug Supply Awards (TDSA) were established to recognise outstanding drug enforcement operations across the United Kingdom. As a policy of robust enforcement comprises a significant component of the overall National Drug Strategy, tackling drug supply in all its various forms remains a high priority for the police and other law enforcement agencies. That being said it has also been recognised that while some level of enforcement is important in constraining drug markets, in mature markets simple arrests and seizures ultimately make little impact the amount of drugs available on the street. The overall focus of recent drug strategies has been on reducing the harms that drugs cause to individuals and families, communities and institutions. Within the sphere of enforcement there has also been a shift; while the reduction of drug availability has remained the goal of supply-side activity, this is explicitly linked to harm reduction, and the national performance measure, community perceptions of drug nuisance, is a measure of social harm.

The problems experienced by communities throughout the UK as a result of controlled drugs are numerous, including health, social, economic, environmental and structural harms. As such, while it is recognised that enforcement alone cannot be expected to solve these problems, it constitutes an important element of a comprehensive strategy for tackling drug harms.

In general, the evidence base concerning the effectiveness of drug-related enforcement activities is weak. However, the evidence that is available makes it clear that a multifaceted approach is required for any sustainable impact to be achieved. Such approaches are likely to have the additional benefit of enhancing public confidence in law enforcement and

promoting a sense of partnership and joint responsibility. While the operations included in this report were recognised at the 2009 TDSA's for their outstanding results under traditional measures of operational success, their contribution towards reducing the harms associated with the supply and use of controlled drugs is equally important.

This year a fifth category of award was introduced that recognises the problem posed by commercial cannabis cultivation sites. Spreading out across the UK, including communities not previously affected by drug supply and posing a range of health and safety risks to adjacent properties, homes and the community at large, these often highly organised criminal operations represent an emerging threat that, if left unattended, could have serious implications in the field of drug production. The award for tackling cannabis cultivation recognises police forces that have uncovered and dismantled extensive networks of commercial cannabis cultivation sites.

The remaining four award categories remain unchanged from previous years. The best practice against street level dealing category focuses on National Intelligence Model (NIM) Level 1 operations that seek to disrupt and dismantle street markets by identifying and investigating the dealers that control them. The operations included within this report all achieved substantial results in terms of arrests and seizures. However, an important feature of these examples was their tangible impact on and involvement of the local community.

The examples of enforcement operations with DIP linkages provide evidence of what benefits may be realised through police initiatives that combine a traditional enforcement approach with an emphasis on diverting drug users into treatment programmes. Seeking to address both the supply and demand for controlled drugs, these operations have provided a number

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of benefits to their local communities, most notably a significant decline in reported levels of acquisitive crime. First introduced as a category in 2006, these operations are now being implemented across the UK.

The best practices against middle market dealing category focused on NIM Level 2 dealers, which serve as the link between wholesale drug smugglers and local level dealers. As the organised crime groups which operate at this level constitute a critical point in the supply chain, disrupting and dismantling their supply networks is an important component of an overall drug supply reduction strategy. Successful operations in this category implemented a range of innovative police tactics to circumvent the increasingly sophisticated measures employed by organised crime groups at this level.

The final category of the 2009 TDSA's is the best practice in asset recovery. As organised crime groups amass considerable wealth, identifying the proceeds gained from criminal activity and confiscating these assets aims to ensure that successfully investigated criminals and organisations lack the means to recover quickly from successful enforcement operations. The operations recognised within this report combined a strong enforcement operation with a comprehensive asset recovery investigation.

The nature of enforcement activities, for example the covert nature of the illicit activities being targeted and the frequent need for rapid responses to immediate problems, makes evaluation difficult and so it is perhaps not surprising that the evidence for the effectiveness of many enforcement approaches is limited. However, enforcement agencies have been developing a range of innovative approaches to tackle drug problems and some of these are highlighted in the case studies within this report.

The case studies included are those that were winners or commended in the 2009 Tackling Drug Supply Awards, with a main focus on the winning operations. The case studies have been put together based on information contained in the nominations for the awards, from the presentations made at the award ceremony and, in the case of winning operations, from interviews with those involved in the operations. However, it should be noted that these operations have not been formally evaluated and the information presented is largely descriptive although, where possible, key lessons from the operations have been drawn out in order to help other agencies considering similar approaches.



2 Street Level Dealing

Street Level Dealing: Summary



These operations all had a key focus on community harms, in particular: acquisitive crime; drug-related violence, disorder and nuisance; community perceptions of drug problems and fear of crime; loss of confidence in the police; and concerns about negative role models.

To tackle this problem they took an intelligence-led approach to tackling the most harmful dealers

combined with partnership-working to encourage drug users into treatment and to address other problems in the area, such as environmental degradation.

All took on the challenge of engaging with the public. An extensive publicity campaign was often deployed going beyond simple leaflet dropplings and standard press reports, for example using Bluetooth technology or holding public car-crushings. The police and other partners were also heavily involved, engaging with members of the community on a practical level, listening to their concerns, and involving them in developing action plans to address these.

Although drug-related harms were often the key motivation for undertaking the operations the outcomes were mainly reported in terms of numbers of arrest, seizures and prison terms. However, other outcomes reported included reductions in overall crime and acquisitive crime; improved public confidence in the police as evidence through surveys and increased numbers of calls to Crimestoppers; and increased numbers of users entering treatment.

Key lessons learned from these operations were:

- A thorough baseline assessment of the problem, including evidence of the harms experienced, is important to provide the basis for identifying appropriate interventions and a baseline for evaluation.
- A longer term focus for operations with multiple arrest phases encourages sustainability;
- Taking time to build true partnerships with a shared vision of the aims is important to long term success and encourages investment of resources;
- Continuous community engagement is essential for lasting impact;
- Having the right people with the right skills involved and given sufficient time is important for success as it takes time and skill to develop a strong case against higher level dealers and to develop true partnerships with other agencies;
- Seek opportunities to make use of alternative sources of funding – in addition to increasing the resources and expertise available it can encourage ownership of the operation by partners.

While street level dealers represent the lowest level of drug supplier, making little profit and easily replaced, they also have the most direct impact on the communities in which they operate. Often members of the community themselves, they are frequently dependent on drugs and drug dealing may be part of a range of acquisitive offending with which they finance their drug habit. Harms that may be associated with street dealing include the nuisance and disorder associated with open markets and dealing, the associated degradation and economic decline of the area, and the normalisation of drug use.

The published evidence¹ has shown that enforcement alone is insufficient in making a sustainable difference in the supply of drugs available and that multi-component, community-focused and partnership

approaches are more effective. The operations included within this report have been recognised for moving above and beyond a basic street-level operation and employing the range of tools available to them through cooperation with local partners and enhanced engagement with the community itself.

Key objectives of these operations have been to:

- make sustainable reductions in acquisitive crime and other forms of criminality linked with drug dealing and misuse, particularly the violence associated with the drug trade; and
- increase community confidence in the police and improve public perceptions of the extent of drug problems in the area.

Award Winner: Operation Nemesis, Stoke-On-Trent

Commended: Operation Grassland, Wakefield and Northamptonshire Police Reducing Supply Team

Key Points: Operation NEMESIS – winning operation

The problem

The operation focused on an area of high deprivation in Stoke on Trent with large numbers of low rental and empty properties and increasing environmental degradation. There was an established drugs market becoming a hub for Class A distribution. Increasing competition from external OCGs was leading to escalating violence. Drug-related harms identified were:

- Degradation of particular areas, including through low-level crime, graffiti etc
- High levels of acquisitive crime
- Growing influence of organised crime groups
- Escalating violence between gangs, resulting in serious assaults and public order incidents
- Negative role models
- Lack of community confidence in enforcement and reduced participation in tackling crime
- Increase in users and insufficient drug treatment

Action taken

Past enforcement operations had had limited impact that was not sustained so a

¹ See, for example, Mazerolle L, Soole D, Rombouts S (2007) Crime Prevention Research Reviews No. 1: Disrupting Street-Level Drug Markets. Washington DC: US Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

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multiagency, multi-component approach was adopted to tackle the drug supply and other drug-related problems within the community in a more holistic manner. Five main strands or phases of the operation were identified:

- 1. Understanding the nature of the problem** - A comprehensive baseline assessment.
- 2. Identification of subjects and evidence gathering** - Undercover officers were deployed to infiltrate the criminal community, using a bottom up approach over 16 months from February 2006.
- 3. Enforcement** – Three enforcement phases took place each involving 350 police officers. Following these, additional intelligence-driven activity was undertaken in a broader area including adjacent communities to address potential displacement and other unintended consequences.
- 4. Consolidation and Partnership strategies** - a range of partnership work was developed:
 - protocol drawn up between all partners at a senior level and regular meetings held.
 - community engagement events took place on the day of the first two enforcement operations resulting in actions including use of civil enforcements and work with families of drug users.
 - Additional drug treatment provision and a reduction in waiting lists was funded by the PCT and a training package designed for practitioners, such as police officers, housing and neighbourhood officers, to increase understanding of treatment.
 - A seminar was organised for local youths, to discuss the drug and gang culture followed by 'Crucial Crew Events' run by all partner agencies for local school children.
 - A coordinated clean up operation took place and fixed penalty tickets for littering/fly tipping issued and clean up costs placed onto land registry to encourage absentee landlords to take responsibility.
 - Funding was secured from Central Government to provide basic crime reduction equipment, eg window alarms, personal attack alarms and vehicle locks, to vulnerable people and crime victims.
- 5. Media and Communication Strategy** - the media and communication strategy was seen as key to lasting success by keeping the community informed and involved. The Nemesis name and logo was incorporated throughout. Local and regional media were given a confidential briefing before enforcement and invited to follow arrest teams, accompanied by local dignitaries. Direct marketing included leaflets and posters. A giant projector displayed the Nemesis logo, photographs and videos of raids on buildings around the city. Bluetooth broadcasting was used around the City delivering a brief message regarding Nemesis, the logo and Crimestoppers information.

Impact

- Overall, tangible improvement in the area targeted which continues to be sustained through enhanced partnership working and continued focus by the police on those wishing to fill the void.
- 82 arrests including 48 level 1 , 12 level 2 and 2 level 3 dealers resulting in 160 years imprisonment

- 13 OCG's dismantled or significantly disrupted
- £148,000 cash seized, 9 houses restrained and 3 high value cars forfeited
- Significant trust and confidence generated within the community, positive feedback received through housing questionnaires, community forums and the local media
- Reported crime in Western Neighbourhood reduced by 20%
- Retention of users in drug treatment up from 52% to 85%
- Drug treatment waiting time reduced from 16 to 2 weeks
- Operation Nemesis now daily business within Staffordshire and embedded in the community

77% increase in drug related Crimestoppers information (31% increase overall)

2.1 Operation Nemesis (Award Winning Operation)

The problem

In 2006 Stoke-on-Trent was identified as a hub for class 'A' drug distribution with significant local drug misuse issues and related problems with community members expressing feelings of helplessness and general apathy towards the deteriorating situation. Illicit drug trafficking and the use of illegal drugs was seen as the driving force behind the communities problems. The drug-related harms and contextual factors identified included:

- **Deprivation**

The 2004 English Indices of Multiple Deprivation found Stoke-on-Trent to be the 18th most deprived local authority area across England and Wales, while in the 2007 Index it was the 16th most deprived. The area was home to a disproportionate number of Class 'A' drug dealers that were part of local and emerging Organised Crime Groups (OCG's) as well as a high proportion of the illicit drug users in the area.

- **Environmental degradation**

A number of factors, including an increase in the availability of cheap rental properties and an influx of low-income and benefit-dependent tenants moving into these properties, created a significant number of vacant and void

properties within the area and further contributed to a degeneration of the physical environment.

- **Confidence in Policing**

Problems such as rising unemployment and increasing drug misuse meant the area had experienced a significant decline in the quality of life over the years. This created disillusionment amongst the community and a general sense of apathy, which led to decreased levels of confidence in the local authorities and the police. This in turn led to a decrease in community-based sources of intelligence and further difficulties in disrupting the areas drug supply.

- **Crime**

Within Stoke-on-Trent, crimes such as theft, shop-lifting, burglary, and street robbery were all increasing and the vast majority of individuals apprehended for these crimes were found to be drug-dependent, the connection had become apparent.

- **Inadequate treatment provision**

Waiting times for treatment had risen to 16 weeks and the retention rate was only 50%, raising concerns over the impact on crime levels. Another issue was a reported lack of sufficient funding for treatment services resulting

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in provision being limited to a small range of options.

- **Violence**

The growing number of drug-dependent users resulted in Stoke-on-Trent becoming an increasingly lucrative marketplace for illicit drugs. This led to escalating levels of violence between existing local OCG's and new groups attempting to move into the area. Since 2006 three incidents of discharged firearms had been reported to police. While such violence may have been commonplace in other areas, for Stoke-on-Trent this was seen as an emerging problem.

- **Strain on police resources**

The investigation of serious drug-related violence resulted in a strain on police resources and so negatively impacted the police forces ability to effectively pursue other organisational objectives.

- **Negative Role Models**

Another perceived problem was the influence of negative role models on younger community members. These

individuals were living amongst the community, displaying the 'trappings of wealth' without any legitimate sources of income and enjoying a higher quality of life in comparison to the law-abiding majority. As such dealers are well known within community, the inability of the police to successfully investigate these individuals had served to further erode community confidence.

Past drug enforcement operations based around surveillance and test-purchasing were unable to sufficiently penetrate the drug hierarchy and so failed to create any lasting impact. As middle and low-level drug dealers were quickly replaced, OCG's were able to continue to function largely unimpeded. Increased knowledge of electronic surveillance methods also meant that OCGs became increasingly cautious in their communications further reducing the effectiveness of these traditional approaches. It was therefore felt that, under these conditions, the most viable option was to use undercover police officers to infiltrate the criminal organisations and climb the organisational hierarchy.



Attempts at community partnership working, hampered by the competing objectives of the different organisations, had often resulted in the police breaking away and pursuing action unilaterally. This had the effect of alienating partners and creating friction and mistrust. Due to the covert nature of drug enforcement initiatives, deciding when to inform partners had long been a point of contention between the police and partner agencies.

Recognising these past problems, 'Operation Nemesis' was developed with the aim of using an intelligence-led approach based on undercover operations to dismantle the organised crime networks that were responsible for the supply of drugs in the area, while at the same time providing an enhanced array of social services to the community. It was theorised that disrupting the upper-hierarchy of drug supply would allow community based initiatives aimed at reducing the harms associated with drug use to be of greater, sustainable effect. Operation Nemesis was therefore developed with the following objectives:

- To provide an accurate strategic and tactical intelligence picture in respect of Class A drug supply and criminality linked to those markets, including burglary and other acquisitive crime, sexual exploitation, serious public order and the illegal possession and use of firearms
- To disrupt and dismantle organised crime groups and existing criminal markets by securing and preserving evidence against identified subjects for offences relating to drug supply and associated criminality
- To identify criminally obtained assets with a view to seizure and confiscation under Proceeds of Crime Legislation
- To engage with partners with a view to maintaining a significant reduction in crime, providing public

reassurance and confidence across all diverse communities and a sustained improvement in the quality of people's lives and the environment they live in.

Tackling the problem

The operation involved several components or phases.

1. Baseline assessment of the problem

A comprehensive review of the problems in the area revealed the picture described above and formed the basis for developing the operation,

2. Identification of subjects and evidence-gathering

It was felt that, in order to create the space necessary to meaningfully engage with the community, it was important to first reduce the supply and availability of drugs and apprehend the individuals responsible for their presence within the community. Therefore, undercover officers were deployed to infiltrate the criminal community, using a bottom up approach over 16 months from February 2006.

Targeting high-end local drug dealers was the primary goal of the 'Operation Nemesis' enforcement team with the aim of significantly disrupting the organised criminal networks which controlled the drug trade in the area.

Following an amalgamation of street-level intelligence and Covert Human Intelligence Source (CHIS) information, undercover operatives were placed directly into the community. Purporting to be low level drug dealers, these officers were eventually able to climb the organisational ladder and become accepted members of the organised crime networks. This created a new stream of first-hand knowledge previously unavailable to Stoke-on-Trent police and allowed them to corroborate existing intelligence and compile a strong-evidence base against operational targets.

3. Enforcement phase

Arrests were conducted over three days staggered over a 4 month period due to the volume of individuals implicated in the operation and the limited manpower and resources available to the police force. The first arrest phase targeted level 3 and level 2 drug traffickers while phases 2 and 3 of the operation targeted remaining level 2 and 1 dealers. Over 200 further warrants were executed in the 6 months following the third arrest phase.

Each arrest phase began with an early morning briefing for police officers at the King's Hall in Stoke-on-Trent. As over 400 police officers were involved in the first arrest phase, it was felt that a clear and professional presentation was critical to ensuring those involved were properly motivated and understood the task before them. Following the confidential aspects of the briefing, members of the media were invited in and were also briefed on the operation. Two mini-buses of media members then accompanied the strike teams on the raids to provide first-hand coverage.

In the days following arrest phases the 'Nemesis' brand was extended to other operations, such as the 'Nemesis Ring of Steel'. This was a high profile operation conducted on the major arterial routes in and out of the city using Automated Number-Plate Recognition technology. With a similar strategy adopted in conjunction with British Transport Police, over 150 stop searches were conducted. While few yielded drug seizures, the widespread media coverage was intended to discourage prospective supplier from bringing drugs into the city and the operation was also successful in removing unsafe or unlicensed vehicles from the city's roadways.

Following the extensive media coverage and overwhelmingly positive public perception, Operation Nemesis, as a brand, continues to be used extensively

for many of the area's large scale drug investigations and a number of partners' services. While the active investigative task force assigned to Nemesis is no longer in place, as far as members of the public are concerned 'Operation Nemesis' is an ongoing police enforcement activity that continues to operate within their communities.

4. Community and partnership work

It was felt that the operation required a new and innovative approach to partnership work that stressed the importance of equal ownership and responsibility to provide sustainable achievements that were greater than the sum of their individual parts. This would require co-ordination and information-sharing between partners at an unprecedented level and thereby require a level of trust and confidence between the partners that did not at that time exist.

The first steps in this process for the police was to enhance their understanding of services provided by partners and determine the individual points of contact. It was also important to gain an understanding of the history between organisations and a general sense of the 'politics' in partnership work. In some cases, damaged relations needed to be repaired and in other cases needed to be initiated. From the outset it was recognised that such a baseline assessment would take several months to develop and time was allowed for this alongside the intelligence-gathering phase.

This element of the operation included a wide range of activities including:

- a risk-assessment of each organisation to determine whether sensitive information needed to be and could be shared, and to what extent. It was recognised that the integrity of the operation could be maintained whilst providing a level of enhanced disclosure to certain partners.

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Managing these relationships, establishing rapport through understanding the perspectives of different partners, and building trust were critical to this stage of the operation.

- A protocol was developed between the partners and a variety of meetings organised throughout the run-up to enforcement, promoting co-operation without jeopardising the integrity of the enforcement operation.
- Community engagement events were undertaken. In the early stages these took place under the banner of the national 'Respect' programme. This offered a highly useful cover for the mobilisation of the partnership with little risk of compromising operational integrity and acted as pilots for the main operation. On the enforcement day for Operation Nemesis, hundreds of community members and partner agencies were brought into the King's Hall under the guise of another 'Respect Day'. Once at the hall, they

were than briefed on the operation and shown the media coverage and impact assessments. They were then organised into local community groups with neighbourhood policing commanders and encouraged to discuss what they could do with partner agencies to build upon the space created by 'Operation Nemesis'. Using the PIER model (Prevention, Intelligence, Enforcement, Reassurance), community action plans were developed in order to encourage community members to take on some of the challenges directly. These action plans were maintained over a 6 month period to instil a degree of individual ownership within members of the local community.

- a drug awareness and training programme for practitioners and key stakeholders. This was a collaborative effort between Police Officers, the Community Drug Service, Drug Intervention Programme managers, Probation Service, and ex-service users. These workshops introduced



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the range of drug-treatment services available, how they may be implemented, and the various agencies involved. The workshops also sought to challenge existing prejudices towards drug-dependent individuals and create an enhanced understanding of the negative impacts drug addiction may have on the community. They included a contribution from an ex-service user who shared his story of how drug use had resulted in the loss of employment and social standing, and how the service allowed him to overcome his addictions and reintegrate himself into mainstream society. Training took place over a 3-4 month period and was provided to over 600 practitioners.

- an improvement in the quantity and quality of services available. Due to the personal relationship which had been developed between the 'Nemesis' team and individuals at the Primary Care Trust (PCT), funding was secured for the enhancement of drug treatment services over a 12 month period. While in the past such a commitment may have been difficult to obtain, the high level of trust that had developed between the organisations made the task relatively straightforward.
- Provision of crime prevention advice to potentially vulnerable individuals and businesses. It was recognised that premises such as doctors, chemists and dentists would be potentially vulnerable due to the disruption to the market and reductions in available drugs. In partnership with the Drug and Alcohol Action team these services were advised of their vulnerability and all local chemists were visited on the enforcement days to offer reassurance and to discuss crime prevention advice. Also, basic crime reduction equipment such as window alarms, personal attack alarms, and vehicle stop locks to individuals who were identified as being vulnerable.
- environmental clean-up initiatives and other operations were also implemented under the 'Nemesis' brand on each enforcement day. These included the removal of rubbish and graffiti, street cleaning, the issuance of fixed penalty notices.
- To address the negative influence of drug dealers on the younger community a seminar was organised at a local community premises, attended by over 150 local youths, to discuss the drug and gang culture. The event was attended by a rap singer from outside the area who spoke of his life involved in crime and the negative impact this had had on him and his community. This was followed by 'Crucial Crew Events' run by all emergency services and the local and health authorities and attended by local school children.
- Numerous other community engagement events were implemented, such as a weekly tasking group between the police and local authority where civil enforcements were discussed, such as evictions, ASBO's and crack house closures. A second action plan led to the development of work with agencies that deal with families of drug dependent individuals. A referral mechanism was put in place whereby the police exchange information about drug enforcement to allow the Social Services to identify children or vulnerable people at risk who may be living with a drug dependent individual.
- Operation Nemesis sought to improve the co-operation between the police and the Crown prosecution Service (CPS) by bringing CPS officials into the investigation at a much earlier stage. This allowed for a much higher level of coordination between the two agencies and ultimately resulted in an extremely high conviction rate.

5. Media Strategy

One of the main goals of the operation was to increase public awareness of police activity and enhance confidence in law enforcement agencies. The newly constructed relationships with partners were further utilised in a comprehensive media strategy. It was hypothesised that turning 'Operation Nemesis' into a brand that could be identified with the entire partnership and not just police enforcement would create a sense of community ownership that had not previously existed. Throughout the build-up to the enforcement phase, the Respect Days allowed an opportunity to coordinate and organise a massive media campaign involving all partners that would reinforce the enforcement activity on the day. This involved determining the different messages partner agencies were keen to promote and ensuring they all fitted in with the overarching objectives of the partnership work as a whole.

Developing a positive working relationship with members of the media was also critical as the media hold considerable influence over the public perception of events. As with partnership working this required a balancing act between proactive coordination and ensuring operational integrity was protected.

Two days before the enforcement raids were to be conducted, members of the media were brought in for a confidential briefing regarding the operation which, without providing specific information, notified them that a major enforcement operation was imminent. While disclosure of such sensitive information represented a risk to the success of the operation, the personal relationships between the 'Operation Nemesis' team and media members allowed the police to feel confident that it would not negatively affect the operation and was an acceptable risk.

Media personnel also accompanied police on some of the strikes and were

then brought back to the King's Hall for breakfast and a post-arrest briefing. They were joined there by the Chief Fire Officer, Police Chief Constable, the mayor, city councillors, a wide assortment of city workers, and members of the community. Totalling in the hundreds, these individuals were then asked to go back out into the community and share the news of the morning's events with other individuals. This was done to provide an alternative method of raising awareness outside the mainstream media.

The operation also used various forms of direct marketing in addition to more traditional media outlets such as radio, television and print:

- A total of 10,000 Nemesis leaflets were delivered by Police Community Support Officers, Specials and volunteers to the residents of the Western Neighbourhood Community and those who lived adjacent to where warrants had been executed on enforcement days. The leaflets explained the action being taken and encouraged the community to support the police by providing information through 'Crimestoppers'. A key development was the level of engagement that accompanied their distribution - those distributing leaflets were encouraged to talk with local residents, advise them of services available, answer questions, and put a personal touch on the enforcement work done earlier in the day.
- Posters advertising Nemesis were displayed on the sides of public transport, in phone kiosks and at local community and business premises.
- A giant digital projector was used to display the Nemesis logo, photographs and videos of raids on to the sides of buildings around the city.
- Bluetooth broadcasting was deployed around the City – a message was automatically distributed to people in

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the area whose phones were Bluetooth enabled. The message indicated it was from Staffordshire Police and if the recipient chose to accept it they received a brief message regarding Nemesis, the logo and 'Crimestoppers' information.

Outcomes/Results

There has been no formal evaluation of the operation, nor a comprehensive results analysis, so the information on outcomes is taken from interviews with key personnel and the award nomination form.

a) Measures of Operational Success

Traditional measures of operational success were significant. The 3 enforcement phases yielded:

- 82 arrests; 48 level 1, 12 level 2, and 3 level 3 dealers.
- asset seizures amounting to £148,000 in cash, 9 houses being restrained, and the forfeiture of 3 high value cars.
- overall reported crime in the Western neighbourhoods was reduced by 20%.
- a 100% conviction rate was achieved, largely due to a vast majority of guilty pleas,
- a total of 160 years of imprisonment were given to those arrested.
- intelligence following the operation suggested that 13 OCGs were dismantled or significantly disrupted.

The 100% conviction rate achieved in this operation was viewed as a direct result of the unprecedented level of coordination between the police and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The work done by the police and CPS in compiling evidence and preparing the cases for trial was commended by the courts on many occasions.

More than 700 drug-related warrants

were carried out over an 18 month period following the arrest phases. The 80% success rate of these warrants is indicative of the quality of information received.

Intelligence received by the police also indicated a sharp decline of drug purity. Using the strong partnership links developed, this information was relayed to community drug service providers to help meet any health-related issues arising from the increased use of cutting agents.

There was a significant improvement in waiting times and dropout rates in drug treatment. Waiting times were reduced to 2 weeks and the retention rate increased to 82%. Based on prior mapping of the customer base of the dealers arrested, it was estimated that upwards of 2,500 individual drug users lost their traditional access point to illicit drugs. This knowledge was used to specifically target individuals within these areas and there was a significant number of new entrants into treatment from the key area of focus in the operation.

b) Impact on harms

Community support and confidence in the police increased:

- information received from 'Crimestoppers' increased by 77% in the weeks immediately following the arrest phase. Over the long term a 31% increase over pre-Nemesis figures has been sustained.
- highly positive feedback from communities across the Stoke-on-Trent area was evident in Safer Neighbourhood Interview Questionnaires. The independently conducted 'Difference Survey' confirmed these high levels of community satisfaction and residents showed a high level of knowledge of 'Operation Nemesis' with 56% of residents in Stoke-on-Trent reporting knowledge of the operation.

- Reported crime in the Western Neighbourhood was reduced by 20% in the period following the operation with displacement to adjacent areas reported as minimal.
- apparent decreases in the number of users within the areas targeted under 'Nemesis' do not appear to have resulted in increased numbers of users in other areas. This suggests an overall decline in the total number of users seems to have been realised, though a longer period of observation may be required to confirm any lasting affect.

The level of openness and trust between partner agencies was significantly improved as a result of the operation and has been maintained. Problems traditionally left to individual organisations within the partnership are now being dealt with through collective action. As well, there is a genuine atmosphere of shared responsibility and a willingness to go above and beyond organisational obligations. Operating inefficiencies and the loss of personal relationships, previously cited as arising from the relatively frequent turnover of staff, have been overcome through an enhanced commitment to ensuring the maintenance of inter-agency relationships as a priority.

c) Costs/resources

A complete estimation of the resources employed within this operation is not possible as the operation was notable for the engagement of a wide range of agencies who contributed resources to the project in many forms, from direct provision of treatment places to assistance in the media campaign.

Ideally, the value for money of the operation would be judged on the basis of a sustainable impact on the harms identified, for example the reductions in crime, lives saved, and the improvements in quality of life for residents. However, this is not possible with the information collected. From a purely enforcement

perspective, an alternative way of judging the success of the operation is to consider the number of convictions obtained from the resources expended. Prior work on the cost-effectiveness of major drug enforcement operations was reported to have shown that each conviction typically costs anywhere from £10,000-11,000. However, the tactics employed under 'Operation Nemesis' were estimated to cost in the neighbourhood of £8,000, a considerable saving.

That being said, the resources required for this operation were considerable. It was estimated that the entire operation cost the police force upwards of £620,000, not including the £80,000 contributed by the Primary Care Trust for the improved drug treatment services. While this represented a substantial amount of resources for Stoke-on-Trent, it was suggested that the amount would have been significantly higher without generous contributions from agencies across the partnership. With a media budget of only £2,000, significant contributions from the local authority were essential. Additionally, the drug treatment service training for police officers and other practitioners was provided free of charge, the King's Hall was provided at no cost. Collectively, support from the partner agencies was essential and enabled a massive media campaign to be implemented where it otherwise would have not been possible. Much of this funding has been mainstreamed and continues which is another measure of the success of the operation.

Issues and Challenges

While the Operation was considered a resounding success by those involved, there were some issues and concerns that proved difficult.

(a) The impact on police resources

One unintended consequence which emerged from the significant allocation of resources towards the operation was



its effect on other police operations. As 'Operation Nemesis' continued to grow in its scope it consumed a larger portion of the police forces operating budget than had originally been allocated. This of course led to cuts being made in any other areas, to the probable detriment of those operations.

(b) The importance of extensive and lengthy partnership-building

Prior to 'Operation Nemesis', it was reported that the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) had been unable to create any measurable impact and was approaching a point of crisis. As mentioned, the priorities of the police and partner agencies, particularly on the issue of drug misuse, are often at odds. Each organisation has its own individual culture and operates in a manner to which it is accustomed. In attempting to streamline operations, police are typically viewed as overly aggressive in pursuit of their own objectives. Therefore, for Operation Nemesis to be a success a lengthy period of partnership building was necessary to repair previous damage and build relationships of trust and openness between the partners, and overturn the image of the police as being overbearing and aggressive.

(c) Balancing information sharing with the maintenance of operational integrity

Decisions surrounding what to tell partners

and when to tell them were a highly contentious issue. Maintaining operational integrity and ensuring the safety of those involved, particularly with regard to test-purchase and undercover officers, were a priority. However, ensuring the partners were intimately involved in the operation and allowing them an appropriate amount of time and information to coordinate their own efforts was also very important. Sometimes compromises were necessary. Examples were given of mid-level officials being made aware of information unavailable to senior staff, and in some instances this led to considerable friction between and within organisations which had to be addressed. However, just as the police had concerns around granting access to sensitive information, such concerns were also expressed by these organisations towards the police, particularly where there had been a history of friction with the police. Consequently, overcoming this obstacle on both sides proved to be a considerable challenge. In some instances this was easier to achieve than in others, since relationships between organisations across the partnership had their own histories. Ultimately, a commitment from all involved to work through these obstacles and not to become bogged by the politics of partnership work allowed these issues to be overcome.

Key Lessons

(a) Include partners throughout the planning and implementation

The level of coordination between partners in 'Operation Nemesis' was unprecedented for Stoke-on-Trent police. Recognising the task before them, the first lesson from this operation may be found in the inclusion of partners at the earliest possible stage in the planning and implementation of the operation. To facilitate this background research into the role and inner-workings of each individual organisation was first undertaken. The

police officer responsible for this task spent upwards of 6 months researching the different agencies, learning what they could contribute to the operation and determining how best to create a space for them to achieve their own individual objectives within the partnership.

Working with the partners in the planning of post-enforcement strategies from the beginning allowed for a seamless transition to post-enforcement work following the arrest phases. Having plans in place and ready to go reduced implementation inefficiencies and the chance for missed opportunities. Maintaining a dialogue, sharing ideas, and effectively communicating those ideas throughout the process were all essential components to this process and ensured a feeling of shared ownership of the operation.

Eliminating the culture of competition between and within organisations was important in building up that level of trust between the partners, and so sharing information was therefore essential to maintenance of these relationships. In this particular case the pooling of not only information but resources was of critical importance considering the significant costs of the operation. Without such efforts it is doubtful the level of success obtained could have been achieved.

(b) Staggered arrest phases encourage sustainability

While the decision to conduct arrests of 'Nemesis' targets over 3 days across several months was originally seen as problematic, it ultimately turned out to be a highly useful tool in maintaining the long term sustainability of the operation. Staggering the arrest phases over a 3 month period reinforced the idea that 'Operation Nemesis' was an ongoing initiative that had become entrenched in daily life. While quantifying any deterrent factor is difficult, intelligence gathered during the post-arrest phase indicated

a certain 'fear factor' resulted, where local drug dealers were left wondering if and when they would be targeted under 'Nemesis'. It is also important to note that no targets were lost the staggered arrest phases, and many targets were apprehended with drugs on location on the second and third enforcement days. As all major drug enforcement activity continues to be branded under the 'Nemesis' banner throughout the city, the sense that it is something which continues to exist is regarded as fact.

(c) Community engagement and ownership was vital to long-term success

Perhaps of most important lesson from 'Operation Nemesis' was creating the space for community engagement to develop and take hold. Prior to the operation, the community of Western neighbourhood expressed feelings of hopelessness and a general apathy towards the 'drug problem'. While removing central figures in the supply of illicit drug was critical, history has continually shown such individuals to be quickly replaced. Consequently, stepping into the breach and filling the void created by their removal was vital to ensuring the long-term sustainability of any progress made through enforcement. Due to the advanced levels of coordination and planning prior to enforcement, and a commitment to allocate the resources necessary to ensuring sustainability post-enforcement, 'Operation Nemesis' has created lasting change and brought hope to communities where it had not previously existed.

One key reason the outcomes obtained through 'Operation Nemesis' have been sustained is owed in large part to the high emphasis placed on engaging the community and instilling a sense of ownership at the local level. Developed through the 'Respect' Day activities, the development of Community Action Plan's appears to have been well

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received by community members. While such programmes are not without their challenges, building a committed base within the community an important first step in reaching out to marginalised or disinterested members. In this respect, word of mouth appears to have been an important tool in growing the support of community members.

(d) People with the right skills and aptitudes in key positions

The core team involved in the operation were handpicked for their roles and this was vital to the success of the whole operation. They were also given the time to do the work properly. Both the community and partnership engagement work and the media component required people who could engage with partners, understand their perspectives and motivate them to participate.

Maintaining such relationships requires individuals that are committed to the values of partnership work. Putting aside preconceptions of typical roles and responsibilities requires open

minded individuals that are committed to the process and must go beyond merely paying them lip service. Such a commitment must of course exist throughout the organisational hierarchy, and so direction and support from senior officials is essential.

(e) Recognise opportunities to lever in resources from other sources and initiatives

Making use of the opportunity afforded by the Respect initiative to use this for much of the community engagement was extremely helpful in a number of ways, for example, allowing preparation of the community for the enforcement phase without compromising the covert intelligence-gathering being undertaken.

The large media component was only possible because of contributions from the communications staff in partner agencies and the necessary increase in treatment places was funded by the PCT. In contributing in cash and kind, partners also take on ownership of the operation.

2.2 Operation Grassland (Commended Operation)

The problem

An area of Wakefield had a well-established illicit drug problem. One Organised Crime Group (OCG) in particular, operating at National Intelligence Model (NIM) Levels 2 and 3, was having a particularly conspicuous and corrosive influence within the local community. This OCG was heavily involved in the supply of drugs within the area and was well known amongst the local community. This led to a number of harms to the community and other negative impacts:

- Public confidence in the police and the criminal justice system was negatively impacted by the way in which these individuals appeared to be operating with relative impunity.

- There was a perception that the police were not actively and effectively following up on investigatory leads provided by the community;
- The already strained relationship between the police and predominantly Asian community was being further damaged.
- Local drug dealers became more brash and blatant as a result of the perceived lack of effective enforcement activity.
- Where arrests were made, a lack of evidentiary support often resulted in failed prosecutions, further increasing negative community perceptions and financial costs to the taxpayer.
- The potential for impressionable youth to view these local drug dealers as a

source of aspiration and role models was viewed as another considerable harm to the local community.

Action taken

(a) Targeting enforcement activity

Building upon the successful enforcement activities employed through the West Yorkshire Police's 'Operation Brava', covert surveillance techniques and test-purchase operatives were employed over a three month period in order to develop new sources of intelligence and lines of enquiry. The intelligence gathered quickly led to an initial enforcement strike on known dealers resulting in a number of arrests. Whereas 'Operation Brava' had focused largely on area based enforcement strategies 'Operation Grasslands' targeted specific criminal networks.

(b) Community engagement

Recognising the existing strain on police-community relations, a concerted effort was made to ensure police activity had an overt community focus. This took several forms:

- Neighbourhood policing officers were involved in arresting the local drug dealers; and
- a media strategy was used to highlight the actions taken by the local police officers.
- leaflets detailing the extent of the operation were circulated throughout the affected communities in conjunction with the arrests.
- Local press provided extensive coverage and publicity to the operation.
- Public demonstration of police activities, such as the confiscation and destruction of vehicles obtained through illegitimate means, were employed to convey a highly visceral image to the community

that information received by the public will be acted upon swiftly. (c)
Partnership-working

Police on the enforcement side of the operation also worked closely with colleagues from Drug Intervention Programme (DIP) team and actively encouraged local drug users to enter treatment. These initiatives were aided by the local Primary Care Trust (PCT), which provided mobile treatment units that visited areas where successful enforcement operations had been undertaken.

Outcomes/ Results

The overarching goal of the operation was to significantly disrupt the organised crime groups operating in the area and reduce the overall level of crime. Other objectives were to increase community confidence in the police's ability to actively pursue drug dealers, increase community support and intelligence streams, and reduce drug usage amongst community members by providing enhanced treatment alternatives to take up the void created by a decreased availability of drugs in the area.

Unintended consequences which may have resulted from the operation were of a key concern to the police. The removal of a large number of known drug dealers throughout the community created the potential for a detrimental impact on the families which these dealers supported. As well, there was a concern that the areas drug problem could be displaced to the prison system, and so consultations were held with relevant officials from the prison service.

Measures of operational success reported by the team were:

- 105 individuals were charged a total of 405 offences.
- 16 vehicles were confiscated;
- £75,000 was recovered in addition to

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substantial amounts of illicit drugs.

In terms of impact on harms:

- A significant reduction in overall crime post-Grassland compared to the same period one year earlier was reported.
- An increase in community confidence in the police is suggested by the overwhelmingly positive media

coverage and anecdotal feedback from the community. This is further supported by a 14% increase in 'Crimestoppers' intelligence received following the completion of the operation.

- However, there was no evidence of a significant impact on treatment uptake.

2.3 Northamptonshire Police Reducing Supply Team (Commended Operation)

The problem

Prior to the development of the operation, Level 1 and 2 drug squads in the Northamptonshire police force had been disbanded. As drug misuse continued to be a significant problem in the area, the need for partnership work between the police and drug treatment services was recognised. In August 2006 the Reducing Supply Team, consisting of one Sergeant and one Constable, was formed to provide the DAAT led multi-agency Reducing Supply Group with a capacity to tackle drug supply identified by drug mapping using DIP/DAAT data. From the outset the decision was made to target locations and/or individuals clearly linked to harms; acquisitive crime, anti-social behaviour and locally identified community concerns.

Therefore, through a co-coordinated approach involving both statutory and voluntary agencies, the Reducing Supply team aimed to reduce a number of harms thought to be drug-related that were being experienced by the community:

- acquisitive crime;
- anti-social behaviour,
- damaged public confidence in the police,
- establishing links to the vice trade, and
- reducing associated health and safety risks associated with the drug markets

were identified as key priorities.

Action taken

(a) Identifying the problem areas

Drug mapping using DIP data relating to both offenders and offences was overlaid with sanitised treatment data to identify areas where the greatest impact on both level 1 drug supply and crime levels could be achieved. Recommendations were then placed before the Reducing Supply Group to develop an effective investigative and enforcement strategy.

(b) Enforcement operations

The original focus was on enforcement efforts targeting open-air drug markets within the Northampton city centre. Covert test purchase operatives were deployed to gather evidence against Level 1 dealers. These operations ran from 10/2006 to 01/2007 and resulted in a number of arrests and charges being laid.

As part of the consolidation phase, the team commenced 'Operation Hale' out of the local Basic Command Unit (BCU). This took the form of an overt operation acting upon 'hot intelligence leads' predominantly derived from increased 'Crimestoppers' intelligence received from the local community.

(c) Encouraging treatment uptake

At this stage in the operation a DIP officer

was deployed to actively encourage local drug users to seek treatment options. This resulted in a demonstrable increase in treatment referrals and the development of new confidential sources of intelligence. As a result of these new intelligence leads, a second covert test purchase operation was commenced in 06/2008.

(d) Communications and education

In conjunction with the above operational work, the team also sought to improve local community drug awareness and education, both within the police force itself as well as other interested organisations, such 'Pub Watch', high schools, and sporting organisations. The Reducing Supply Team, in conjunction with drug treatment services, also provided drug awareness training to Neighbourhood Policing Teams. Furthermore, the Reducing Supply Team successfully secured funding from local partner agencies to enhance community awareness of illicit drugs. Significant investments were also made into 'Crimestoppers' and 'texting lines' to improve community intelligence.

Outcomes/Results

Measures of operational success were numerous:

- The first covert test purchase operation achieved 57 arrests and 45 offenders convicted resulting in a total of 95 years in custody.
- Treatment agencies also reported a 20% increase in self-referrals in the three week period following enforcement. However this was not tracked to measure sustainable outcomes for clients.
- Anti-social behaviour legislation was also utilised to obtain a 'crack house closure'.
- 'Operation Hale' also enjoyed considerable success, most notably

evidenced through the arrest of two members of an Albanian OCG for drug trafficking, resulting in sentences of six years.

- Other notable arrests included a male outside a primary school found to possess nineteen wraps of heroin resulting in a four year term of imprisonment. Additionally, a male and female were arrested for conspiracy to supply, resulting in a total of ten years imprisonment.
- The covert arrest phase which followed on the tail end of this operation resulted in 35 arrests that resulted in a total of 60 years of imprisonment, with many cases still pending.
- Another added benefit of the operation has been the improved relationships between enforcement and treatment agencies, which may enable more offenders to enter and remain in treatment.

With respect to impacts on harms there was:

- a considerable reduction in the general level crime was reported; the Castle ward experienced a 39% crime reduction following the enforcement period;
- the crack house closure was reported to have led to a much-improved quality of life for many residents in the surrounding area;
- the excellent publicity from local and regional media, successful partnership work, and the commitment from enforcement agencies to tackle drug supply is expected to have improved community confidence as a result of reduced levels of crime and anti-social behaviour.

3 DIP Linkages Enforcement Operations

DIP Linkages - Summary

The aim of operations in this category is to enhance the effectiveness of both the DIP and traditional supply reduction operations by linking them more closely together.

The operations included here had a number of important features:

- Partnership-working from the outset through engagement with local drug services, including setting up clear protocols to outline the role and responsibilities of the police and partner agencies, to develop understanding and trust between the agencies.
- Using the window of opportunity provided by supply-directed enforcement activity to encourage low-level offenders into treatment – this requires co-ordinated action between the teams as the window will be small.
- A clear commitment to following up those who were arrested within the operation, demonstrating that action will be taken if necessary, is important.
- Using the opportunity within DIP to developing an intelligence stream for future enforcement activity was also important.
- A continuing programme of operations rather than a one-off occurrence enhances sustainability.

Operations linking the Drug Interventions Programme (DIP) with drug supply-related enforcement activity are aimed at reducing both the demand and supply of drugs. Coordinated efforts between the drug supply and DIP teams seek ensure the opportunity presented by enforcement activity to reduce supply is used to push drug users away from continued substance abuse and into drug treatment services. Employing the ‘carrot and stick’ method, encouragement of users to enter into treatment is reinforced with legal sanctions and the capacity to act upon them.

Since the introduction of the DIP-related provisions within the 2005 Drugs Act and other pieces of legislation initiatives have been developed to take advantage of the new measures available and strive to have

an even greater impact on areas with high levels of drug problems. Since the inclusion of the category in the Tackling Drug Supply Awards in 2006, numerous operations have been recognised for outstanding results. Successful operations are those which result in decreased levels of acquisitive crime and drugs misuse, increased drug treatment intake figures, and a sustainable impact over a period of time. Also looked for is evidence of their ability to glean new sources of intelligence regarding the drug supply of the local area through their interactions with DIP clientele which should allow forces to develop successful enforcement operations against the local area drug supply, creating further space for DIP work to take hold.

Award Winner: Operation ICEBERG

Commended: Operation Manaton

3.1 Operation Iceberg (Award Winning Operation)



The Problem

In 2007 there was a serious Class 'A' drugs problem in North Kent. Accentuated by its close proximity to London, Bluewater shopping centre and the good transport links to the rest of the country, the area was identified as not only a significant market in and of itself but also a potential hub for drug trafficking and organised crime. Other concerns raised related to the well established link between Class 'A' drugs misuse, specifically heroin and crack cocaine, and acquisitive crimes. The area also had an established cocaine and marijuana trade.

As a long standing area of high drug activity, previous enforcement initiatives had achieved relatively little success in achieving a lasting impact on the supply of

controlled drugs. Like markets elsewhere those in North Kent were decidedly resilient.

The main harms identified as affecting the area were:

- significant levels of acquisitive crime, thought largely to be driven by drugs misuse;
- declining confidence in the police and a sense of apathy and acceptance that these criminal activities were a part of daily life in the area.

Action taken

a) Enforcement activity

Developing an investigative strategy at Level 1 of the National Intelligence Model, a BCU wide operation was initiated and implemented using a three-pronged approach. Firstly, the operation sought to significantly disrupt the activities of local OCG's and develop successful enforcement investigations against the host of nominals associated with the drug supply. A Financial Investigator was employed and acted on intelligence from a variety of sources.

b) Arrest referral and outreach

North Kent is a non-intensive DIP area. Individuals identified as likely to be drug users taken into custody were subject to a drug treatment review and motivated to pursue treatment alternatives where appropriate.

c) Offender management

A mechanism to follow-up individuals was instituted through an offender management initiative in partnership with drug treatment services and the prison service. Risk analyses were conducted and individuals were placed into high/medium/low risk categories. This was based on estimates of the

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individual's impact on the community through criminality, the costs of crime, volume of crime, type of crime, and any other relevant information. Offenders were visited while in custody, particularly during their run up to being released. In total, approximately 30 offenders were subject to an intensive supervision and management programme aimed at disrupting their criminal activity while encouraging them to seek out drug treatment services such as DIP upon their release, where appropriate.

d) Community Partnership work

Work was undertaken to improve the partnerships between the police and the range of drug interventions, e.g. DIP and Turning Point, and with the prison service.

The aim was to change the perception amongst local drug users that the police and treatment services were completely separate operations. Co-ordination with the prison service provided valuable information on the individual's progress during their incapacitation. Also, this co-operation allowed for the development of comprehensive post-release strategies designed to limit the likelihood of recidivism and promote change in the individual's habits. To aid in the development of these post-release plans, partnership work was also undertaken between the police, housing and social services as well as other relevant partners across the Crime and Disorder Reduction partnership.

e) Media and Communications Strategy

The communications strategy for this operation was a two-part approach. During the investigation police actively encouraged local residents to step forward and report criminality. The line 'Too much bling, give us a ring' sent the message that individuals enjoying the spoils of controlled drug supply and dealing, as well as other forms of criminality, were being specifically targeted by the police. This had the dual effect of promoting public confidence and reassurance while also sending a stern message to individuals engaging in criminality that a concerted effort was being made to focus in on their illicit activities.

A second part of the media campaign focused on creating publicity around the successful enforcement work done in the community. Leaflet drops were employed and information regarding the operation was circulated throughout the community. Community Safety Officers were deployed to actively engage local residents and provide firsthand knowledge of work done by the police. The POCA and Financial Investigation component of the investigation was heavily advertised to demonstrate to the public that serious efforts were being made outside of a general police response that had largely been ineffective in the past.

Key Points: Operation ICEBERG

The problem

In 2007 there was an established Class A drugs problem in North Kent accentuated by its close proximity to London, Bluewater shopping centre and the good transport links to the rest of the country. In particular, there was a concern about the crime links: acquisitive crime linked to heroin and crack cocaine use, and organised crime linked to cocaine supply and cannabis production.

This was above all a crime reduction initiative. Also aimed to take out supply rather than merely disrupt it, by addressing supply, demand and seizing commodities.

Other goals were to:

- increase public confidence in the police.
- Increase referrals to DIP and other services.

Action taken

Operation Iceberg is a NIM level 1 BCU project (with links to level 2) which began in May 2007 and consists of three key components:

1. Enforcement and asset recovery.

The operation started with a major campaign of disruption and arrests. A campaign encouraged the community to call Crimestoppers with information with the slogan: “too much bling? Give us a ring”.

The team has a Financial Investigator and the use of POCA is seen as a crucial element to the operation to ensure a sustainable impact by preventing dealers from continuing where they left off.

2. Arrest referral and outreach

Every person in custody is reviewed and those referred to treatment are frequently followed-up outside of the custody suite while motivation is high.

3. Offender management.

Offenders are systematically categorised as high/medium/low risk through analysis of the estimated cost of crimes, volume of crime, type of offence and other information. The approach is that “we go to them before they come to us”, which includes prison visits prior to release. Approximately 30 offenders are intensively managed to disrupt their criminal activity and encourage them to access DIP and other services.

Impact

- Overall crime was already down by 10% in 2006 prior to Operation Iceberg, and crime continued to fall: by 25% in 2007 and 33% in 2008 against 2005 levels.
- Heroin and crack cocaine are reported to be in ‘short supply’. The nature of market has also changed: now more underground (e.g. dealing from vehicles and cocaine deliveries to the door).
- There have been 188 arrests, £1.5m worth of drugs seized, 17 large cannabis factories shut down with over 6,000 plants seized and over £900,000 of cash seized.
- In the first year, arrest referrals increased by 76% (overall 151 referrals) and the quality of referral also improved.

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- 36 chaotic addicted offenders are being managed. 27 are engaged with treatment, 6 have begun employment or training and the majority have reduced or stopped reoffending.
- Some unintended or negative consequences were identified:
- Much of the heroin trade (and associated crime) has been displaced to areas like Slade Green, Abbey Wood and Erith. North Kent police have been working with their neighbouring forces to help to manage this.
- The initial media profile of the campaign was leading journalists to ask if N Kent had a major drug problem so there was a change of strategy to low-key communications targeted at neighbourhoods affected by the operations.

Outcome/Results

a) Measurements of Operational Success

The Level 1 operations, with linkages to Level 2 criminality, resulted in :

- 207 enforcement strikes within the area;
- £1.5 million worth of drugs were seized, including 17 cannabis factories containing 6,000 plants valued at over £580,000;
- Investigations also recovered over £900,000 in cash some of which has been reinvested in further police activity; also
- 151 quality referrals were made to the Drug Interventions Programme
- 36 chaotic offenders brought into an intensive offender management programme.

b) Impacts on harms

- 27 of the individuals subject to intensive offender management had successfully engaged with the drug treatment services and 6 others had full time employment/training;
- Public confidence in the police was reported to have improved as a result of the operation as evidenced by an increased flow of intelligence following the enforcement activities;

- Overall crime was already down by 10% in 2006 prior to Operation Iceberg, and crime continued to fall: by 25% in 2007 and 33% in 2008 against 2005 levels.

c) Costs/Resources

The operation involved dedicated police resources funded by the local force: a Police Sergeant, 3 Constables and 1 Detective Constable. The Police Constables were involved in offender management while the DC undertook investigations. EU funding was obtained which funded a Financial Investigator/Intelligence Officer, a project analyst and an Arrest referral worker (from Turning Point). Resources from the BCU and Central Tactical Resources and CJIT/DIP teams were also drawn on.

d) Issues and Challenges

Two major unexpected or unintended results occurred during the implementation of this operation and provided significant challenges to the police. Firstly, much of the heroin trade subsequently became displaced to adjacent communities. Police are currently attempting to overcome this issue by working with the local police officers in these areas and sharing valuable intelligence where relevant. It is hoped that these increased efforts to coordinate and collate information will result in the same impact being made in these areas as was evidenced in North Kent.

Secondly, the initial media profile of the campaign led journalists to ask if N Kent had a major drug problem so potentially increasing public concerns about drugs among the wider community. There was therefore a change of strategy to low-key communications targeted at neighbourhoods affected by the operations

Key Lessons

'Operation Iceberg' provides a number of key lessons which may be applied to further enforcement activities.

1. Early engagement with local drug services was important to success.

This was made a priority from the outset of the operation and an enhanced understanding of how the two organisations could each gain from the other allowed the drug treatment services to be used to greater effect. By going well beyond mere lip service to promoting treatment a substantial increase in successful treatment referrals was obtained.

2. The proactive approach to referral and offender management was key.

Another key component of the investigation was the commitment

to follow up on those arrested within the operation. Due to the obvious performance demands and strains on police resources, this is often not possible. However, the end result is often that these operations having only a marginal impact over time, however successful initially. Recognising that following up on the individuals arrested was not a luxury but rather an essential tool in the promotion of sustainability allowed the operation to go above and beyond the results typically obtained without a follow-up mechanism.

3. Addressing the gaps left by supply reduction operations quickly

Lastly, the ability of the operation to successfully plug the gaps created by the reduction supply with new treatment alternatives while also preventing new suppliers from moving into the area, at least in the short term, allowed the space to achieve an impact on users. However, the resilience of drug markets means that such windows of opportunity seldom last for very long. By having made preparations for suitable referrals and treatment provision it was possible to move quickly to fill the space and increase the likelihood of realising sustainable impacts.

3.2 Operation Manaton (Commended Operation)

The Problem

Intelligence and DIP drug testing identified a high number of offenders continually testing positive for Class 'A' controlled drugs despite being engaged in treatment programmes. These offenders tended to be lower level criminals engaged in acquisitive crime in order to fund their drug habits. Due to their low-level criminality they were falling outside the scope of the PPO scheme. While the Wirral area had reported decreasing crime levels for a number of years it was suggested that further reductions, particularly in the area of theft, could be made by actively targeting these low-level offenders who

accounted for a disproportionate amount of the existing criminality. Although many of these individuals were known to police, instances where warrants for theft arrests could be issued were rare. As many of those arrested were already in drug treatment programmes, it was clear that these treatment alternatives were not effectively dissuading them from criminal activity.

Thus the harms being addressed by this operation were acquisitive crimes and also inefficient use of resources since offenders were not engaging properly with treatment, continuing to offend and continually being arrested and drug-tested.

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Action taken

The aim of the operation was to send a clear message to these drug using offenders that they should engage with treatment services to address their drug problem and offending behaviour or else they would be prosecuted. The following stages were undertaken:

(a) Intelligence gathering and preparation phase

Area Intelligence Units and 3 dedicated staff were tasked to research offenders through existing intelligence systems. To avoid disruption of their normal policing activities, the 3 staff members assigned to the operation were rotated in two week cycles (1 week for preparation, 1 week of action). Intelligence was gathered through a number of sources such as custody drugs testing data, ASBO's, and intelligence logs. A profile for each target was created and warrants were applied for under the Misuse of Drugs Act. In order to maximise the positive engagement with treatment, drug treatment services were contacted to ensure sufficient drugs referral staff were available in the custody unit to meet the anticipated demand.

(b) Execution of warrants and referral to treatment

Two shifts of search teams were drawn from Area resources and were led by an experienced drugs investigation officer. Teams were instructed to recover any evidence of drug use or other forms of criminality. It was made clear to these individuals that enhanced drug treatment services were available locally and a clear message was given that failure to engage with these services would result in further police action based on the evidence collected or tenancy enforcement.

Teams ran a rolling programme of warrant execution in order to maximise the number of warrant executions and ensure that the message that action would be taken against those who did not engage with

treatment was spread by word of mouth amongst drug users.

Experienced drug officers placed into leadership roles ensured that proper protocols were followed. Officers were also tasked with gleaning as much intelligence as possible to enhance the police force's local area intelligence.

After the initial operation a second week of action was planned and completed at the start of December 2008 in an effort to reduce offending in the build-up towards the holiday season. Plans for further weeks have already been made and the operation has expanded to cover all of Merseyside.

(c) Media and communications

A robust media campaign ensured highly positive publicity of the operation through television and print outlets. Leaflet drops were done in the area of closures in order to publicise the work and encourage further assistance and intelligence from the public.

Outcomes/ Results

(a) Measures of operational success

The first week of action resulted in:

- the execution of 51 search warrants and 51 arrests - 8 for possession with the intent to supply, 25 in connection with stolen property, and 3 for cannabis production;
- £6,000 in cash was recovered and counterfeited goods valued at £250,000 were seized.
- 90 individuals testing positive for drugs and 51 individuals added to the treatment caseload.

The second action week saw:

- a further 62 warrants executed, with 82 arrests - 13 for possession with intent to supply and 43 in connection with stolen property, while 2 further cannabis cultivation sites were uncovered;

- £5000 in cash was seized, and a CS gas canister was recovered;
- 72 arrestees tested positive and a further 37 entered drug treatment services.

Evidence of drug use found during the execution of warrants was collected. A number of outstanding arrest warrants for theft and burglary were exercised and the individuals detained. A number of closure orders resulted from these operations, none of which were contested. The operation was also integral to the application of 6 crack house closure orders with further properties identified as potential closure sites.

(b) Impact on harms

It was intended that these actions would accelerate reductions in acquisitive crimes but evidence in support of this has not been presented. Another aim was to encourage these low level offenders to engage properly with treatment. A considerable number of individuals did enter treatment but it is not clear if this led to positive outcomes.

These crack house closures that the operation contributed to coincided with a reduction in ASBO's in the area, and this is believed to have resulted in increased community confidence, and the delivery of a positive public message.



4 Middle Market Enforcement Operations

Middle Market Enforcement Operations - Summary

The operations targeting middle market drug dealing presented here are very different. However, there are commonalities; two out of the three targeted a specialised area and all three had a strong focus on developing intelligence and knowledge of the operations at this level. Successful Level 2 middle-market drug enforcement operations often use sophisticated surveillance and intelligence gathering techniques. To deploy these technologies effectively requires personnel that have considerable experience in these methods. Perhaps most importantly, the operations contained within this report recognised this need and sufficiently deployed such staff.

The key lessons from these projects are:

- specialist skills and knowledge as well as experience of sophisticated surveillance and intelligence gathering techniques are required to target middle market drug operations
- the ability to develop and implement plans of action quickly and decisively where the intelligence received by enforcement agencies is “hot intelligence” is important - a flexible approach and skilled staff are necessary to ensure that the operations respond quickly to new leads and changes to criminals’ tactics ;
- working closely with other law enforcement agencies and businesses involved both up and down the supply chain broadens the intelligence available and is essential for successful operations;
- close working with the CPS can ensure that the evidence collected can be translated into successful and efficient prosecutions.

Ensuring that enforcement activity places pressure across the supply chain is a key part of the overall strategy to reducing the supply of controlled drugs. As the link between large-scale drug traffickers and street level dealers, organised crime groups operating at this level, known as the ‘middle market’ represent an opportunity for law enforcement to have a tangible impact on the ground while developing new sources of information as to the overall picture of drug supply and importation.

In order to meet the challenges posed by middle-market drug dealers, operations

need to continually refine and enhance their surveillance and investigation tactics to address the increasingly sophisticated smuggling and distribution techniques employed by these OCG’s. Through assistance and consultations with a number of organisations such as HRMC, UKBA, and SOCA, the police enforcement operations recognised in this report were able effectively identify and dismantle a number of significant middle-market operations, disrupting supply at the local level and creating the space for Level 1 operations and other initiatives to have a greater impact at the local level.

Award Winner: Operation Controlled Deliveries

Commended: Operation Crack, Northumbria Police and project Kitley, SOCA

Key Points: Controlled Deliveries

The problem

Importation and distribution of drugs through the use of fast parcel services. Increasingly large numbers of packages of 5-10 kgs of Class A drugs coming into the country. These are then repackaged and distributed further by a wide range of organised crime groups mainly operating out of addresses in the London area. The large number of parcels containing fairly small amounts means that interception of a proportion does not damage the business.

The groups involved in the distribution of these drugs were linked to other criminality, including violence, and the drug use and lower level markets to acquisitive crime and disorder at the neighbourhood level. Through prosecuting those involved and intercepting the supplies of drugs it was intended that these harms would be reduced.

The main aim of the operations was to disrupt supplies and arrest and punish the middle market dealers. It was expected that the seizures will decrease the level of supply and hence reduced the potential harms associated with drug use throughout the community. In addition it was hoped to build public confidence in the police.

Action taken

A Territorial Policing Crime Squad team developed a partnership with the fast parcel industry which formed the basis for the development of an approach which gave them the ability to respond rapidly to intelligence and not only seize the shipment but also identify and gather evidence to successfully prosecute those involved in receiving and distributing the drugs.

Key features of the approach developed were:

- intelligence-gathering, covert surveillance using a range of techniques, and the use of innovative packaging technology;
- partnership work with HMRC, UKBA, FSS and the parcel industry to secure intelligence flows;
- close working with Crown Prosecution Service to ensure evidence gathered is sufficient to ensure successful prosecutions;
- experienced team able to react rapidly to intelligence received as the window of opportunity for action is very narrow;
- At the time of arrest, attention is paid to informing the public in the area that the police activity is a drugs operation to build confidence that the police are taking action.

Impact

Through the successful completion of the 20 controlled deliveries 65 arrests were made, 67.5 kg of Class 'A' and 1005 kg of Class 'B' controlled drugs with a combined street value of £6,645,000 were recovered and cash seizures totalled nearly £300,000 and crimes proceeds in excess of £4,000,000 were identified. The strong evidence obtained is thought to have reduced the costs associated with prosecutions as offenders plead guilty.

It is hard to measure the impact of middle market enforcement activity on harms. It is reported that the seizures have decreased the level of supply for short periods which may have reduced the potential harms associated with drug use throughout the community but this has not been verified. The successful arrest and prosecution of individuals targeted during the operations removed a significant number of dangerous criminals from society and the positive reaction to enforcement work and subsequent increase in actionable intelligence received from the community suggests improved public confidence in the areas around enforcement activity.

4.1 Operation Controlled Deliveries-TPCS (Award Winning Operation)

The Problem

Operation Controlled Deliveries was conceived to specifically target the growing use of fast parcel delivery services for the importation of Class 'A' drugs in packages of between 5-10 kilograms. Much of this occurred within the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) area as London is the main hub for parcel delivery. This was a rapidly growing problem and the large number of packages and the comparatively small amounts each contained meant that the crime groups concerned looked on the loss of a proportion as acceptable. The size of these packages meant that they fell between the enforcement activity focussing on street level supply and the higher level activity targeting multi-kilo supply networks resulting in a gap that was being increasingly exploited.

However, as the operational mandate and currently held key enforcement priorities of the Territorial Police Crime Squad (TPCS) did not explicitly include drug supply, it was necessary to make the link to the broader drug-related harms that were considered a priority, such as youth violence, gang violence, organised criminality, counterfeiting, burglary from dwellings, and other forms of criminality. This allowed the TPCS to fulfil their duties while also tackling the issue of controlled drug supply, which was viewed as the driver behind the various other forms of criminality investigated by the team, in particular violence between rival crime groups.

The harms experienced by the community that were identified as resulting from controlled drugs were:

- persistent violence and disorder, with areas to which the parcel deliveries were being delivered being the gun

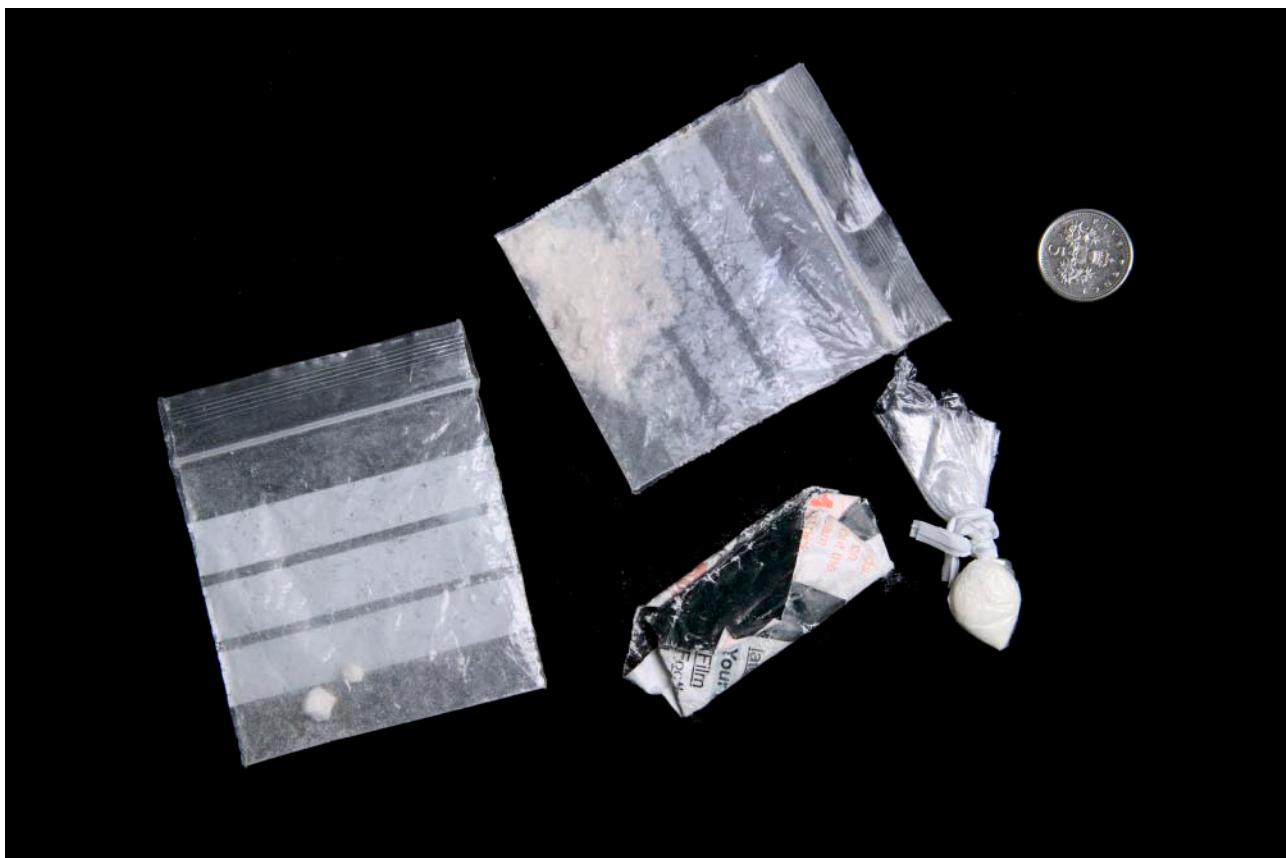
crime and violence hot spots;

- high volumes of acquisitive crime;
- reduced confidence within the community in the police and law enforcement officials and the criminal justice system more generally;

It was hoped that efforts to reduce the supply of controlled drugs through this operation would create a space for more positive community developments to take hold.

The very nature of the fast parcel industry was a particularly problematic issue that would need to be overcome from the outset. As these companies offer next day delivery of parcels worldwide, the opportunity for abuse, with regard to contraband of any kind let alone controlled drugs, is highly significant. While estimates vary, it had been suggested that a significant amount of contraband crosses borders on a daily basis despite the efforts of various law enforcement agencies. An additional factor in the UK is the lack of any legislation or requirement of the part of fast parcel services to be responsible for the items they ship. While the United States levies fines against companies for each package of illegal contraband discovered, this does not occur here.

The crime groups suspected of abusing the parcel delivery service and had become increasingly sophisticated in their methods. Previous attempts at controlled delivery operations had been unsuccessful due to an inability to link those receiving the packages directly as they would often leave them unopened in communal areas. Also intelligence indicated that controlled drug packages were becoming smaller in weight so as to increase the likelihood of evading detection. It was



therefore decided that an innovative and comprehensive strategy was required to tackle this problem.

Action taken

a) Developing partnerships and intelligence streams

Starting from an initial relationship between a TPCS officer and a fast parcel company other linkages were developed quickly and a TPCS liaison officer was put into contact with regional security managers from all the major fast parcel companies. Direct links were forged between the police and the industry and a mechanism was developed to alert the police of incoming controlled drugs. Due to the nature of the fast parcel industry, these tips often represented 'hot intelligence' and needed to be acted upon within anywhere from a couple days to a few hours. Effective working partnerships were forged with SOCA and the HRMC. This was crucial to identifying drug packages, importation routes, and delivery addresses. As a by-product of

these relationships, intelligence sharing protocols were established within the industry in order to intercept other criminality such as large scale fraud.

In addition to this source of intelligence, a range of other methods, such as cover surveillance, CHIS tasking, and analysis of mobile phone data generated further lines of enquiry. Due to the vast amount of initial leads provided by the parcel industries, coupled with the units own competing demands, it was estimated that only 1 out of 5 packages identified by intelligence were subject to detailed investigations by the TPCS. The remaining enquiries were sent along to BCU Command. However, the expertise developed as a result of 'Operation Controlled Deliveries' was and continues to be actively disseminated to interested law enforcement agencies.

Just as the police were provided with intelligence from the industry, the companies also received intelligence from police as to possible individuals who might be engaging in corrupt practices within the business. Police were able to connect the receipt of packages to phony addresses

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and determine this to be evidence of internal corruption. Information on routes, individuals or other suspicious activity that might be linked to corruption was shared with security officials within the industry who would then act upon the information as appropriate.

b) Enforcement

A key aim of the approach developed was the collection of sufficient evidence to ensure conviction of as many members of the crime groups involved as possible. Working closely with the Technical Support Unit, innovative packaging technology was developed through which the operational team were alerted to receipt and opening of packages. This aided operational decision-making in regard to timing of entry/arrest, what to look for when taking action and provided additional evidence.

The CPS and Forensic Science Service were engaged at a senior level and provided a dedicated point of contact for evidentiary analysis, legal advice, case disposal decisions and to challenge any bail applications. By ensuring they were essentially case ready at the time of charges pending trial, this ultimately led to guilty pleas being entered during the judicial process saving both court times and associated costs to the public.

c) Communications strategy

Affected borough operational command units were engaged to involve their CDRP's and local resources such as Safer Neighbourhood teams (SNT). This included, where appropriate, visible SNT presence to inform and reassure the public using information leaflets outlining police activities in the areas and to continue this for some time following the end of enforcement operations.

Due to the covert nature of the operations and the need to protect sensitive police tactics, details released to the press concerning the operations were limited. However, the actual results of operations

were disseminated to the press in order to promote the success of the operations, provide public reassurance, and deter potential offenders.

Outcome / Results

(a) Measures of operational success

This approach to tackling drug importation continues to be used successfully. From 20 controlled deliveries the following were outputs were achieved:

- 65 arrests were made resulting in over 70 years in imprisonment thus far with numerous cases still before the courts;
- 67.5 kilograms of Class 'A' and 1005 kg of Class 'B' controlled drugs were recovered having a combined street value of £6,645,000.
- Cash seizures totalling nearly £300,000 and proceeds of crime in excess of £4,000,000 were identified.

(b) Impact on harms

It is difficult to measure the impact of middle market enforcement activity on local harms and no results analysis has been undertaken. The activity was reported to have disrupted the supply of 'Class A' drugs in the South East of London and led to temporary dips in availability. The successful arrest and prosecution of individuals targeted during the operations removed a significant number of dangerous criminals from society.

There was a very positive reaction to enforcement work in the community and this was associated with an increase in actionable intelligence received from the community. This suggests increased community confidence and awareness of police activity in the areas around enforcement activity.

The high proportion of guilty pleas entered due to the extensive evidence obtained will have led to savings in criminal justice and court costs.

Issues and Challenges

Several challenges presented themselves to TPCS staff. The volume of intelligence and potential lines of enquiry were far beyond the unit's capabilities to respond to them, resulting in a significant amount of leads being referred to the borough level. As these units were unlikely to have the expertise or resources to conduct controlled delivery operations in a similar fashion as the TPCS, the end result of these leads would only amount to interceptions of the controlled drugs, doing little to actually impact the underlying problem.

Encouraging the parcel industry to become more vigilant remains an ongoing challenge. While the industry was highly receptive to the unit's overtures and complied with requests, the lack of any enforceable duty placed upon these companies may not always prioritise the issue. As these companies generally do not employ cutting edge detection technology and offer only basic scanning services, more might be done to tackle the problem. That being said, their co-operation has been good and provided more intelligence than the unit could action.

Another challenge relates to the ability of the criminals to harness technology to circumvent surveillance and enforcement practices and adapt to advances. To combat this continuous development of specialised and innovative measures is necessary. Another key consideration was the possibility of displacement of criminal operations, though little evidence suggested this had occurred on a meaningful level, at least to best of the unit's knowledge.

Key Lessons

(a) The need for a speedy, specialised response

As the majority of intelligence received

by the police was 'hot intelligence', the ability to react quickly and decisively was a critical component to the operations success. As covert surveillance deployment requires a number of authority levels approval, fast tracking this process is essential in order to effectively act upon these hot intelligence sources.

As the smuggling of contraband, and controlled drugs in particular, is often a highly complex and sophisticated criminal enterprise, experienced staff are needed to recognise the techniques employed by criminal operatives and in order to develop enforcement strategies that will elicit a strong evidence base.

(b) the value of close working with the CPS and other enforcement agencies

Close coordination with the CPS was important in ensuring that a firm evidence base was obtained prior to arrest and has the potential to save considerable costs to the court and public through highly effective and efficient police investigations.

Relationships with other law enforcement agencies that have experiences in dealing with controlled drug smuggling operations can provide additional support and advice towards generating investigative strategies. Due to the international element of controlled drugs smuggling establishing links in source countries and identifying relevant counterparts and points of contact were also critical. As OCG's which are involved in controlled drug smuggling are highly likely to be involved in a range of illicit contraband smuggling ventures, deploying covert surveillance techniques can illicit new lines of enquiry and flush out the range of illicit activities undertaken.

(c) The potential importance of middle market activities

The high volume of parcels can mean that large quantities of drugs can be imported even if each package is quite small. However, at present this is not always

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reflected in the current key operational objectives. At present the opportunities for action in this area outstrip the resources of a unit such as the TPCS.

4.2 Northumbria Police: Operation Crack (Commended Operation)

The problem

Community intelligence gathered by Sunderland police identified that harms associated with drug misuse were having a detrimental impact on the quality of life experienced by the community. As is often the case, illicit drugs were felt to be the driver behind acquisitive crime and other related forms of criminality and disorder. There was also concern that members of Organised Crime Groups (OCG's) operating within the area may potentially serve as negative role models. These individuals were highly visible community members and their ability to engage in the supply of illicit drug supply with apparent impunity served to reduce community confidence in the police. This had the knock on effect of decreasing the availability of intelligence streams, further reducing the police's ability to implement effective enforcement strategies.

Previous operations targeting street-level dealing, such as the deployment of test-purchase operatives and the initiation of reactive investigations failed to produce any tangible impact. Where success had been achieved any gap in the supply was quickly filled by another supplier, eliminating any potential for a lasting impact. The inability of police to successfully target middle-level suppliers also seemed to have the effect of boosting the confidence of lower level dealers who appeared to be operating more blatantly than previously witnessed.

In development of an investigative strategy, four key objectives were identified, three of which specifically involved reductions in drug-related harms:

- to create a sustained reduction in the supply of controlled drugs;
- the removal of negative role models and prominent OCG members;
- reducing acquisitive crime and morale amongst the criminal population;
- improved community confidence.

Action Taken

The design of the operation was based on the premise that to be successful it would be necessary to significantly disrupt the market and that to achieve this would require a multifaceted and targeted approach that focused on disrupting the criminal networks used to facilitate the drug trade. While consultation with the community and partners was seen as



critical, the protection of covert policing strategies was essential in order to ensure operational integrity. Therefore, rather than inform these organisations of the specific details of the operation, these groups were told the upcoming enforcement activity would represent an area wide generic response to the controlled drug problems.

A SWOT (Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) analysis was employed to identify possible adverse impacts resulting from the operation as well as to identify any potential vulnerable areas which may be subject to a displacement of crime and infusion of new suppliers.

Strengths identified were a significant investment in intelligence sources, a rapid and visible response to community concerns, the removal of status from prominent OCG members and negative role models, and extensive community and partnership consultation. Potential weaknesses noted were the potential for misinformation to be incorporated into enforcement strategies, the reduced prospect of successfully convicting of OCG heads, a loss of confidence reported by the community and an increase in complaints resulting from negative search warrants. Opportunities developed from the identification of new streams of intelligence from police activity. Finally, the threat assessment indicated that the disruption of existing supply networks opened up the area to outside organised crime groups. As well, the potential for drug users to resort to prescription drug cocktails of readily available substances, the displacement of acquisitive criminality, the potential for increased awareness of police techniques, and the inevitable increase in recorded drug crimes leading to an increase in overall recorded crime in the area.

(a) Enforcement activity

In close liaison with a central team of Field Intelligence Officer's (FIO's), Dedicated

Source Unit's (DSU's) proactively targeted human sources of intelligence within the community who were thought to have information regarding the movement of controlled drugs. Further liaisons with Crime Operations, Neighbourhood Policing Forces and SOCA were also initiated and joint operations were undertaken. Covert technical support and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) software was used to corroborate intelligence. Neighbourhood Safety Team's (NST's) intervened in the recovery of commodities or assets from safe houses and in transit. Arrests were dealt with promptly and investments were made in laboratory analyses in support of remand applications where appropriate. Following these actions, the current availability of illicit drugs was assessed through engaging with local partners.

Local Area Command reviewed each operation at its conclusion and where appropriate, Financial Investigators were deployed to assess opportunities for charges to be filed under the POCA. Where intelligence suggested supply continued to operate, additional resources were supplied to go back and target the individuals who had moved in to fill the supply gaps. As the link between acquisitive crime and drug misuse is well established, rapid and robust enforcement response was deployed in response to any indications of crime spikes or newly emerging hot spots. The issuance of warrants, early arrests and forensic strategies were employed to provide a comprehensive area plan and reduce the confidence of remaining criminals.

(b) Communications strategy

Media and community forums were utilised to disseminate arrest and seizure information and an explicit attempt was made to highlight the vulnerability of those individuals who had been perceived as negative role models and other prominent OCG members. Leaflet drops were used to help explain undercover operations in

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the area and to inform the community of the police's response to their concerns.

To aid in the enhancement of community confidence, a full media campaign was initiated in order to increase awareness of the police tactics utilised throughout the operations and results achieved. Partnerships with the drug treatment services were made a priority and officers were deployed to follow up on treatment progression of drug users and to encourage continued attendance.

Outcomes/Results

The enhanced intelligence and enforcement capacities provided an early response capability to support Level 1 operations by a secondment. The turnaround of intelligence was enhanced by the allocation of resources dedicated to a proactive response across the Area Command and overarching neighbourhood criminality. The policy of direct intervention allowed hot-intelligence to be utilised quickly, increasing both productivity and confidence in the sources of intelligence. Early reluctance on the part of sector staff and CID was readily overcome by the engagement of resources in successful operations and direct actions against those persons previously deemed beyond the reach of Area Command by neighbouring officers. The SWOT analysis allowed predicted reactions to be managed and addressed at the earliest stages with increases in shoplifting, infiltrations of suppliers from Merseyside and the risks of misinformation countered as rapidly as they arose.

(a) Measures of operational success

As a result of the enforcement activity:

- 1 kg of pure cocaine 1.25 kg of heroin were recovered;
- the OCG supply networks used to re-establish supply were significantly dismantled.

- two cannabis cultivation sites that housed upwards of 2,000 plants were discovered that were linked to a regional OCG as well as a newly emerging Vietnamese organised crime group.
- a local chapter of the Hell's Angels was connected to a seizure of 196 kg of cannabis resin.
- Liaisons with SOCA resulted in the recovery of significant quantities of cannabis and amphetamine which was linked to a POCA application resulting in the seizure of a property valued at 1 million.
- To date, offenders have received in excess of 30 years imprisonment with most trials pending completion.
- The drain on resources by continued police activity has removed the profit and status of several key individuals who although not facing prosecution have been reported as no longer involved in the supply of illicit drugs. The visibility of prominent OCG's in the area has also been vastly reduced.
- Neighbourhood Safety Team's reported that local criminals are very aware of the ongoing police response and that a significant proportion of criminality has been suppressed.
- The utilisation of Armed Response Vehicles, Area Support Groups, Motor Patrols and Dog Handlers to actively target OCG members produced significant intelligence and investigative opportunities.

With respect to the weaknesses and threats identified, early reports of a move towards prescription drugs on the part of drug users was acted upon decisively and ensured these newly emerging markets were crushed before they could become fully implemented. Further intelligence suggested that OCG's from the neighbouring areas of Merseyside and adjacent areas were attempting to move

into the area, and these groups were quickly identified and subject to police intervention.

(b) Impact on community harms

The impact on drug-related harms identified were:

- An overall decrease in crime of 5% in 2008 in the Sunderland Area Command (compared to 3.9% force wide) despite a 31% increase in recorded drug offenses.
- 1% decrease in burglary dwelling (0.003% force wide) and a 7% decrease in theft from and of vehicles (3.9% force wide).
- an increase in community confidence has been shown. In 2008 a MORI poll of the area showed that 30-33% community held a fear of being alone after dark. A follow-up poll during the post-enforcement period showed this number had fallen to 24%. Similar falls were recorded with regard fear of burglary, robbery and gang related

activity. Concern about drug use also fell during the same period from 47% to 21%.

- There was an increase in community intelligence sources and direct reporting against those persons previously seen as beyond the law.

However, there were also some negative findings. The high visibility and notoriety of the operations did raise the profile of the issue of drugs in the public domain. This was evidenced through the unexpected finding that an increased fear of drug dealers was reported within the community. Also, while the operations employed were deemed to be quite successful, the highly robust and proactive nature of enforcement strategies employed resulted in a number of operations which produced negative results, likely the result of misinformation or other diversionary tactics. A number of negative searches produced confrontations with community members, although only one complaint was related to the use of police tactics.

4.3 SOCA - Project Kitley (Commended Operation)

The Problem

Intelligence assessed indicated that the purity of cocaine at UK street level has declined to approximately 25% over the last three years whilst import strength has remained static at around 70%. This consistency of purity at import and increase price at wholesale level, compared with decreases in price and purity at street level indicated to SOCA that cocaine was increasingly being cut after arriving in the UK, a process commonly known as 'bashing'. The use of pharmaceutical agents, as opposed to other non-pharmaceutical substances, to cut cocaine had been shown to have increased in popularity over the last two years. This shift was thought to have been due to the recognition that they mimic the effects and appearance of cocaine

to some degree and are therefore less noticeable to users. These same agents are also being discovered in other drugs such as heroin and amphetamine with increasing regularity.

Dealers who buy and sell cocaine in 1kg quantities and above stand to make an additional 35% profit on their initial expenses by using these pharmaceutical agents. As importing 1kg of cocaine typically costs about £28,000, the use of a similar amount of cutting agents, at a negligible cost, can generate at least £80,000 at the street level. Benzocaine, lignocaine (aka lidocaine) and phenacetin are currently the most commonly identified diluents in street level cocaine. Unlike phenacetin, benzocaine and lignocaine are rarely reported in cocaine seizures at UK borders. This suggests that they are

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added domestically. The proliferation in the use of these pharmaceutical agents is also thought to be the result of their ready availability. They are mainly produced in China and India and not currently subject to import controls in their powdered form. As well as increasing profits for criminals the use of these agents can have potential health harms for users. For example, phenacetin is known to have carcinogenic properties while the unknown and variable strength of street-level cocaine may increase the risk of harms from overdose. In addition, it is possible that an increase in availability and/or reduction in price caused by cutting could draw in new users.

Action taken

The project had five objectives:

- to increase knowledge of the illegal drug trade, particularly relating to cutting agents used for Class A drugs;
- The identification of the scope for overt and covert activities to provide intelligence relating to the acquisition and use of common cutting agents;
- The exploitation of opportunities would be developed to identify, prosecute and disrupt OCG's involved in Class 'A' drugs supply through their procurement of cutting agents;
- To identify opportunities for disrupting the supply of cutting agents; and
- To identify the potential for legislative or regulatory change to enhance the control of chemicals used as cutting agents.

The project was initiated and Operational action was instigated and coordinated by the newly created the Crime Techniques Team. The team also negotiated a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) with HRMC Class 'A' National Intelligence Unit (now part of UKBA) which ensures SOCA receives immediate notification of

the importation of the main cutting agent chemicals which fit an agreed suspicious profile. This integrated cross departmental approach, its close liaison with regional police forces, its willingness to innovate (for example, in the development of new tracking methods) and significant enforcement activity over an extended period of time have been key to success.

A mixture of traditional and non-traditional enforcement techniques have been used to identify and tackle the UK procurement, distribution and users of the cutting agents. For example, the project has:

- identified organised crime groups involved in importation of cutting agents and opportunities for enforcement/intervention action have been taken;
- in one instance, a warning was sent to police forces and NHS/Drug Action Teams following enforcement activity, highlighting that in the short-term available supplies of cocaine might be sold at increased purity or, more probably, other potentially more harmful substances could be used to bulk the cocaine – thereby increasing the risks to consumers;
- a wider communications strategy was developed to raise awareness amongst the general public and key audiences, including legitimate industry, about the use of cutting agents and the risks associated with them.

Outcomes/ Results

From 20 SOCA operations were initiated under the Project Kitley umbrella the following achievements had been recorded at the time of the awards:

- 19.1 metric tonnes of cutting agents were seized valued at £500,000 - if they had been used as cutting agents in cocaine they would have generated a cash turnover of £500 million;

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- quantities of cocaine, heroin, amphetamine, MDMA, cannabis, firearms, ammunition, hand grenades were also seized;
- around £2 million cash has been recovered;
- 47 arrests made - 29 of these arrestees were on police bail as investigations were ongoing, 4 persons had been charged with conspiracy and supply charges and, of these, one principal has been convicted and sentenced to 25 years imprisonment, 2 others received lesser sentences while 1 awaited trial.
- 38 disseminations to police forces resulted in further operations being initiated and a number of significant charges are anticipated.

- SOCA has significantly increased its knowledge and understanding of the UK cocaine trade. Two SOCA Assessments were published (April 2007 and April 2008) on the use of chemical cutting agents. Good practice guidance has been widely distributed through the ACPO-chaired UK Drugs Nexus Groups.

Measures of the impact on harms are difficult to obtain. It is believed that these operations will have undoubtedly disrupted supplies to cocaine dealers and their preferred cutting agents. The issuing of warnings about possible impact on cocaine purity is a recognition of the potential negative consequences of this activity. However, this might equally have the more positive effect of deterring some use.



5 Asset Recovery Operations

Asset Recovery Operations - Summary

The operations in this category all used financial investigation to provide evidence to link individuals central to organised crime groups to drug supply activities. In most cases these were individuals who had previously been able to evade prosecution. Although very different in geographical focus, ranging from a group working in a local inner-city area up to an international drug smuggling operation, the shared a number of features linked to their success:

- All of the operations in this area made use of dedicated Financial Investigators alongside more traditional intelligence gathering operations. Commencing Financial Investigations at the earliest point possible and close co-operation between the two strands of the investigations enhanced the work of each.
- Reflexivity and the ability to adapt to unexpected leads was extremely important. This allowed for the identification of and action against individuals and assets which were not initially known to the police.
- Partnerships, for example with the CPS, financial institutions and domestic and international enforcement agencies also played a key role within the operations.
- Understandably, the key outcomes monitored were the amount of assets seized and confiscated and successful prosecutions obtained. However, the potential for positive impact on communities was noted and there may be benefits in terms of enhancing impact and sustainability in giving this more focus.

As the 2002 Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) is utilised more often by police and law enforcement officials such investigations have grown increasingly successful. The operations contained within this report and recognised by the 2009 TDSA have utilised this legislation and made a significant number of confiscation and seizures orders against some of the most notorious Organised Crime Groups in the UK. As these investigations are inherently complex, they require the specialist knowledge of trained Financial Investigators. Establishing close relationships with the investigative team, these FI's are able to work from and generate new lines of enquiry that prove invaluable in identifying the network of individuals involved. The lowering of the threshold for seizing suspect sums of cash under the POCA from £5000 to £1000

in 2006 has allowed police to pay more attention to those operating at the lower end of the drug supply spectrum as well as targeting those OCG members who attempt to circumvent the legislation by carrying small amounts of cash.

This year's winning and commended operations all focused on dismantling a specific OCG and their network of associates. The winning operation, 'Macarise' focused on a notorious OCG operating in one of the roughest and most hostile neighbourhoods in the UK. Operation Volcano targeted a major OCG head purporting to be a legitimate businessman, while the other commended operation, 'Bella Vista', targeted one of the largest Class 'A' drug importation and money laundering schemes in the country.

Award Winner: Operation Macarise, North Liverpool

Commended: Operation Volcano, Nottinghamshire

Operation Bella Vista, Metropolitan Police Service

Key Points: Operation MACARISE

The problem

One particular OCG, the 'Gee Family' operating out of North Liverpool, was a notoriously violent group known to local police for some time that had been linked to a series of murders, numerous firearms discharges, and Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks on rival factions and police stations related to disputes over the supply of drugs in the area.

As they were located in a close-knit community in which they had many family members and associates and where they operated through violence and intimidation, it had proved difficult to successfully prosecute the key members of the group. The harms experienced by the community were therefore violence and intimidation, fear of crime with associated reduced quality of life and loss of confidence in the police as the group appeared to be able to operate with impunity.

The operation aimed to disrupt the operation of the group by successfully prosecuting key group members and seizing their assets. Since the violence employed by the group and the impact that has on other residents in the area was a reason for targeting this group, a reduction in violent crime and an improvement in public confidence in the area was an implicit, if not explicit, aim of the operation.

Action taken

(i) Covert operations including undercover operators, a range of surveillance techniques and test purchasing followed by overt crackdowns were initially directed at level 1 dealers but the intelligence gathered and the removal of a significant number of local dealers meant that higher level gang members became more exposed.

(ii) A robust financial investigation into the money laundering operations of the OCG members and related associates using a dedicated Financial Investigator who developed lines of enquiry and pursued them vigorously. With the covert surveillance and financial investigations operating in tandem with each other, new intelligence arising from the covert surveillance operations was used to further the financial investigation, and vice-versa. In this way it was possible to link the different members of the group to each other and the illicit drugs operations.

Impact

Several senior members of the group were successfully prosecuted along with large numbers of street level dealers. 43 kilograms of heroin, 12.3 kilograms of cocaine and 1.77 kilograms of crack cocaine, estimated to have a street value of over £3 million in total, were seized. Additionally, £1.1 million in cash and £2 million in assets have also been seized. Also, 17 firearms have been recovered in addition to 374 pieces of ammunition.

The impact on harms was not measured. Intelligence suggests that the price of Class 'A' drugs in Merseyside has risen dramatically although the extent this is related to this operation is not clear. Also police stops and searches following the operation suggested that fewer individuals were coming into the area in search of drugs. The level of violence may have decreased but no data was collected to support this.

One possible unintended consequence of this operation was that the negative publicity associated with case may have increased the already negative image of the area, which in the long term may reduce the sustainability of any benefits to residents from the disruption of the group.

5.1 Operation Macarise (Award Winning Operation)

The Problem

Areas of North Liverpool are home to some of the most ruthless and violent Organised Crime Groups (OCG's) within the UK. Operating in areas of significant deprivation, police activities in this area have historically faced significant challenges in penetrating these communities and creating lasting impact. While the problems facing these communities are incredibly complex, the high prevalence of drug misuse and abuse in the area has long been identified as a driving factor behind a range of criminality, as is often the case throughout the UK and elsewhere.

One particular OCG, the 'Gee Family' operating out of North Liverpool, was a notoriously violent group that had been known to local police for some time. Through previous investigations into a series of murders, numerous firearms discharges, and Improvised Explosive Device (IED) attacks on rival factions and police stations, the range of violent criminal behaviour had been well documented. Intelligence suggested that these violence attacks were related to disputes over control of the Class 'A' controlled drugs supply.

Located in communities that were largely resistant to police activity or even resentful of their presence, previous investigations into criminal acts attributed to these individuals were hindered by a lack of witnesses willing to step forward, largely due to the likelihood of retribution and intimidation on the part of OCG members. As these individuals are well known in the area, this was a significant problem for the community as a whole. Using financial investigation to link the family members to criminal activities offered a new approach to gathering evidence and building a case against them.

The violence employed by the Gee Family

and the impact that had on other residents in the area was a reason for targeting this group, a reduction in violent crime and an improvement in public confidence in the area was an implicit, if not explicit, aim of the operation.

Action taken

a) Intelligence gathering and enforcement activity

In developing an investigatory strategy, it was decided that a 'Level 2' covert surveillance operation would be initiated through the deployment of covert Matrix officers. Initial intelligence into the OCG's operations was gathered through the use of test-purchase operatives targeting 'Level 1' street dealers. These operations led to the execution of 40 Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) warrants and 25 successful prosecutions, and a plethora of intelligence regarding the organisational structure was obtained. This allowed covert surveillance operatives to identify the hierarchy within the OCG itself.

Once the structure of the organization was identified and the main nominals targeted, a two-pronged investigatory strategy was pursued. Firstly, a wide variety of covert surveillance methods were deployed on persons of interest in order to develop an understanding of their network of operation. These methods included the use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS), the deployment of trained Covert Rural Observation Post Surveillance (CROPS) operatives, undercover officers, evidential probe devices and technological and conventional surveillance techniques.

The second part of the operation was a robust financial investigation into the money laundering operations of the OCG members and related associates. Intelligence relating to the finances of suspects was filtered back to a dedicated Financial Investigator who developed lines



of enquiry and pursued them vigorously. With the covert surveillance and financial investigations operating in tandem with each other, new intelligence arising from the covert surveillance operations was used to further the financial investigation, and vice-versa.

New streams of intelligence arising from the financial investigations were filtered back to the Senior Investigation Officer (SIO) to aid in policy decisions and to determine Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) opportunities. Analyses of these intelligence sources determined that money laundering methods were directly tied to the drug operations. However, due to hierarchical structure of OCG's it is often not possible to directly link high-

ranking members to the drugs themselves, and so the evidence gathered through the financial investigation was critical in establishing that these individuals were using the proceeds of crime to directly fund lifestyles far in excess of their reported earnings.

Intelligence gathered from both components of the investigation was used to identify associates who were assisting high-ranking OCG members launder the proceeds of the OCG's drug enterprises. Intelligence gathered from Suspicious Activity Reports was used to identify a number of businesses and financial institutions being used by the OCG and related associates. As the financial investigation continued to reveal additional

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lines of enquiry it became clear that a network of associates and family members outside the OCG were being used to help hide the cash and assets accrued by the OCG members.

For example, in one instance large sums of unexplained cash were used to set-up a taxi business on behalf of one of the main nominals. An in-depth financial investigation into the company revealed that it was a method used by a number of OCG members to launder proceeds from the drug trade as large deposits of cash, under the guise of legitimate income, were deposited into the accounts of OCG members. Consultations with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) officials lead the financial investigator to conclude that these deposits were inconsistent with the level of turnover reported by such businesses.

Other lines of inquiry uncovered suggested linkages with other OCG's and associates in Brighton and Glasgow. The Financial Investigation continued to identify a complex web of associates being used to conceal vast sums of assets and cash. These enquiries lead to consultations and assistance from the Merseyside Criminal Assets Team (MCAT), the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), HMRC, and Interpol.

As the evidence accumulated during the covert financial enquiry, investigations extended to a wide range of individuals both within and outside the OCG. Strike days were coordinated to maximise the likelihood of apprehending the wide range of individuals involved in both the drug and money laundering operations. Numerous POCA seizure orders were made in conjunction with the arrests. The proactive financial investigation also allowed numerous assets and bank accounts to be frozen pending the resolution of the criminal charges.

b) Community Partnership work

Due to covert nature of both the surveillance and financial investigations, consultation and partnership work with community organisations and businesses was generally not possible. Also the tight-knit nature of the communities and the way the Gee family and their associates were embedded in it meant that there would be a high-risk of the operation being compromised by leakage of information. However, it was expected that the dismantling of the OCG would create a space for community policing initiatives to engage with the community across a wide range of other policing activities. It was also thought that the significant amounts of assets and cash seized through the operation would help restore community confidence in the area. This would also be aided by the removal of the more notorious members of the OCG who were serving as negative role models for the community's youth.

Outcome/Results

a) Operational Success

Through the intelligence and evidence gathered through Operation Macarise a total of 67 search warrants were executed, 11 of which were under the POCA. These yielded:

- Seizures of 43 kilograms of heroin, estimated to have a street value of £2,610,000.00, 12.3 kilograms of cocaine, estimated to have a street value of £615,000, and 1.77 kilograms of crack cocaine, estimated to have a street value of £170,000;
- £1.1 million in cash and £2 million in assets were also seized (the majority of the cash has been forfeited following uncontested hearings);
- 17 firearms have been recovered in addition to 374 pieces of ammunition.
- Several senior members of the Gee family were successfully prosecuted and peripheral defendants had

received 51.7 years imprisonment up to the time of the awards.

b) Impact

The impact on the harms to the community that were recognised prior to the operation was not measured. Intelligence gathered following the enforcement operations has indicated that the price of Class 'A' drugs in Merseyside has risen dramatically. However, whether this can directly relate to the apprehension 'Gee' OCG members cannot be stated with any absolute certainty, though their absence has certainly been noticed by local police and the results of stop and searches following the operation suggest that fewer individuals are coming to the area in search of drugs. The level of violence may also have decreased but no data was collected to support this perception. However, achieving any kind of significant impact remains a considerable challenge due to inherently violent nature of a large number of OCG's in the area. While there has been a decrease in violence attributed to the Gee crime group, other OCGs have continued to engage in serious violent crime.

c) Unintended consequences – positive and negative

One unintended consequence of this operation discussed by the enforcement team was the negative publicity the local area received as a result of the police activity. Already widely known as an area of significant deprivation, the negative publicity associated with case served to further denigrate the area. This was something which the team felt was an unwanted side effect of the enforcement activity. On the other hand as mentioned above it appeared that fewer individuals were coming into the area in search of drugs which may benefit the area.

d) Costs

As the main focus of the operation concerned the finances of the nominals

under investigation, the operation employed a dedicated Financial Investigator throughout. Under the direction of a Senior Investigative Officer, the investigative team employed 1 Detective Inspector, 3 Detective Sergeants, 10 Detective Constables, 1 Senior Crime Scene Manager, and an analyst. Numerous other police staff were utilised at various stages of the operation, and so the resource expenditures were considerable.

Issues and Challenges

As previously discussed, the hostile environment in which the police were operating had historically served as a major impediment to enforcement activities. As the Gee Family had been operating within the community for a lengthy period of time, the scope of the 'Class A' distribution network and money laundering operations were extensive. As the financial investigation and surveillance operation continued to unravel new strands of enquiry the investigation became increasingly sophisticated. Navigating through the complex illicit financial transactions proved to be a considerable challenge and required the expenditure of considerable resources.

It is also difficult in these deprived communities to make a sustainable impact. As one OCG is taken out of circulation there is a seemingly limitless supply of others willing to fill any gaps which may arise out of successful enforcement initiatives. Therefore, while protracted investigations into OCG's have the potential to create a space for community initiatives to develop and take hold these opportunities must be acted upon quickly through a multifaceted approach.

Key Lessons

1. Developing a comprehensive and co-ordinated investigatory strategy

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from the outset of the operational was critical.

In this particular case, the ‘street-level up’ approach proved to be particularly successful in developing pathways into the OCG’s organisational structure and identifying its hierarchy. The use of proven and effective surveillance methods was essential due to hostile nature of the area in which the police were operating.

Another important factor in the operation’s success was its reflexivity. While a comprehensive strategy was developed at the early stages of the operation, it was expected that unexpected leads would be generated as the case developed, particularly with regard to the financial investigation. The aggressive pursuit of new leads and juggling of parallel lines of enquiry was aided by this open minded approach to the identification of the operation’s targets.

The deployment of an experienced and motivated Financial Investigation team

to identify the illegitimate holdings of the nominals in this case was also critical. Building this component of the operation into the strategy from the outset led to a more robust investigation throughout. A policy of ‘following the money’ led to discoveries of numerous lines of enquiry that would otherwise have been unknown to police. It was therefore crucial that an open dialogue existed between the enforcement and financial teams. Having the lead FI present during important briefings and becoming grounded in the overarching scope of the OCG allowed for a more robust financial investigation to take shape.

2. Use of a dedicated CPS official improves outcomes

Another key component of the investigation was the use of a dedicated CPS official that worked closely with the investigative team. This relationship was greatly enhanced by the team’s familiarity with their CPS counterpart



through previous investigations. Advice on decisions to charge and ensuring consistency throughout the process were important elements of success. As well, where situations arose where it had been decided to delay indicting certain nominals, the CPS's consent was needed, and so having a strong existing relationship made the process considerably easier.

3. Sustainability might have been improved had follow-up work with the community been undertaken.

While the operation has been recognised for its achievements with regard to the

financial investigation component of the operation, it was reported that follow-up work in the local community could have been improved upon. Resource constraint issues aside, it was felt that aggressively promoting the work done on the investigation and implementing a robust post-enforcement strategy might have been beneficial. As it stands, it is difficult to assess whether the operation will have a sustainable impact.

5.2 Metropolitan Police Force- Operation Bella Vista (Commended Operation)

The Problem

A highly notorious international organised crime group well known to police as the 'Bling Bling Gang' had long been suspected of controlling one of the largest crack cocaine importation schemes and money laundering networks of its kind. Financial enquiries into the organisation began when a 2006 trial involving members of the OCG identified upwards of £50 million worth of drugs under the organisations control. This group exploited the immigration/customs link between the French colony of St. Martaan in the Caribbean and the French mainland. It was believed that cocaine was smuggled into the UK through specially constructed suitcases or containers such as vases, rum, or perfume bottles. Once in the country, it was transported to manufacturing operations in rented houses and converted into crack cocaine and then supplied to a UK-wide network of local street dealers. The proceeds from these criminal activities were then sent to Guyana, Canada and the USA by way of courier or overseas remittances through Western Union. An investigation into the cocaine importation scheme and money

laundering operation was commenced in April 2004 through the Metropolitan Police Service's SCD7(4) Specialist Intelligence Service under 'Operation Bella Vista'.

Action taken

In 2004, in co-operation with the French National Drug Squad, 12 couriers were arrested in Paris en route to the UK, and seventeen defendants within the UK. These arrests coincided with a number of arrests made through the discovery of a long-standing crack cocaine manufacturing site and this was followed by more arrests worldwide.

In conjunction with this drug enforcement activity, a robust covert financial investigation was launched through the deployment of 2 full-time Financial Investigators in support of SCD7(4) and were provided with analytical and research support under the direction of an SIO/ Case Officer. This financial investigation, ongoing since 2004, continued to compile evidence throughout the proceedings against the individuals detained during the initial enforcement operation. The financial investigation subsidised available

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intelligence by compiling a financial profile of those involved with a view towards asset confiscations.

Aided by French interceptions of communications, conventional account monitoring was used in addition to a variety of proven financial investigation methods. Intelligence received from enforcement teams was disseminated in 'real time' in order to maximise their utility. These strategies were critical to the discovery of a variety of monies being made available to pay couriers, book flights, and send payments for importing controlled drugs. Subjects were prioritised based on their hierarchy in the organisation and financial information from other jurisdictions was obtained and used to strengthen the evidential support of confiscation orders.

Enquiries revealed that the majority of the drug proceeds were transferred to Guyana. Three main routes were employed to transfer funds to outside the UK. The first method was through simple remittances through Western Union. A second method was the use of couriers to physically transport the funds. The final technique was a process where high value goods, such as vehicles and jewellery, were purchased in the UK with money obtained from drug dealing and transported back to Guyana where the recipients of the goods made payment into bank accounts in Guyana.

Using a single point of contact due to the potential for corruption, UK Officers travelled to Guyana on 3 occasions to identify and restrain the assets obtained through the criminal operation. Through the construction of a working partnership with Guyana police officials, UK Court orders were supported by their Guyanese counterparts and the funds were successfully restrained. This portion of the investigation also led to the identification of Guyanese police official colluding with the OCG. This lead to the official being prosecuted in Guyana under money

laundering charges and represented the first time such a charged had been issued in the country.

Officials also travelled to St Martaan and Guadalupe to recover assets and follow up avenues of enquiry, a task which proved exceedingly dangerous. During their visit a police station which they were visiting was firebombed. They were also subjected to threats and harassment from local OCG members. Nevertheless, evidential links were established between these locations and Guyana and the assets were included within the investigation.

Outcomes/ Results

The operation resulted in a large number of arrests worldwide and significant seizures. In total the operation led to:

- 62 OCG members being charged worldwide - 14 from the UK, 25 from France, 13 from Guyana and 10 from the United States.
- The 17 UK defendants received a combined total of 208 years with one of the main targets receiving a sentence of 27 years imprisonment.
- Five separate forfeitures were obtained totaling over £400,000.

As the investigation was premised upon an international drug importation scheme, coordination with the relevant law enforcement agencies and counterparts in these countries was critical to operational success. While these efforts were complicated by internal corruption issues and potential acts of violence against visiting UK police, the operation's significant conviction figures and forfeitures speaks to the success of the initiative.

5.3 Operation Volcano (Commended Operation)

The Problem

A high ranking member of a prominent OCG involved in the importation and supply of Class 'A' and 'B' controlled drugs drew the attention of Nottinghamshire police, due in large part to his opulent lifestyle and successful businessman persona. Associated with a number of notorious organised crime groups in the region, the individual was suspected of involvement in the importation of heroin, cocaine, and amphetamines. Holding a wide portfolio of properties and other high value assets, such as luxury cars, the individual was also the director of several successful businesses and well-connected to a number of charitable organisations.

Following the successful completion of 'Operation Normality', intelligence gathered on an associate implicated this individual in the supply of controlled drugs. However, this information was in need of further corroboration. Therefore 'Operation Volcano' was instituted to specifically target this individual and to dismantle and ultimately prosecute the organised crime group under his control.

Action taken

Covert surveillance techniques and dedicated Financial Investigators were deployed in concert with a drug investigation team. Intelligence gathered over a period of 18 months led to the identification of witnesses that were intimately involved in the individual's criminal activities and were prepared to give evidence against him. Intelligence gleaned from these sources allowed the financial investigators to establish that the individual's vast assets were indeed the result of illegal activities and provided significant insights into the operation of the group.

A total of 40 bank accounts holding over £3 million were analysed for evidence of money laundering. Analyses of loan and mortgage accounts indicated that

the individual either obtained new loans or refinanced existing loans to a total value in excess of £6 million. An analysis of the nominal's personal accounts revealed no evidence of day-to-day living expenses, indicating that they were being paid by other means. Investigations into the 44 separate properties owned by the individual indicated that many of these properties were not occupied by tenants as had been claimed. As financial investigators probed deeper it became clear that a substantial portion of the individuals claimed income was made through fraudulent tenancy agreements that allowed the individual to launder proceeds gained from drug trafficking into clean income. It was also found that many of the occupants of these properties were known drug dealers associated with the individuals trafficking operation.

At the time of the individual's arrest, no complete business records were recovered in respect of these supposed rental properties. Many of the occupants of these properties could not provide evidence of payment in the form of rent books and nothing had been declared to the Inland Revenue. The individual was also the registered owner to a fleet of motor vehicles, the procurement of which could not be accounted for, again suggesting a high likelihood of criminal activity

Due to the high profile nature of the main target, publicity opportunities were maximised with both local and national news outlets. A media strategy was employed with the aim of promoting public reassurance and community confidence.

Outcomes/ Results

The successful completion of the investigation yielded significant sentence lengths and assets seizures for prominent members of the OCG:

- Four individuals were successful prosecuted and received a combined total of 38 years imprisonment.

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- Realisable assets seized totaled £454,000, with benefits identified in upwards of £12,000,000.
- The operation was identified as an example of best practice in dealing with accomplice witnesses and the effective use of dedicated financial investigators.
- The operation was also recognise for developing effective working partnerships with SOCA, EMSOU, Financial Institutions, and Regulatory bodies, Probation, Prisons, Housing, Social Care, Social Service, Public Prosecution and various other organisations.

6 Cannabis Cultivation Enforcement Operations

Best Practice Against Cannabis Cultivation - Summary

The operations in this group targeted the emerging problem of commercial cannabis cultivation. A number of common themes emerge from the operations described here;

- Recognising that organised criminality lies behind the cultivation sites is seen as critical for formulating an effective investigative strategy. Linking different sites to the work of a specific network was important.
- Timing of interventions needed to counterbalance the benefit of prolonged intelligence gathering against the potential health and safety risks posed by the properties – use of risk matrices and operational guidelines helped this risk assessment process.
- The deployment of crime scene analysis teams and a clear forensic strategy to maximise intelligence gathering and link suspects and sites was crucial to dismantling the networks.
- Linkages with local business opened up new sources of intelligence and access to resources.
- Links with other law enforcement agencies and learning from other agencies with previous experience in the field was valuable due to the international nature of the organised crime groups being investigated.
- Once the operations were completed the police moved quickly to spread word of their efforts in order to enhance public confidence and the sustainability of the operations.
- The potential for increasing racial tensions due to the frequent involvement of South East Asian OCGs in commercial cannabis cultivation was recognised as a potential unintended consequence and community leaders and organisations involved to mitigate this risk.

The proliferation of commercial cannabis cultivation sites across the UK has been well documented. Highly organised criminal networks have added a new and dangerous element to the problem. Operating out of unassuming locations often within the heart of local communities, these sites pose a number of health and safety risks to adjacent properties, homes, and the community at large. As the many of the OCGs found to be organising these networks are of South-East Asian ethnicities, additional issues such as the possibility of community tension and concerns over illegal immigration and human rights. Therefore the harms posed by these sites goes beyond the harms

traditionally associated with cannabis misuse and supply.

The three operations recognised by the 2009 TDSA's demonstrate that while operations may be fine tuned according to the specific nature of the issue in a given area, the techniques and tactics employed by the police are largely consistent. The winning operation, 'Mazurka' tackled an explosion of cultivation sites across Northern Ireland. Operation 'Dragonfly' combated the problem within the urban environment of Greater Manchester, while operation 'Bulb' investigated a network of sites that were taking advantage of a particular deprived region of South Bristol.

Award Winner: Operation Mazurka, Northern Ireland

Commended: Operation Dragonfly, Manchester and Operation Bulb, Avon and Somerset Constabulary

6.1 Operation Mazurka (Award Winning Operation)

The Problem

Prior to October 2007 the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) had not been aware of any problem within its jurisdiction regarding commercial cannabis cultivation sites. Although aware that police forces throughout the UK had been reporting significant increases in the number of these operations being discovered, Northern Ireland cannabis cultivation was largely thought to be restricted to sporadic small scale operations carried out by local people. The initial discovery of a large scale commercial cannabis factory in Belfast City Centre with South-East Asian (Chinese) linkages was followed by several other cultivation sites being discovered across Northern Ireland. As these sites appeared to share the same modus operandi, the PSNI Drug Squad in Belfast quickly identified them as the work of an organised criminal network.

Due to the relatively small geographical area and population of Northern Ireland, these discoveries were thought to pose a significant problem for the region. That they were made across the 6 counties of Northern Ireland suggested to the police that the likelihood of widespread proliferation of these sites was almost certain. Therefore, the decision was made to put together a service wide strategy. Also, as this problem of cannabis cultivation sites had been previously found throughout other parts of the UK, consultations with SOCA, the Scottish Operations League team in Glasgow and the 'Operation Pendry' team in London were undertaken to aid the planning of the operation.

Although PSNI Drug Squad primarily focuses on the misuse of Class 'A' drugs such as cocaine and heroin, the wide availability and use of cannabis in the region had been a well-documented concern and a tough stance against cannabis use had been a long standing

policy. While police were aware that cannabis had long been a widely consumed drug amongst the population, prior to this operation the police were largely unaware of any significant South East-Asian organised criminal group operating in the area. It was therefore determined that this was a relatively new problem in the region and likely in its initial stages of development.

A number of community harms were associated with this new development:

1. Increased racial tension

The Chinese origin of the OCGs involved had the potential for increasing racial tension even though they were unrelated to the resident South East Asian community.

2. Fire and other risks to individuals, properties and the surrounding neighbourhood

The practice of bypassing the electric meter to avoid detection was a common technique which presented a fire risk. In addition the presence of a range of volatile chemicals and various crude and dangerous security measures posed a risk to the safety of the public, police and suspects.

3. Loss of revenue

The use of large amounts of electricity without payment represented a considerable loss of revenue to the electricity companies.

Key Points: Operation MAZURKA

The problem

Commercial cannabis cultivation became apparent in Northern Ireland. This was linked to organised crime groups of Chinese origin which therefore had the potential for increasing racial tensions even though they were unrelated in any way to the resident South East Asian community.

The practice of bypassing the electric meter to avoid detection was a common technique, which presented a substantial risk of fire to adjacent homes or buildings in addition to the property itself. The use of large amounts of electricity without payment also represented a considerable loss of revenue to the electricity companies. The presence of a wide-range of volatile chemicals, and high likelihood of crude and dangerous security measures also posed a risk to the safety of the public, police, and suspects.

Action taken

Covert and overt policing strategies were developed to identify and dismantle the network of cannabis cultivation sites. While lengthy intelligence and evidence-gathering phases were undertaken where possible to assist in penetration and dismantling the organised crime groups this was balanced against the assessment of risk posed by the properties. A systematic approach to forensic assessment of the sites was taken to maximise intelligence-gathering opportunities and a HOLMES (Home Office Large Major Enquiry System) account proved invaluable for handling and processing all the different strands of information.

The expertise of a wide range of agencies with experience of cannabis cultivation in other parts of the UK was tapped. In Northern Ireland the Public Prosecution Service, local UKBA officials, and Community Safety Team officers were brought in at the earliest stages, briefed on the issues, and kept abreast of developments throughout the operation. Partnerships were formed with local retail providers of the supplies needed to set up the farms who provided information on sales, as well as with the electricity suppliers. Landlords and estate agents were also targeted with a leaflet campaign providing information to help them identify suspect prospective tenants.

Local South East Asian community leaders were involved and their support for the operations publicised so that it was clear that they were not linked to the perpetrators. There was also a careful media strategy that highlighted the work being done without giving details of the strategies being used which generated substantial media coverage.

Impact

Closure of 78 cannabis cultivation sites. 86 arrests were made which resulted in 73 individuals being indicted and a very high conviction rate was achieved. Cannabis cultivation was almost eradicated from the province (only 4 sites identified subsequent to the operation). A high proportion of suspects pleaded guilty giving cost savings in prosecutions.

There has been no evidence of increased racial attacks on the local South East Asian community and the increased flow of information from the public suggests improved community confidence. There is evidence of possible displacement to Ireland.

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Action taken

a) Intelligence-gathering and enforcement action

Due to the nature of the problem, robust covert and overt policing strategies were developed to identify and dismantle the network of cannabis cultivation sites. The investigation blended covert and overt elements into a two-tiered approach. Local officers were responsible for the investigation of cultivation sites within respective District Command Units using an agreed upon framework. The Belfast based Drug Squad was responsible for proactive intelligence gathering and the specific targeting of the organisers of the cultivation network. These strategies were devised in consultation with DCU managers.

During the initial planning of the operation a number of objectives were set out. Cannabis cultivation sites present a range of potential health and safety risks as described above so ensuring the safety of the public, police, and suspects was critical.

Within Northern Ireland, the Public Prosecution Service, local UKBA officials, and Community Safety Team officers were brought in at the earliest stages, briefed on the issues, and kept abreast of developments throughout the operation. Local DCU's were utilised in the day to day investigative component of the operation while Drug Squad was responsible for the overarching investigation into the criminal network.

As the previously uncovered cultivation sites and information gathered from these premises determined the involvement of South-East Asian organised groups, gathering intelligence on individuals responsible for the sites would require the use of a wide range of covert surveillance techniques of a sensitive nature. Individuals identified as organisers of the cultivation sites were kept under surveillance over a four month period in order to establish linkages between the sites and to identify bases of operation.

As cannabis cultivation sites require significant resources and supplies, a priority was placed on determining



how these materials were purchased. Information and intelligence gathering determined that while a significant portion of these supplies were purchased through mail-order services, other materials were procured from local hardware businesses. This presented an intelligence opportunity for police and through partnership work with local retail outlets individuals engaging in suspicious purchases were flagged by stores and investigated by the police. The detail of this partnership work is discussed later.

A financial investigation was also established to identify those responsible for procuring the residences used for the cultivation sites. Unscrupulous or negligent landlords leasing premises to individuals engaged in criminal activity is a problem throughout the UK and it was quickly determined that those responsible for the cultivation sites were taking advantage of this opportunity. Intelligence gathered through this line of enquiry indicated that fraudulent bank accounts were being set-up to secure leases. In addition, it was also found that significant sums of cash and assets were being sent out of the country, although the sophistication of these methods made determining the source and destination of these remittances difficult. Arrests made against these individuals utilised a pro-charge/ remand in custody approach, where possible, to disrupt the cash flow of the organised crime group.

Owing to the significant health and safety risks presented by the cultivation sites, Risk Matrices were developed to aid in enforcement decision making. This was greatly aided through the partnership developed between the police and the electricity company. While long standing investigations similar to Operation Mazurka may benefit from a protracted intelligence phase culminating in a single or series of strike days, due to the safety risks posed to properties adjacent to cultivation sites this was not always

possible. While some groups of individuals were rounded up on pre-determined dates, arrests occurred throughout the operation based on risk assessments. In most cases police officers close to the operation were not involved arrests in order to firewall the operation and ensure operational integrity.

Once sites were secured, a robust forensic strategy was employed to identify and link suspects through DNA and fingerprint analysis. Intelligence matrices were developed to link together suspects and determine their roles in the operation. Other sources of intelligence included the use of an Automated Number Plate Reader (ANPR), telephone analyses, recovered satellite navigation systems, rental agreements, and car hire contacts. The sources provided evidence of further complicity for a number of suspects and helped to strengthen the evidence base in preparations for arrests.

As this information rapidly accumulated through the discovery of additional sites, a Home Office Large Major Enquiry System (HOLMES) account was used to aid data collection and processing and to help identify suspects and evidence. Intelligence gathered from each cultivation site was disseminated through debriefing documents created by the enquiry team. This document was used to help collate information and identify further linkages. A Higher Time Police Analyst maintained a 'live time' record of cultivation sites, arrests, vehicles, premises, and intelligence that in conjunction with HOLMES provided timely actionable investigative leads. Information and evidence gathered through covert and overt investigative techniques were analysed by a dedicated intelligence team. As it became apparent that suspects had ties to other individuals throughout the UK and Republic of Ireland this information was disseminated to relevant police agencies.

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confirm their belief that the vast majority of the cannabis being cultivated at these sites was being exported to other areas of the UK and possibly abroad. Consultations with a variety of enforcement agencies that had previous experiences with cultivation sites confirmed these findings. Such a finding suggested the operations within Northern Ireland were likely part of a much larger criminal network. This posed a significant problem for the investigatory team, as determining where the cannabis was ultimately sold proved highly challenging and ultimately was not discovered. Such an endeavour would have required a highly co-coordinated joint effort across multiple police forces that was therefore outside the scope of 'Operation Mazurka'.

As the scope of problem expanded during the course of the investigation it became clear that the resources initially procured for the operation would not be sufficient. The decision was then made to request support from the PSNI's 'Gold Command' branch through the Assistant Chief Constable. Gold Command represents the highest level of support for major police enquiries and provides increased funding, support, and resources outside of normal means. Once the request was approved, the necessary resources were made available and the investigatory teams were able to expand the investigation and develop new lines of enquiry.

b) Partnership work

As described above the operation required extensive co-operation between different units of the PSNI. Also important to the success of the operation was the partnership work between the Public Prosecution Service (PPS) and the police. As the magnitude of the operation required a significant commitment from both agencies, dedicated PPS staff were aware of the operation through its entirety and provided critical advice in regard to the charging of suspects throughout the process. The PPS also provided support

in ensuring the legality of police activity to ensure strong evidentiary support of the charges filed against the suspects.

At one point during the operation, 16 suspects were arrested on the same day, and so having the PPS prepared in advance to handle such a heavy case load was essential. While co-ordination between the police service and the PPS on investigations of this magnitude is common practice, the fact that the suspects holding no legal status with the U.K. added another dimension to the operation that required considerable strategic planning. As the illegality of the suspects was surmised for an early point in the investigation, co-ordination with the United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA) was highly useful. Once individuals were detained, UKBA was able to provide translation services and assistance in identifying the individuals in police custody, the vast majority of whom held no identification of any kind. While identifying the individuals proved to be exceedingly difficult the advance work done between the PSNI and UKBA allowed the issue to be dealt with as efficiently as possible.

As the investigation expanded, the support of central command became critical. Once the operation was upgraded to 'Gold Command' status it became a high priority for the entire police force. This helped to reduce the strain on existing resources and staff and allowed the operation to pursue all available lines of enquiry. As 'Gold Command' operations are given access to central funds not normally available, this helped to reduce further strain on other operations within the individual unit's and DCU's that were affected by the scope of 'Operation Mazurka'.

As briefly noted, partnership work with local businesses was a critical component to the operation's success. As the forensic examination of the initial cultivation sites found that electrical transformers were manipulated to hide the surge in

electricity usage and avoid suspicion, co-operation with the electricity provider was established from the earliest stages of the investigation. It was quickly estimated that they were losing approximately £30,000 per site on an annual basis. A highly motivated partner, following consultations with police and the electricity companies provided considerable assistance to the operation, supplying information on electricity use and abstraction, making staff available to attend cultivation sites, providing health and safety risks assessments, and ensuring the sites were safe for police investigations to collect evidence. They were also integral to the identification of additional cultivation sites through the provision of heat-detection equipment and training to police on how to detect cultivation sites.

In a similar vein, hardware suppliers were also eager to assist the police with the investigation. The partnership was initiated through an initial consultation with a local store manager. Rather than issuing a general request through the form of a letter or e-mail, police requested that representatives of stores from across Northern Ireland attend a general meeting with a member of the investigation team. This allowed the police to put a personal touch on the request and control the number of individuals being aware of the police's activities. In a meeting attending by approximately 25 senior level representatives, a confidential briefing led to the establishment of a process for stores to report suspicious purchases to the investigation team. This created several new lines of enquiry and lead to the discovery of a number of previously undetected cultivation sites.

(c) Community engagement

As the investigation revealed the cultivation sites to be exclusively operated by South-East Asian crime groups, the potential for backlash from the domestic population was a significant concern to the police. Past instances of civil unrest

and violence directed towards minority members of the community are a well-documented part of the regions history. Once the operation became public knowledge, the potential harm that could be posed to the general law-abiding South-East Asian population was thought to be considerable. Therefore it was important to reach out to local community leaders, explain the scope of the problem, and work with them to determine how best to engage the general public.

While concerns for operational integrity did not allow this consultation to occur prior to the post-enforcement media campaign, it was given high priority in the days following and so was implemented almost in unison with the media coverage. Working with a local member of the South-East Asian community who was also a member of the Legislative Assembly in Northern Ireland, statements of support were issued for the operation and it was stressed that those involved with the cultivation sites were not members of local community. While determining the effect of this initiative is inherently difficult, no personal violence against members of the South-East Asian community occurred in the weeks and months following the operations conclusion. In one instance a cultivation site raided by police was vandalised. This was the only report of any related criminality specifically targeted towards South-East Asians.

This public reassurance campaign was also significantly aided by communications between the PSNI and the Northern Ireland Chinese Welfare Association (NICWA). An open dialogue between the police and the NICWA created a direct link between the police and the South-East Asian community. This ensured that if violence against this group had occurred, police would have been able to react quickly. The support of this organisation for the operation also helped to reinforce the message that the local population had nothing to do with the network of cannabis

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cultivation sites.

As the PSNI Drug Squad is an enforcement-lead unit, community outreach following the conclusion of the operation was handled by community safety units across the region.

d) Communications and Media Strategy

As with all covert investigations, maintaining the integrity of the operation was of the utmost importance. As police made a number of arrests throughout the operation, the potential for leakage was significant. While the media were not placed under any type of embargo, the police were purposely reluctant to describe the activities and vague when asked to comment prior to the operations conclusion. Once the operation had ended, however, the police quickly became quite proactive in their dealings with the media and extensive television, radio, and print coverage was given to the operation. While leaflet drops detailing information were also employed, Community Safety officers were made aware of the operation from the outset. This enabled them to actively engage the community on the subject at the appropriate time, particularly the local South-East Asian population.

Even following its conclusion, details on the methods used by police could not be provided and so the press releases and messages sent out by the police had to be carefully crafted by the PSNI's media relations department. One of the main aims of the campaign was to educate the public regarding the potential harm posed by cultivation sites. By informing the public that these sites posed a significant threat to adjacent properties, it was hoped that this would encourage any individuals who discovered a cultivation site within their community to inform the police.

While not a media campaign in the most direct sense, educating estate agents and landlords as to the risks posed to properties converted to cannabis cultivation sites comprised an important

branch of the overall strategy. Leaflets were distributed to all landlords, estate agents, and property managers throughout Northern Ireland, detailing what to look for in terms of suspicious activity and how to report it. Again, while such a measure is difficult to assess, anecdotal reports from the police suggest it has been well received and reflects the overwhelming positive feedback from the general community.

Outcome/Results

a) Measurements of Operational Success

Traditional measures of operational success were numerous. The 101 searches resulting from 'Operation Mazurka' intelligence resulted in:

- the discovery and closure of 78 cannabis cultivation sites yielding 26,207 cannabis plants weighing a total of 204 kilograms and having an approximate value of £15.5 million;
- 86 arrests were made resulting in 73 individuals being indicted, with many cases still pending, the penalties received thus far have been significant with gardeners and builder's receiving sentences of 2 years while renters and organisers are receiving sentences of 5 years;
- the conviction rate has been close to 100%, with only two cases, as of July 1st 2007, being dropped. All other individuals have been successfully prosecuted, the vast majority of which pleading guilty and saving considerable costs to the courts;
- the operation was also highly successful in predominately targeting the organisers of the cannabis cultivation network - 75% of those charged occupy the upper-tier of the criminal organisations hierarchy.
- £150,000 in cash was seized.

b) Measures of impact

Perhaps the most critical measure of success in this operation is that in the 6 months following the conclusion of the operation, only 4 cannabis factories have been discovered. While intelligence units continue to monitor the situation, responsibility for investigations into newly discovered sites has fallen back to the DCU level. Recent discoveries of a host of cultivation sites within the Republic of Ireland suggest there may be an element of displacement at work. In that regard, the PSNI continues to work closely with the Garda Siochana is sharing best practices and providing strategic advice and support when called upon.

With respect to the community harms identified above it has been estimated that the electricity suppliers saved approximately £2 million through the successful detection of numerous cultivation sites. Also, there has been no evidence of increased racial violence against the local South East Asian community.

Anecdotal information on increased 'Crimestoppers' and other sources of intelligence suggest the operation was received in a highly positive light by the community. Politically, the operation was publicly supported across the political spectrum, a highly unusual event in Northern Ireland. Over 300 articles by local and national press have since been published that overwhelming support the police activity. As well, intelligence gathered by police in their day-to-day activities following 'Operation Mazurka' indicates the tagline is synonymous with marijuana cultivation and there has been continued interest from the press in cases before the Crown Courts. Currently, there are plans to distribute complete follow-up information detailing sentences received by individuals charged under the 'Operation' once they have concluded.

b) Costs

The resources expended during 'Operation Mazurka' were highly significant. All funds came from within the PSNI itself as external funding was not made available. The PSNI itself utilised the vast majority of its own budget, as the operation required considerable man power and overtime expenditures. As well, DCU's throughout the region also expended considerable resources during overt components of the investigation.

Once the operation began receiving central funds from Gold Commands, some of those were pressures eased however the strain on the operating budgets of the individual departments, particularly with regard to the drug squad, were already affecting its day-to-day operations. Exact figures were unavailable.

Issues and Challenges

While the operation has been deemed an overwhelming success it was not without its challenges. The emergence of a highly organised and effective Chinese crime syndicate was a new development for the PSNI. While Northern Ireland demographics are in a period of transition, the region remains quite homogenous. As the majority of suspects that came under this operation spoke no English, communication with them was an obvious challenge. The PSNI's lack of familiarity with South-East Asian organised crime groups also meant that the use of Covert Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) could not be relied upon. With one of the more useful intelligence gathering tools unavailable, the police had to rely on more time-consuming and expensive methods of intelligence gathering. This ultimately placed a considerable strain on resources, even with the support from Gold Command.

As the operation rapidly expanded in scope, it became exceedingly challenging for the PSNI, a relatively small police force

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in comparison to other areas, to meet the needs of the operation, irrespective of resources. The sheer volume of information collected and analysed required a high level of organisation and co-ordination than previously experienced. Simply managing the operation became a significant task in and of itself.

Operationally, other challenges were reported. The financial investigation, while successfully seizing £150,000, was less successful than other parts of the operation. The sophistication of the methods employed by the individuals resulted in many dead ends. While this component was felt to be important, it did not receive the resources that were applied to other areas of the case designated to be of a higher reporting.

One important issue the PSNI had to grapple with was the acknowledgement that the actual drugs themselves were

not being sold within Northern Ireland. Consequently, despite the overwhelming success of the operation, the actual impact on the day-to-day supply of cannabis was relatively unaffected. That being said, this was something which had been identified at the outset of the operation and so it was to be expected. The main harm in this operation was the threats and dangers posed by organised criminality and the cultivation sites themselves. With regard to those objectives, significant achievements were made.

As was made reference to on several occasions, the strain on resources which resulted from this operation negatively affected other operations, particularly within the PSNI drug squad. Investigations in relation to Class A drugs, the units primary focus, received far less attention than normal during the course of the operation. Indeed, the PSNI drug squad



noted that it took them approximately 2 months to get back up to speed on operations concerning 'Class' A drugs such as crack cocaine and heroin.

One major unintended consequence not previously discussed concerns the human smuggling element that was a part of this operation. Some of the growers who were arrested claimed to not even be aware of where they were. In some cases, these individuals had allegedly paid to be smuggled into the country and were now working in the cannabis factories by choice. In other cases, individuals indebted to the OCG were smuggled into the country and essentially forced to work for the OCG for fear of reprisal against themselves or families back home. While the potential human rights issues were recognised, tough action was taken against gardeners, regardless of how they appeared to have become involved in the operation. This was done for several reasons. Firstly, putting away the growers would place a strain on the OCG's resources. Secondly, it was done to send a strong message to both the OCG and the public that it was taken very seriously. Finally, these individuals' stories could not be verified, so might just be an attempt to evade punishment. This was an area that was recognised as perhaps deserving more attention in such operations in the future as it could have far-reaching consequences for those individuals. One tragic example was a case of suicide of one gardener while in police custody, although it did not appear that this could have been foreseen and there is now greater awareness of the issues.

Key Lessons

Several key lessons were reached at the conclusion of the operation.

1. Making the link between organised criminality and cannabis cultivation.

The recognition that it was organised criminality behind the cultivation sites was

seen as critical. Recognising the high level of co-ordination between the individuals involved allowed the police to develop an investigative strategy that had been shown in previous operations to be effective against organised crime groups. Simply investigating the cultivation sites on a case by case basis would have yielded far more limited results

2. Obtaining the support of senior officers in order to obtain sufficient resources is essential.

With an operation of this size, support from senior command was essential. As the operating budget for the investigation continually expanded to the point of consuming the resources of the PSNI Drug Squad, without senior level support the operation would have suffered from significant resource short falls and operational deficiencies. Without the recognition, support and commitment from top-level officials it is doubtful the operation could have been as successful.

3. Partnership working with other enforcement and criminal justice agencies and businesses were key to effectiveness

The partnership linkages with criminal justice agencies and other public institutions undoubtedly benefitted from a concerted effort to co-ordinate strategies at the early stage in the investigation. It is also important for the police to fully comprehend what each agency's role can be within the investigation. As each organisation has its own objectives and mandates, identifying this at an early stage helped the operation to maximise its efficiency.

Working with local businesses was also a very important factor in the operation. The relationships developed with the electricity and hardware suppliers opened up a wide variety of intelligence sources to the police. As previously reported in other case studies within this document, these businesses are often very interested

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in co-operating with the police, and therefore their involvement should be maximised. Of course, their participation must also be balanced against ensuring confidentiality, particularly in operations such as 'Mazurka' where covert strategies are being heavily utilised.

4. Make full use of forensic investigation to provide intelligence

A structured approach was taken to forensic investigation of the cultivation sites identified and this yielded enormous dividends in terms of intelligence and made an important contribution to the overall success of the operation.

5. Community engagement is important for maximising impact.

As has been a theme of these case studies, community engagement is

continuing to play a greater role in police enforcement strategies, particularly in regards to promoting the sustainability of these enforcement operations. Of course, public support cannot be gained simply through arrests and seizures. Successful police work must be followed up with an effective awareness campaign and true public engagement on a meaningful level. While in this particular case the close involvement of the community support and public relation team's ensured that the work done on 'Operation Mazurka' was promoted and the potential for harm to community relations avoided.

6.2 Operation Dragonfly (Commended Operation)

The Problem

In March 2007 the Greater Manchester Police department recognised the emerging threat posed through the proliferation of commercialised cannabis cultivation sites. Intelligence from the area suggested that the operations were largely the product of Vietnamese and Chinese organised crime groups. And at the time of the operations conceptualisation, relatively little was known about the nature of these OCG's, and so consultations were made with outside police forces who held previous experiences in dealing with form of criminality. This led to the development of an on-going multi-faceted robust surveillance and intelligence gathering operation coupled with an extensive media and community outreach strategy.

Harms recognised and specifically targeted by the operation were:

- health safety risks to the public;
- damage to the physical environment;

- associated criminality, anti-social and ill health effects of increased THC in local marijuana; and
- tacit or otherwise acceptance of the criminality by public and landlords through lack of awareness or lack of challenge.

Action taken

(a) Intelligence-gathering and enforcement action

Enforcement operations were enacted at both Level 1 and Level 2 of the National Intelligence model. The Level 1 operation was first and foremost designed to maintain and improve the quality of cannabis cultivation intelligence. It was also important to prepare and present intelligence gathered to have the problem included on the Force Control Strategy in order to facilitate monitoring, reporting, and targeted enforcement. At Level 2 the operation sought to use intelligence gleaned during the first phase of the

operation to identify and map OCG's operating the cannabis cultivation sites.

The intelligence and enforcement activities identified areas for operational intervention or disruption as well as existing and emerging trends, such as the use of migrant workers and students as farmers. It also established a framework for identifying cultivation sites as belonging to a network of Chinese or Vietnamese OCGs. Another important development was the identification of health and safety risks, such as the use of crude and often dangerous security measures.

Forensic examinations of the crime sites were conducted based upon an agreed upon framework to ensure crime scene integrity. This allowed the police to link a number of individuals not found at the premises during enforcement raids to be linked into the operation. Police staff became educated in photographing and measuring farms for use by forensic scientists. This was critical to the operation as the huge amount of evidence being collected could not all be stored, and so maintaining a protocol for the recording of evidence was very important.

Increasing awareness of the problem at both the force and partnership levels through increased dialogue and consultation was seen as an overarching goal of the police activity and led to the development of force wide investigatory models that resulted in the production of target profiles and the creation of an intelligence package for force wide dissemination. Developing into a force wide response to the problem, Operation Dragonfly made use of the Force Intelligence Branch to pass along relevant information to the relevant BCU's of the region.

Local private landlords and letting-agents were brought to the police station and warned regarding their legal responsibilities and the effects of POCA should they recklessly continue cash

rentals. They were given advice and a booklet regarding the signs to look for, as a result excellent intelligence flows were established.

(b) Communications and media strategy

The media strategy for the operation involved both short and long term phases. In the short, public awareness was raised through engaging with local landlords and educating them as to how to become more vigilant in maintaining their properties. From a more long-term perspective, the operation sought to brand the cultivation sites as a form of serious criminality and organised crime. This was achieved through a close working relationship with the CPS to ensure tough penalties were pursued following arrests and ensuring these efforts were publicised through all forms of media. The media were also given intimate access to enforcement raids and the SIO of the operation was made available for interviews.

As the risk of fires was significant, promoting the health and safety risks posed by the cultivation sites was an important part of the awareness campaign. The local fire service was brought on as a partner and joint statements were made condemning the proliferation of these cultivation sites and encourage the public to inform police of suspicious activities within their community. Media coverage of instances was fires and significant damage occurred was encouraged as a means of reinforcing this message.

While the involvement of Chinese and Vietnamese OCG's was publicised, this information was balanced against the need to ensure the normal, law abiding population was not effectively criminalised as a result of the actions of these groups. To help this process, links were forged with local community leaders. As part of a larger awareness campaign within the Vietnamese population, information concerning the operation was fed back

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to the BBC's Vietnamese World Service website, which was a trusted source of information for Vietnamese people in their native country. Information concerning the identities and home towns was publicised here as part of a naming and shaming policy.

Outcomes/ Results

The operation was organised centrally and so a single point for collation and dissemination of intelligence was a highly beneficial by product of the operation and we reinforced by a specific evidence collection plan and standardised intelligence dissemination methods. Another key development was the creation of a bulletin system to share information quickly. The culmination of the operation led to the development of a best practice guide and investigation strategy being devised and the production of problem

profiles to provide insight into the regional and national extent of the issue.

From its inception to the awards Operation Dragonfly has successfully achieved:

- 96 cannabis farms dismantled (100+ plants)
- 45,000 cannabis plants destroyed (valued at £6.75 million)
- 63 individuals have been arrested
- a Forensic Strategy for dealing with commercial cannabis farms published
- an Operational Strategy for dealing with commercial cannabis farms produced and published.
- excellent media coverage both at local and international level including features on the BBC world service and National Geographic channel.

6.3 Avon and Somerset Constabulary: Operation Bulb (Commended Operation)

The Problem

During the later part of 2007 intelligence indicated organise crime groups in South Bristol were developing cannabis cultivation sites to take advantage of the various opportunities associated with its production. As recent government policy had strongly focused on Class 'A' activities, the focus on cannabis had been reduced. Additionally, financial rewards involved in cannabis cultivation was thought to be considerable, particularly so when weighed against the risks. Perhaps most importantly, the demand for cannabis as commodity was well-entrenched and provided a link into other types of drug supply.

Various areas within South Bristol are recognised as regions of significant socio-economic deprivation. This led OCGs to identify residents who would be vulnerable to be drawn into crime by allowing their

homes to be used for cannabis production. Pay-offs and, where necessary, threats were employed to keep local residents from reporting the OCG's activities.

Operation Bulb was therefore developed with the following aims:

- To improve the quality and quantity of community intelligence by conducting high visibility drug warrants and then utilise signs and letter drops in the immediate area to encourage more intelligence, showing the public the police will act on information received and to provide further community reassurance that these acts of criminality will not be tolerated and that the police are determined to help improve the environment in which they live.
- To work alongside partner agencies in tackling commercial scale cannabis production by ensuring that both

sides agree to an information sharing protocol to maximise a two way intelligence flow.

- To reduce the public perception that police pay little interest in cannabis and to confirm that they have recognised that cannabis is a major source of income for persons involved in serious and organised crime.
- Therefore the expected impact was:
- A reduction in the availability of the drug to vulnerable persons
- An increasing the numbers of persons prosecuted for the offence of production to deter others
- The sending of a positive message to the public that the police take this issue seriously
- People would be deterred from allowing there premises to be used for cultivation
- more drug users would be encouraged/ supported in seeking help from appropriate support networks / agencies,
- public / community confidence in the police would be improved.

Action undertaken

Following the successful completion of 'Operation Blister' the South Bristol drugs team took the lead in enforcement activities concerning cannabis cultivation. A 4 step plan was implemented that involved:

(1) initiating partnership meetings with relevant agencies to identify resources and support,

(2) gathering intelligence using source handlers and local neighbourhoods policing teams,

(3) building strong relationships with the Force Drug Strategy Team (DST), and

- (4)** identifying single points of contact at electricity suppliers to enhance confidentiality.

Following the planning stage of the operation, intelligence concerning current trends in cannabis cultivation, potential dangers hazards associates with sites, and possible locations of potential factories were analysed. The DST established a protocol where all cultivation sites were attended by staff from electricity supplier. A further enhancement of this partnership led to £50,000 sponsorship being secured towards the purchase of 8 Hand Held Thermal Imagers. The enforcement team was also granted access to the company's helicopter equipped with a state of art thermal imager able to detect cannabis cultivation sites during daylight hours throughout the year.

The intelligence gleaned from 'Operation Blister' and the contacts established with the community were also used in 'Operation Bulb' leading to the identification of 8 factories that were controlled by a South-East Asian criminal network. Further investigatory work determined that these individuals were involved a multi-million dollar money laundering scheme. Through the use of crime scene and financial investigators the investigatory team was able to develop a structure profile of the network that led to further case work and investigations.

As one overarching goal of the operation to improve the quality and quantity of community intelligence, high visibility warrants were conducted and utilised in conjunction with leaflet drops in the surrounding area to promote the enforcement activity. This was designed to enhance community reassurance and raise the profile of cannabis cultivation investigations.

During and following the completion of the arrest phase, police worked closely with partner agencies. On strike days

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partner agencies were involved, engaging with the community and following up in areas where enforcement activity had taken place. The enhanced co-ordination allowed for the development of a joint message being sent out across the partnership that cannabis cultivation was being taken very seriously and would be met with a robust enforcement and community-led response where appropriate.

Outcomes/Results

Operational measures of success included:

- the execution of over 100 warrants
- the seizure of 4,500 cannabis plants and 7.5 kg of cannabis product.
- large quantities of other drugs were also discovered;
- over £31,000 in cash was seized; and
- the quality and quantity of intelligence concern cannabis cultivation was greatly enhanced.

The positive reaction from the local community and media outlets seemed to suggest improved confidence and trust between community members and police. It was also reported that the supply of cannabis was significantly reduced in the aftermath of the operation. Improved contact and information exchange between partners was also noted.

One observation worth noting is the perceived lack of service provision in support of those addicted to cannabis, particularly those under the age of 18. The evidence obtained through this investigation is being fed into a review of local service provision through the CDRP.

7. Overall Conclusions and Key Lessons



Though the successful enforcement operations across the five Tackling Drug Supply Award categories each focused on different areas within the drug trade, common themes across the range of operations can be drawn out. Though some of the operations relied more heavily on these aspects than others, according to the nature of the problem being addressed, they represent key lessons which should be considered in future investigations. While these commonalities were in general not particularly unique in their own right, it is their application in combination with one another that is often perceived as the driver behind the success of these operations.

First and foremost, it is clear that allotting a sufficient amount of time to form a baseline assessment of the problem is critical. This is inherently difficult due to the myriad of competing demands and resource constraints. However, taking the

time to identify the key players involved in the drug supply, their modus operandi, and their impact on the community at large was a common strength across the nominated operations.

As mapping out a comprehensive enforcement strategy is the next logical step in the process, clearly identifying the key objectives and perceived impact of the operations may help to limit and/or control unintended consequences which may result. Developing contingency plans and giving thought to what may be required post-enforcement to achieve a sustainable affect at the earliest point helped many operations reduce inefficiencies later on. Putting sufficient time and resources into this stage and going beyond mere 'box ticking' pays off in the longer term. The benefits of such a commitment to detail in the planning of successful operations is evidenced throughout the examples contained within this report.

On a practical level, the driving force behind any successful operation often rests with the individuals conducting the investigation. Many of the teams included within this report cited the importance of experienced personnel with specialised skills in key positions. While detailed baseline assessments and comprehensive strategic planning are undoubtedly beneficial, their effective implementation requires strong leadership throughout the operational team. Where such staff are not available, efforts to seek advice and assistance regarding best practice, from both within and outside the area police force will be important. Utilising experienced personnel and developing further expertise requires a top-down commitment throughout the chain of command. As such, the most operations that had the greatest impact were those which benefited from such a level of commitment.

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The resilience of drug markets is well documented. Even amongst the operations included within this report, maintaining a sustainable impact on the local area by reducing drug use and supply, eliminating predatory dealers and networks of distribution, and improving community confidence in law enforcement has been shown to be difficult. The gap in drug supply which results from successful enforcement operations often represents only a small window of opportunity. Therefore moving quickly to fill this void through effective post-enforcement strategies and proactive community engagement may represent the best opportunities to reduce the harms experienced by the local community. Where it was possible, the most successful operations were able to utilise the space created through enforcement and sustain a higher level of community involvement and engagement following the arrest phase of the operation. This was facilitated by early and frequent engagement with key people and organisations within the community.

While the nature of these efforts varied, one major linkage that may be drawn between them was the enhanced co-ordination across the range of partners organisations. Although the nature of some operations allowed for more coordination than others, some level of enhanced communication between the police and partners occurred in all of the operations contained within this report. It is also been shown that, where it is possible to develop a coordinated strategy with partners prior to the arrest phase(s), greater benefits may be realised. A commitment to proactive partnership work, though an ongoing challenge due to the sensitive nature of drug enforcement activity, seems to represent an area where more common ground can be found and advances made.

Balancing operational integrity and community partnership work is

unquestionably a difficult task. To that end, the most successful operations undertook a baseline assessment of what different partners might contribute to the operation and how the proposals could fit with their organisational priorities. This can only be done through direct communications with these agencies and by developing an intimate knowledge of their own organisational objectives. While sometimes these may appear to be in conflict with what police enforcement operations may be attempting to achieve, making a commitment to enhancing communication and developing constructive working relationships will be more beneficial in the long term.

Where it is possible, efforts should be made to develop links into the local business community as well. Evidence produced in this report indicates that businesses are often eager to work with the police and provide assistance. Of course, this may be entirely dependent on whether such cooperation is in their best interests and offers some kind of direct benefit. Where this is the case, making use of the additional resources and support they can offer may help to lessen some of the costs associated with protracted enforcement operations.

Many of the teams noted the importance of having dedicated CPS staff specifically assigned to the operation. This was a feature of many of the operations, and the level of success achieved in conviction rates and guilty pleas reported in many of the examples within this report and the consequent savings in associated court costs demonstrates the potential benefits.

For most of the operations in this report the measures of success were largely restricted to operational measures and information on the impact of the operations on drug-related harms and communities was limited. As the majority of teams responsible for the operations included within this report are very much focused on the enforcement side of police

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activity, it was often reported that following up with the community and determining the impact of the operation on the ground is something they simply lack the time or ability to do. It is also the case that operations targeted at the higher levels of criminal networks operating at the regional, national and international level will inevitably find it hard to demonstrate impact at the community level. This is therefore an area that needs considerable development if the overall effectiveness of operations is to be properly demonstrated. However, developing stronger linkages with other organisations that specialise in community engagement and consultation is needed. This could also facilitate the development of community-based initiatives to be developed in anticipation of the enforcement operations conclusion without tying up staff within the specific unit that is conducting the operation.

The limited information provided with respect to both costs and benefits did not allow any assessment of the value for money of the different operations in this report. It is clear that many of the operations were very resource intensive but in several cases it was possible to obtain resources, both financial and in kind, from other agencies and business. An additional benefit of this was the added buy-in of those organisations into the operations concerned. In some cases the large amounts of assets confiscated during the operation will in time have provided a source of revenue. It was also noted in several cases that the operations yielded information relating to other areas of criminality – an additional benefit that should not be overlooked.

Finally, as briefly touched upon earlier the importance of support from senior command is vital. That being said, it was often reported that drug enforcement investigations sit relatively low on the list of priorities. Whether this is actually the case is irrelevant. What is important to note is that the operations included within

this report were highly successfully because they had the encouragement and support of senior command and management. In some instances where resources initially provided proved to be insufficient, additional funds and manpower were provided. Without such support, it is unlikely these operations would have achieved the results for which they have been recognised in these awards.

