

Response from the Police & Crime Commissioner of Devon and Cornwall to An inspection of the south-west regional response to serious and organised crime

As APCC joint lead for serious organised crime (SOC), I know how important it is for police forces and other agencies to properly understand, assess and respond to SOC threats locally, as well working collaboratively across the region and beyond.

HMICFRS identified some positive practice within the South West ROCU, including the way they work with and support police forces, and joint working with partner agencies. Inspectors also recognised Devon and Cornwall Police's improved strategic governance which will support an improved response to SOC. However the report also identified a number of challenges that both the force and the ROCU face, particularly in the allocation of resources and capacity.

Inspectors also highlighted problems with the force's crime recording and intelligence system NICHE, and the backlog in intelligence reports as a result. I am however pleased to see that the force took steps to address and resolve these issues in the time between the inspection and the publication of the report.

There is clearly still significant work for us to do both locally and regionally to tackle SOC. I have asked the Chief Constable to provide me with a full briefing which outlines his plans for improvement, at a future meeting of my Accountability Board.

Chief Constable's comments

I fully acknowledge the findings of the inspection, which rightly highlight the excellent work being carried out across the force. At the same time, I recognise and accept the areas identified for improvement and appreciate the constructive feedback provided. Within the force, there is a clearly articulated framework of structures, responsibilities, and ownership which will drive our improvement plans. Serious and organised crime (SOC) is a central consideration across all strands of policing – from neighbourhood to specialist crime resources.

We recognised the critical importance of enhancing collaborative working with our partners and local communities. There is both a need and an opportunity to build greater awareness and reporting of SOC, enabling a deeper understanding of the harm it causes to individuals, communities and wider public confidence.

We remain fully committed to addressing SOC through the nationally recognised 4P approach; embedded in our operational and strategic response.

Area for improvement

The South West Regional Organised Crime Unit and its constituent forces should improve how they assess threats.

Action planned/taken: Devon and Cornwall Police have focused on ensuring consistency of threat assessments, now using dedicated moderators within a singular team, and created greater links into the regional organised crime threat assessment (ROCTA) team. As part of the serious and organised crime (SOC) local profile the force is now better engaged with partners, ensuring their data is used in scoring. Lead responsible officer (LRO) training has commenced, alongside proactive work and ongoing liaison with Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) to understand wider threats. The force has also enhanced its disruption submissions, whilst using local governance structures to understand, assess and review threats more consistently.

Devon and Cornwall Police will work collaboratively with the Southwest Regional Organised Crime Unit (SWROCU) to coordinate and enhance threat assessments, but will continue to make improvements locally including further LRO training, ongoing liaison with triggering Organised Crime Groups (OCG's), deconfliction, enhanced partnership engagement and the introduction of a 4P App based programme in support of LRO's.

Area for improvement

The South West Regional Organised Crime Unit and its constituent forces should improve how they work together to tackle serious and organised crime.

Action planned/taken: The force has focused on providing liaison, governance, and structure to serious and organised crime (SOC) with a Professional Investigation Programme level 3 (PIP3) Director of intelligence (DOI) recently taking the lead for the force SOC portfolio. A local SOC delivery plan has been created to aid progression and liaison, and greater links are forged through regional taskings, such as regional tactical intelligence group, regional tactical tasking and co-ordination group and regional organised crime threat assessment managers meeting to understand threat, harm and risk. Devon and Cornwall Police 2025-2027 control strategy has a focus on organised crime, ensuring SOC is everyone's responsibility.

Area for improvement

Devon and Cornwall Police should make sure that its intelligence system is fit for purpose.

Action planned/taken: There have been significant developments with the use of NICHE across the organisation, specifically ongoing training in support of inputting and publishing intelligence. The force has invested in written and video bitesize training to encourage submissions and reduce rejections of submitted intelligence. Resources have been identified from other taskings to review and publish intelligence. Intelligence is published within 24 hours in 75% of cases. Importantly this is against a backdrop of sustained month by month increase in intelligence submissions in key areas of our control strategies, including violence against women and girls (VAWG), child sexual exploitation (CSE) and organised drug supply, and submitted from a broad spectrum of departments (21% increase in call management and

communications unit (CMCU) and 14% increase in neighbourhood). The department are sustaining the ability to review more intelligence (15% increase since February 2025), publishing it quicker and have reduced and sustained a vast reduction in backlogs and re-works required.

There is ongoing work to implement further expansion of automation to our intelligence processes, alongside further enhancements of training across the organisation. There is a strong and auditable performance management structure of intelligence on a daily and monthly basis overseen by the Director of Intelligence, which is now business as usual.