



Police Service
of Northern Ireland

Serious and Organised Crime Strategy

2022-2023



**we care
we listen
we act**

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Chief Constable's Welcome



I am keen that we manage risks and emerging issues relevant to specific crime types and that we continue to communicate what we do to the public. It is important that we portray key messages relating to organised crime, to increase confidence in policing and to educate communities of risks relevant to them and their families.

The strategy has been developed to identify key areas for continued development and improvement to guide The Police Service of Northern Ireland's commitment to tackling the harm caused to our communities through organised crime. This will require a concerted collaborative effort to achieve the best outcomes.

The key themes for tackling such criminality is focused under Pursue, Prepare and Protect, Prevent and Partnership and it is how we aim to protect individuals, business and communities in Northern Ireland from organised crime.

Serious and Organised Crime is a blight on our communities; it exploits the vulnerable, destroys community confidence and undermines a thriving, safe and peaceful Northern Ireland.

I am pleased to introduce the Serious and Organised Crime Strategy of the Police Service of Northern Ireland which will deliver a whole system approach to tackling such criminality, crime which is estimated to cost the UK economy £37 billion annually.

Simon Byrne
Chief Constable
Police Service of
Northern Ireland

Who We Are

The Police Service of Northern Ireland is the policing organisation for all of Northern Ireland.

We see our role as a visible, accessible, responsive and community-focused service that reflects the needs of those who count on us.



Our Purpose

Keeping People Safe.

We are the Police and our purpose is to serve our community and to keep safe those that live, work and visit here. It is when we work together with our communities; our partners and our colleagues, that we achieve our greatest success.

What We Do

We Care: We Listen: We Act.

We are an organisation that demonstrates through our actions and behaviours that we care, we listen and we act.

Our purpose

Keeping People Safe

What we do

We care : We listen : We act

How we do it

By delivering visible, accessible, responsive, community-focused policing

Introduction

Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) has an impact at all levels within Northern Ireland, causing significant economic and societal harm. This type of criminality is planned, co-ordinated, targets the most vulnerable and is frequently motivated by financial gain.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland leads on investigations into Serious and Organised Crime in Northern Ireland. This is enhanced by our partnership working with a number of departments and agencies including; the National Crime Agency (NCA), Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC), United Kingdom Border Force (UKBF), Home Office Immigration Enforcement (HOIE) and the Department of Justice (DOJ).

In line with the Organised Crime Strategy produced by the Department of Justice, in partnership with members of the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF), our strategy builds on the arrangements currently in place.

The overarching aim is to protect individuals, communities and businesses in Northern Ireland from organised crime.

This collaboration is key to the successful targeting and disruption of organised criminality within Northern Ireland.

We have created this Serious and Organised Crime Strategy to enhance and develop our operational response to this issue whilst working in concord with the Department of Justice and partners to address key priorities.

Through this, we will assess how effective we are at disrupting serious and organised crime with a focus on existing threats, whilst responding to new and emerging crime types. By monitoring our performance against specific, judgement indicators we can provide a baseline for progress and allow us to identify new work streams and project leads. This will inform our strategic actions for the year ahead in tackling serious and organised crime within Northern Ireland.

What is Serious and Organised Crime?

Serious and organised crime is carried out by people working together in groups (Organised Crime Groups) or as part of a wider network across other jurisdictions. This type of criminality involves planning and co-ordination and has the ability to cause significant harm. Whilst drug related offences are typically the most common type of organised crime, it also involves other types of criminal activity, which seeks to exploit the most vulnerable.

The financial harm faced by victims can be significant, however this does not fully capture the level of suffering caused to them and the wider community through economic impact, health and safety concerns, coercive control, fear, threats of violence and serious harm.

These criminal groups act in pursuit of a material gain, usually financial, however in cases of Organised Crime Groups linked to paramilitary activity, community control is often a motivation.

Serious and Organised Crime is a corrosive threat which effects more citizens than any other national security threat and is estimated to cost the United Kingdom at least £37 billion annually.

The NCA assess that threats in relation to Serious and Organised Crime are increasing in both volume and complexity. As a result, it has been identified as a national priority.



Impact of Serious and Organised Crime in Northern Ireland

Serious and organised crime within Northern Ireland has a significant level of impact affecting individuals, businesses and the wider community.

There is also significant interaction and relationships between Organised Crime Groups operating on both sides of Northern Ireland and Ireland as they work together across a number of organised crime types.

It is estimated that around one third of these Northern Ireland based Organised Crime Groups are paramilitary organisations or have suspected paramilitary links. Both Republican and Loyalist paramilitary groupings are linked to criminality. We assess that they engage in the extortion of legitimate businesses and those involved in drug related activity, illegal money lending, money laundering, the importation and distribution of drugs and tobacco and also violent crimes such as assaults and shootings which can inflict serious injury or have fatal results.

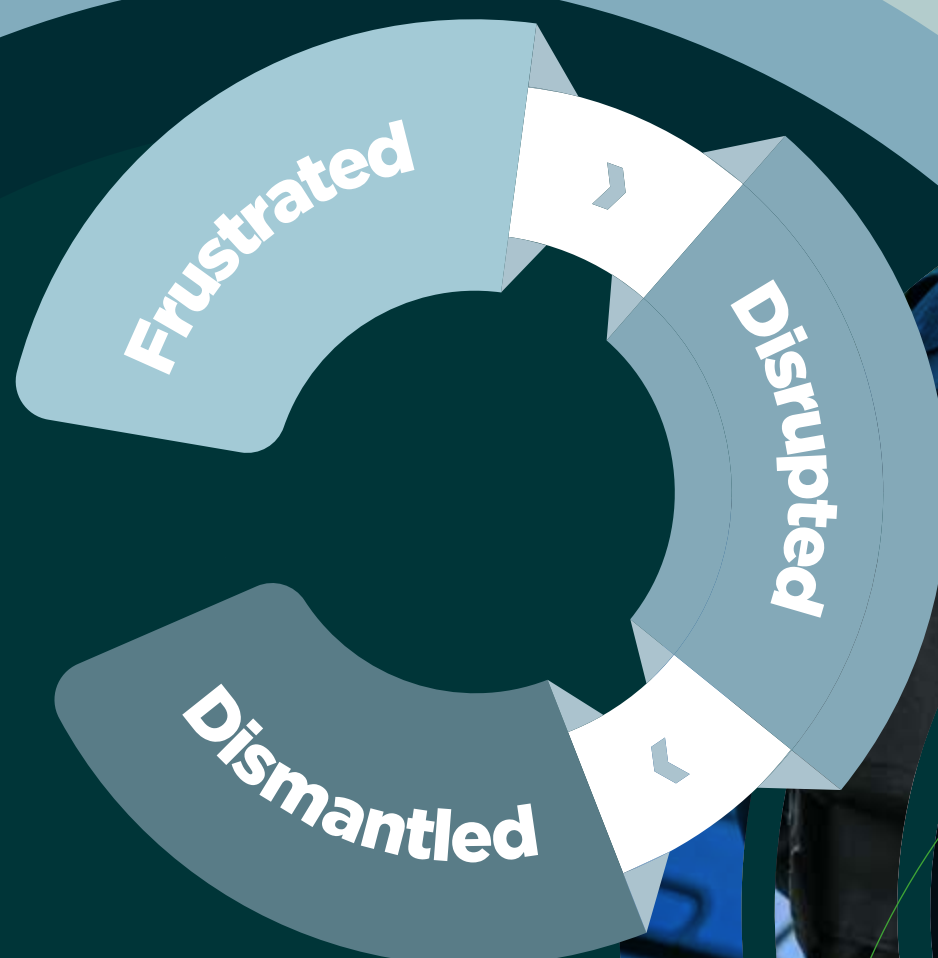
Whilst the COVID-19 pandemic created new opportunities to commit crime for Organised Crime Groups, the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union has presented criminal groups with the opportunity to pursue further avenues of exploitation.

With travel routes being affected along the United Kingdom's channel coast with stricter border controls now in place, we are tracking the evolution of new and emerging criminal routes into the United Kingdom, through Northern Ireland as a consequence of the Common Travel Area. The Police Service of Northern Ireland are aware of changes to the transportation of illegal drugs, firearms, people and illicit goods through these routes.

Our Approach to Tackling Serious and Organised Crime

Our ambition is to reduce the capacity and capability of Organised Crime Groups through targeted activity, which will help us achieve safer, more engaged and more confident communities.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland currently assess and record activity against Organised Crime Groups on the following levels:



Frustrated

- Planned activity by the Police Service which prevents Organised Crime Groups from carrying out criminal activity, or
- The arrest and/or instigation of criminal proceedings against one or more group member(s) (not main principal) for an offence that would normally warrant a prison sentence, or
- Seizure of assets on one occasion.

Disrupted

- The arrest and/or instigation of criminal proceedings against one main principal for an offence which would normally warrant a prison sentence, or

- The arrest and/or instigation of criminal proceedings against two or more group members (not main principal) for an offence that would normally warrant a prison sentence, or
- Seizure of assets on two or more occasions or a substantial single seizure.

Dismantled

- The arrest and charge or instigation of criminal proceedings against the main principals for an offence, which would normally warrant a prison sentence.

As of September 2021, the Police Service of Northern Ireland is responsible for investigating 71 Organised Crime Groups. To date, a number of successful interventions such as searches, arrests and seizures have been carried out resulting in an outcome of frustration, disruption or dismantlement of an Organised Crime Group. This demonstrates our efforts in tackling those involved in organised criminality.

Partnerships and collaborative working:

Tackling serious and organised crime poses a great challenge. In order to protect the public from harm and enable them to be vigilant and not support organised criminals, it is important we as a Police Service, work in partnership to respond to these threats. By working collaboratively we can utilise criminal and civil tools as a means of disruption.

The Police Service of Northern Ireland's Organised Crime Unit operates as a partner in the Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF), Joint Agency Task Force (JATF) and the Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF) in the fight against Serious and Organised Crime related criminality. Through these partnerships, we are committed to targeting those who seek to exploit the most vulnerable and harm society.

Organised Crime Task Force

The Organised Crime Task Force provides a strategic multi-agency forum in order to tackle Serious and Organised Crime and reduce the harm it causes to communities, individuals and businesses in Northern Ireland. The multi-agency partnership is between the Police Service of Northern Ireland, a number of partner agencies, Northern Ireland Government Departments, the Policing Board, the business community and the community overall.

Locality based policing, allows us to work together more effectively to deliver a cohesive approach in tackling serious and organised crime.

Joint Agency Task Force

The Joint Agency Task Force was set up to tackle organised and cross-jurisdictional crime. Partner agencies such as the National Crime Agency, Immigration Enforcement and Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs work together with the Police Service in a concerted and enhanced effort to protect the public from the threat and harm caused by organised criminality. The objective is to build on existing frameworks and to increase collective effectiveness within existing operational and financial constraints. It continues to provide opportunities for real time collaboration between An Garda Síochána (AGS), the Police Service and partner agencies in their combined efforts to frustrate, disrupt and dismantle the activity of Organised Crime Groups.

Paramilitary Crime Task Force

The Paramilitary Crime Task Force is a partnership initiative which aims to tackle paramilitary linked criminality in Northern Ireland. It comprises of officers and staff from the Police Service of Northern Ireland, HMRC and NCA all working as part of one co-located team, sharing capacity, capability, intelligence and analysis.

Operation Fusion

In order to assess and identify the crime related threats resulting from EU Exit, the Police Service of Northern Ireland has developed a capability, provided by a partnership approach to current and emerging threats by criminal hauliers and any other emerging crime type.

Due to the scale, sophistication and geography of criminality involved, this multi-agency approach has been implemented with our Organised Crime Unit and partner agencies under the banner of Operation Fusion.

Multi-agency policing operations are conducted at ports and across road networks, targeting the movement of illegal commodities throughout the Common Travel Area. By working together as part of a collective effort, members of the OCTF and partner agencies represented on the SOC Emerging Threat Subgroup have demonstrated their commitment to disrupting those who seek to cause harm through the illegal importation and supply of drugs in Northern Ireland.

Our aims and objectives

This strategy has been developed to exist alongside and build upon the wider Northern Ireland Organised Crime Strategy, to consolidate and enhance our response to existing organised crime threats and enable us to identify new and emerging crime types.

By providing a joint and flexible strategic response under the Northern Ireland Organised Crime Strategy to our

common threats and issues, we aim to have a better understanding of serious and organised crime within Northern Ireland and protect our communities and those that are vulnerable from harm.

The Northern Ireland Organised Crime Strategy, to which we are aligned, is structured across the thematic pillars of;

Prepare and Protect

Individuals, communities, systems and businesses to mitigate vulnerability and impact.

Pursue

Offenders through investigation, disruption and prosecution.

Organised Crime Strategy Thematic Pillars

Prevent

Deter and divert people from engaging and re-engaging in organised crime.

Partnership

To create a sustainable, efficient, effective and collaborative system response.

These themes are then mapped against six strategic objectives contained within that strategy.

Whilst the Police Service works to the strategic objectives set out in the Northern Ireland Organised Crime Strategy, this document describes the specific actions that we will undertake in support of those strategic objectives.

In keeping with the overarching thematic pillars of PURSUE, PREPARE, PROTECT, PREVENT and PARTNERSHIP and the underpinning aims of the six strategic objectives as outlined in the Northern Ireland Organised Crime Strategy, we have developed ten strategic operational objectives specific to the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

The delivery and successful implementation of these objectives will be measured by monitoring our progress against judgement indicators, influenced by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary, Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFS). This will enable us to assess our effectiveness, conduct consistent reviews, evaluate current standards and identify any gaps in service delivery, which in turn will lead to the development of new work streams.

The following pages outline how we will map our strategic operational objectives under the thematic areas. These objectives compliment the strategic objectives as defined within the Northern Ireland Organised Crime Strategy.

The Serious and Organised Crime Strategy Action Plan demonstrates how these objectives are aligned, highlighting our ongoing activity and outstanding actions, along with what we will do to achieve these outcomes.

The judgement indicators for each objective provide a benchmarking tool, in order to self-assess our

performance in respect of disrupting serious and organised crime, across the following areas;

- Paramilitary criminality
- Drugs
- Criminal use of firearms
- Child sexual abuse and exploitation
- Modern slavery and human trafficking
- Cybercrime
- Fraud and money laundering



Aim

To protect individuals, communities and businesses in Northern Ireland from organised crime, focusing on strategic operational objectives under four key themes.



| Theme | Operational Objectives |
|---|---|
| PURSUE Offenders through investigation, disruption and prosecution. | 1.1 Improve how we assess the threat and risk from serious and organised crime. |
| | 2.1 Use intelligence to develop our understanding of the threat from serious and organised crime. |
| | 2.2 Improve how we identify and assess organised crime groups. |
| | 3.1 Continuously seek to improve the impact our activity has on serious and organised crime. |
| | 3.2 Ensure our response has a significant effect on disrupting and dismantling serious and organised crime. |

| Theme | Action |
|--|--|
| PREPARE AND PROTECT Individuals, communities, systems and businesses to mitigate vulnerability and impact. | 4.1 Ensure we communicate and engage effectively with the public about serious and organised crime to raise awareness. |

| Theme | Action |
|---|---|
| PREVENT Deter and divert people from engaging and re-engaging in organised crime. | 5.1 Proactively identify and deter those at risk of being drawn into serious and organised crime. 5.2 Ensure an effective approach to prevent re-offending of those involved in serious and organised crime. |

| Theme | Action |
|--|--|
| PARTNERSHIP To create a sustainable, efficient, effective and collaborative system response. | 6.1 Effectively work in collaboration with our partners, to frustrate, disrupt, dismantle and investigate organised criminality. 6.2 Work together to maximise opportunities to identify and interdict Serious and Organised Crime offenders exploiting the border, including those involved in insider threat and close vulnerabilities. |

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