

Report to the Commissioner's Governance Board

Date: 7 November 2016

Title: Emerging Risks and Cross Border Crime

From: Chief Constable



INTRODUCTION

1. Due to Kent's unique position as a gateway to Europe and its proximity to London, there continues to be an element of criminality in the form of organised crime groups and urban street gangs who operate across county borders and into Kent. This includes urban street gangs from the Metropolitan Police Service area developing 'county line' drug networks into Kent, and organised crime groups who engage in serious crime within the county and those facilitating illegal migrant entry into Kent, and therefore into the UK, through its many ports and coastline.
2. Cross border criminals are identified as those that attend a location with the sole purpose of committing a crime. These do not include tourists or students that may become involved in a violent incident or other crime whilst temporally residing in the county. The actual number of cross border criminals that are operating in Kent is difficult to define; due to their nature they have often left the county before the crime has even been reported, and therefore, these crimes are complex to quantify and detect.
3. Kent Police has recently refreshed its Control Strategy; the identified priority themes follow a scanning and assessment process. The Control Strategy includes: Modern Day Slavery (MS) and Human Trafficking (HT), Gangs, Child (Sexual) Exploitation, Domestic Abuse and Serious Sexual Offences, High Harm Impact crime and Counter Terrorism and Domestic Extremism. This is the second year that Kent has included these elements of harm and vulnerability within its priority Control Strategy.
4. Kent has recently released its Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) local profiles which are designed to enable partners to work together to tackle organised crime within their local communities and prevent vulnerable individuals from being drawn into serious and organised crime. These individuals can be identified as, but not limited to foreign students, looked after children, troubled family members, unaccompanied asylum seeking children, and people already caught up in gangs and criminal enterprises. The profiles have been launched both within Kent Police through in-Site, and on the KCC Community Safety Portal which is accessed by partner agencies who have signed up to information sharing agreements.

CROSS BORDER THREATS

5. There are a number of trends currently experienced in Kent, and other counties, from cross border criminals. These include:

5.1 Human Trafficking (HT) and Modern Day Slavery (MDS)

The Modern Slavery Act was enacted in March 2015 and was an important milestone in the fight against slavery and for social justice. The Home Secretary requested a review of the operation of the criminal justice aspects of the Modern Slavery Act. The review was published at the start of the Summer and made a number of recommendations to policing, CPS and the judiciary in relation to legislation and powers. The recommendations for policing focus on: training for investigators, debriefing and sharing lessons learnt across the judicial system and reinvigorating the Force and Regional SPOC network. The Prime Minister has announced the need to establish a Task Force which is likely to focus heavily on the end-to-end National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and our Pursue capability.

Within Kent there has been an increase in the number of HT and MDS crimes reported, which include cultural violence such as forced marriage, honour based violence as well as sexual exploitation (prostitution) and forced labour/servitude, although the volume of reports are currently low. An element of this is linked to illegal organised immigration crime (OIC) and the trafficking of persons into slavery for forced labour, cannabis and drug cultivation and the sex industry. It is acknowledged that there is an under reporting of these crimes and increased reporting, awareness and intelligence is encouraged.

The Serious Crime Directorate (SCD) has established a Modern Slavery Coordinator for Kent and Essex who has made great progress in delivering some of the recommendations in line with the review, whilst other recommendations are delivered through the 4P (Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare) plans. This post is funded for two years by the Police and Crime Commissioners for Kent and Essex. Early results have included a refresh of the Anti-trafficking partnership, local threat groups, A21¹ partnership for housing accommodation and working with overseas embassies to support local victims. This has positively placed Kent in the spotlight nationally due to its proactive response in tackling these crimes.

The National Crime Agency (NCA) announced a national, coordinated approach to MDS and launched Operation Perceptual; days of focused activity including the execution of warrants, partnership interventions, safeguarding and community engagement. Kent has recently run a two week period of Op Perceptual activity between 10th October and 21st October, alongside the national operational period.

Kent are currently a pilot area for the Home Office Operation Dovetail; testing of proposed arrangements to move the entirety of Counter Terrorism Prevent activity into the Local Authority by 2017/18. Engagement with this operation, part funded by the Commissioner, will benefit communities and vulnerable individuals whilst disrupting those looking to exploit CT opportunities through the facilitation of domestic extremists through trafficking and OIC.

Current intelligence received identifies specific incidents and locations of interest. Through the recent refresh of the Control Strategy, and the launch of the Local Serious Crime profiles, there is an anticipation of increased quality and quantity of intelligence received, that will allow for increased proactive targeting of offenders and further safeguarding opportunities of potential vulnerable victims.

5.2 Gangs

There are around 380 identified Urban Street Gang (USG) members, originating from the MPS that have been active in Kent over the last 12 months. These members are classed as active due to having a 'footprint' within Kent either from being stop and checked, sighted or from intelligence received indicating they are actively dealing drugs in the county; although less than half have a permanent residence in the county. The USG members will predominately be involved in running "county lines" drug dealing networks across Kent. The USG members recruit vulnerable individuals into their networks and exploit them in order to increase their profits made from drug dealing and other criminal activities. The types of individuals who can be exploited by gangs in this way include looked after children, unaccompanied asylum seeking children, persons with mental health or drug addiction problems whose properties are often subject of "cuckooing" by the gangs.

Tactics such as serious assaults are often used by gangs as a means to enforce drug debts or to exert control over rival groups. Links between urban street gangs and organised crime groups have been observed in Kent in the last twelve months, with members of one MPS based gang being arrested and charged with aggravated burglary offences in Kent, and attempted murder of a rival criminal by way of a drive-by shooting in Essex.

Each local policing division provides resources on tackling gang crime with intelligence and coordination provided by SCD. SCD continue to operate an embedded officer within the MPS Intelligence structures to maximise opportunities for cross border activity. Gangs are a priority for Kent Police and feature as prominent resource requirements at the monthly Force and Divisional Tasking and Coordination Group meetings.

5.3 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

CSE is a current and growing concern nationally. Kent has included CSE within its priority Control Strategy themes for the last two years. It has also established a CSE Team (CSET); which adopts a multi-agency partnership approach to tackle CSE and safeguard vulnerable children. The team comprises:

- Police: 1 x Detective Inspector, 2 x Detective Sergeants, 4 x Detective Constables, 3 x Police Staff Investigators, 3 x Intelligence Officers, 1 x Trainer, 2 x Analysts, 1 x Admin Support.
- Partners: 1 x KCC Early Years Help Co-ordinator, 2 x Social Workers from Medway, 2 x KCC Social Care Manager (1 is currently in the process of being recruited) and 1 x Health worker.

¹ A21 Partnership is a 3rd sector charity that supports victims of modern slavery and trafficking with housing support along with welfare and health support.

The Post Implementation Review of CSET conducted by Kent police recommended the creation of an operational framework to support the understanding and clarity of the team's work, providing a framework for quality assurance. This will provide clarity to partners and support the strategic oversight of the team's core function. The determination of the operational remit of the CSET is:

Identify the intelligence picture for the county and then take on proactive investigations into the highest risk CSE cases.

Work streams include:

- On street CSE
- Those CSE investigations that involve a degree of organisation
- Those CSE investigations that involve multiple offenders and/or victims
- Those CSE cases involving victims assessed as high risk of CSE or are otherwise particularly vulnerable.

The team are also responsible for training and raising awareness of CSE with police, partners, professionals and the public.

The CSE team will develop intelligence and fully utilise multi-agency investigation, disruption and safeguarding opportunities available within the enhanced capabilities of the CSE team to manage and reduce risk to the victims and bring offenders to justice. Since January 2016 the team has assessed over 1720 submissions of intelligence relating to CSE.

The volume of live investigations and the associated high levels of risk versus capacity within CSET are carefully monitored. The team are now fully resourced following the recruitment of staff to meet the initial agreed establishment. The volume of intelligence being submitted continues to remain high with overtime being used to manage peaks in demand. A paper was submitted to both the Kent and Medway Child Safeguarding Boards to request uplift in financial support to increase the establishment of the CSET in the form of two additional administration support posts. This was on hold pending the outcome of the Post Implementation Review (PIR) but has now been completed and the report confirmed the requirement for a resource investment to triage intelligence reports. This will provide the team with increased resilience to prioritise cases and prevent children being unnecessarily exposed to the risk of harm.

Police and Partnership CSE Champions are well established across Kent. Medway held their first CSE Champions event on 17th September 2016.

A number of the victims that are engaged with the CSET includes looked after children. Missing Person Liaison Officers on divisions are briefed on CSE concerns and are aware of the locations of a large portion of the looked after children accommodated in their area. Work is progressing with CSET to improve information sharing between other local authorities when accommodating children in Kent. The level of service provided to those children who subsequently go missing and are at risk of harm will be improved with this information. This will increase the opportunities to locate children within the first 24 hours, ensure they are safeguarded and reduce the cases of long term missing. Work is also scheduled to develop better engagement with care home providers to establish stronger protocols for safeguarding children.

Kent County Council has ownership of the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) who are accommodated within Kent. It is the role of law enforcement agencies to tackle organised criminality that seeks to facilitate their unlawful entry into the UK. The County continues to see a steady rise in the number of UASC despite the implementation of the National Dispersal Scheme. The details of premises across the county that accommodate Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children are provided to each Community Safety Unit. Work is underway through the UASC Partnership Board to share information, and map locations of UASC to understand if there are any issues with crime and ASB, CSE gangs and Human Trafficking or Modern Slavery. The aim is to undertake engagement in these areas through CSPs and Community Liaison Officers to provide information on local law, values, health and culture in the UK, and how to access services if required to try to prevent offending and missing persons.

5.4 Organised Crime Groups (OCG): Operation Scorpion

The Serious Crime Directorate (SCD) has launched Operation Scorpion in Kent. This is a priority operation for the Force which will support officers and staff in working together and with our partners to tackle OCGs. Efforts to tackle Serious and Organised Crime are managed through the 4P approach. Kent has an excellent reputation in respect of the Pursue element. The focus of Op Scorpion is to further strengthen Kent's approach under the other three headings of Prevent, Protect and Prepare.

The Op Scorpion plan will further develop governance structures, communication plans, local Serious and Organised Crime profiles, defined operational plans for each OCG and local SOC partnerships. The Op Scorpion Team has worked with the Kent Community Safety Team to develop an online toolkit to assist practitioners tasked with tackling OCGs and reducing the harm that they cause.

OCGs that have been assessed will be allocated a Lead Responsible Officer (LRO). This LRO will work with the Intelligence Team to develop a 4P plan to tackle the OCG. The LRO will engage with local and county partners in order to achieve a truly multi-agency approach to disrupting and dismantling that OCG. It is hoped that other agencies will also seek to nominate potential OCGs for multiagency ownership, and also that such agencies may be the Lead Responsible Agency/Officer for OCGs.

The SCD Organised Crime Group Management Unit is responsible for assessing and scoring the harm caused from each Kent/Essex owned OCG against nationally agreed criteria. This enables effective tasking and co-ordination of resources through the Force TCG meeting against those OCGs causing the highest harm. There are 43 OCGs mapped and scored and owned by Kent at this time. The types of crime these groups are engaged in includes class A and B drug supply, human trafficking/modern day slavery, fraud, serious violent crime, serious acquisitive crime, and firearms offences.

The unit is responsible for close liaison with both the South East Region and Eastern Region intelligence units to understand how OCGs being managed by other Forces or Law Enforcement Agencies impact upon Kent. There are 387 OCGs owned by other police Forces and other law enforcement agencies which are suspected to be impacting upon Kent to some degree. In the main this involves those OCGs exploiting the ports to provide access to Europe. In some cases OCG management can be referred from Kent to the regional or national agencies for support or ownership.

5.5 Artifice burglars

When committing this offence, offenders pretend to be an official from a recognised service such as the Police Service, Water Board, or energy company, in order to gain entry to an address. They predominately target elderly and vulnerable persons and work in pairs. Within Kent there have been 75 artifice burglaries in the last 12 months. This is a decreasing trend with one third fewer victims of artifice burglaries compared to the previous 12 months.

Kent is a member of the Operation Liberal Forces who share intelligence, crime reports and methods and offender descriptions. This allows Forces to link offences and ensure that the cross border artifice burglaries are collectively targeted and brought to justice for the offences they committed in all counties. In Kent 30% of artifice burglars have been identified in the last year, and a third of these have since been charged. This is a particularly difficult offence to identify and locate the offender due to the transient nature of cross border offenders.

5.6 Organised shoplifting

Nationally there has been an increase in organised bulk shoplifting offences where loaded trolleys are pushed out of supermarkets into waiting vans, or designer and high value "shopping list" items are selected within stores and taken to waiting vehicles. Often this will be undertaken by a group of offenders acting as a distraction and an accomplice.

Kent Police is a leading member of the Business Crime Advisory Group and employs a business crime lead to work in partnership with local businesses, Chamber of Commerce, partner agencies and counterparts in other Forces to ensure that this type of crime is effectively tackled and that intelligence, including ANPR, is shared.

EMERGING RISKS

6. A further factor in cross border crime is the emerging risk and growing concern in the use of digital and online facilitation of crime. There are many crime types that are increasingly affected by digital crime including child exploitation, theft and fraud, stalking and harassment, and radicalisation. Additionally the organisation of gangs and criminal groups through the use of social media and instant messaging applications has meant that they can be more fluid and versatile in their operation. The increased demand is being actively managed by the Head of Forensics with some examinations being outsourced to an external provider. Local digital hubs within each division are being developed to manage the seizure of items and ensure clear digital forensic strategies are determined to support investigations.
7. The Change Team are currently working on a new working model to tackle the increasing demand in domestic abuse and mental health, and have considered the increasing risk of digital crime, whilst designing the Force's capability and capacity to tackle new and emerging threats and vulnerabilities.

An emerging threat that needs to be highlighted is the forthcoming Police and Crime Bill 2016. Contained within this Bill are two key elements: Pre-Charge Bail and changes to powers under the Mental Health Act 1983. A task group has been set up, led by Chief Superintendent Curtis, to assess the impact of the pre-charge bail elements, whilst the Concordat Steering Group are currently discussing and overseeing the provision being developed in relation to the Mental Health Act changes.

Previously it has been highlighted that there is a growing volume of Section 136 detentions under the Mental Health Act and an increasing amount of officer time is spent dealing with mental health issues. This increase is having a knock on effect on all agencies and is subject to on-going review.

SUMMARY

8. There are many risks, both current and emerging, that impact on vulnerable persons. Kent Police are prioritising working with partners, encouraging reporting and intelligence submission, and relentlessly identifying areas of cross border and emerging criminal activity to safeguard vulnerable individuals and protect its communities.