

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER FOR LEICESTERSHIRE POLICE & CRIME PANEL

Report of	POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER
Subject	HMICFRS THEMATIC INSPECTION – ‘BOTH SIDES OF THE COIN’
Date	THURSDAY 20 FEBRUARY 2020 – 2:00 p.m.
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Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Panel of the HMICFRS Thematic Inspection entitled ‘Both sides of the Coin’ which assesses police forces’ ability to identify, respond to and disrupt county lines related criminality and abuse.

Recommendations

2. The Panel are recommended to discuss the contents of the report.

Background

3. The Government’s Serious Violence Strategy (2018) identified strong links between increases in violence and the exploitation of children and vulnerable adults by criminal drug dealers operating county lines. The inspection concentrated on the police but also included the National Crime Agency.
4. Inspectors from HMICFRS analysed documents and data provided by police forces, the national county lines co-ordination centre, the National Crime Agency and the Home Office. They also visited and interviewed staff at the co-ordination centre, three police-led multi-agency regional organised crime units and ten police forces. Leicestershire Police was not visited as part of this inspection.
5. Of the ten recommendations contained within the report four were directed at the Home Office, two to the College of Policing, two to the National Crime Agency, one for the Department of Education and one for the National County Lines Co-ordination Centre.
6. Leicestershire Police are not mentioned within the inspection report.

Force Position

7. Leicestershire Police recognises County Lines as a form of Serious Organised Crime which is a strategic priority area. The exploitation of vulnerable people, child or adult, alongside the use of weapons and drugs supply makes it a theme that impacts across multiple areas of the force such as investigations, safeguarding, neighbourhoods and intelligence.
8. The PCC holds the force to account for the matters relating to County Lines through the Strategic Assurance Board, attendance at Force Performance Meetings and by being briefed on specific operational matters.
9. The PCC recognises that County Lines, like other forms of Serious Organised Crime, requires a whole system approach across partnerships to effectively protect those at risk, relentlessly pursue those responsible and identify signs of its presence within communities to build resilience against it.
10. The PCC achieves this approach through the Strategic Partnership Board and its associated subgroups such as Vulnerability Executive Board, Strategic Offender Management MAPPA Board and Prevention Board. These focus on different aspects such as Child Criminal Exploitation, Drugs Intervention and high risk locations and individuals.
11. The outcomes of some of the activity can be seen through the partnership campaign #knowthesigns which seeks public support in reporting County Lines and Modern Slavery launched in 2019.
12. The force has developed its response to County Lines over a number of years as it was recognised as early as a growing threat area for Leicestershire Police and was one of the areas of focus for the Serious Harm Reduction Unit.
13. The national assessment details some key areas of development linked to the report are set out in the following three areas;
 - Police Intelligence, Prioritisation and Response
 - Joint Working with other public services
 - Powers and Legislation

Police Intelligence, Prioritisation and Response

14. Leicestershire Police are fully compliant with the national reporting requirements for County Lines and have engaged directly and visited the National County Lines Coordination Centre to ensure there is a clear line of communication and knowledge sharing.
15. The consistent identification of county lines entering and leaving Leicestershire are managed alongside the Organised Crime processes to ensure the same level of scrutiny and resources are available to tackle the threats and ensure vulnerability identification is made in every case.
16. Leicestershire Police supports and engages with the National weeks of intensification which has included dedicating significant operational resources in understanding the true level of threat and harm from county lines. An example that the PCC was briefed on was Operation Lionheart in April 2019 which was a large scale policing operation by the force targeting this area of criminality using local and regional assets.

This resulted in:

- 107 persons convicted
- 168 years from all sentencing
- Weapons and a firearm recovered
- 145 Search Warrants completed
- 47 Safeguarding referrals
- 10 Modern Slavery Referrals

17. The force is continuing to work with local authorities, safeguarding partners and substance misuse partners in maximising the outcome of the operation and ensuring the learning is applied to recognise the signs of County Lines as early as possible to allow for intervention.

Joint Working with other public services

18. The identification and recognition of the early signs of exploitation across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland can be seen through the clear increase in safeguarding referrals that identify Child Criminal Exploitation linked to county lines and organised crime.
19. This is evidenced by the increasing number of joint agency strategy meetings for these young people. This is a significant step change and marks excellent progress across joint activity in this area.
20. The PCC has also funded a Strategic Lead for Child Criminal Exploitation to work across all partners to design operational responses and co-ordination of delivery of this and awareness across the whole force area.
21. This is being further developed by the Vulnerabilities Executive Board to ensure consistent recognition across agencies and design effective interventions. The progress of this partnership board updates the SPB as already outlined.
22. The force and partners, have recognised the threats to children not attending school so targeted activity has taken place at Pupil Referral Units and the wider education system through packages delivered raising awareness of County Lines to pupils and staff alike lead by the Serious Harm Reduction Unit.

Powers and Legislation

23. Leicestershire Police are actively seeking the use of Modern Slavery legislation in tackling all forms of Child Criminal Exploitation including County Lines. Awareness of its application and the defences available have been rigorously reviewed with learning from our operational experiences with enforcement.
24. The force is also increasing its investigative capacity in the area of exploitation and bring the teams together with the Modern Slavery and Child Sexual Exploitation team to ensure all expertise is one location and sharing expertise across each type.
25. The force has successfully managed a number of modern slavery defences presented as part of the investigations allowing the correct people to be safeguarded and those responsible prosecuted.

Implications

Financial: None

Legal: None

Equality – Impact Assessment: None

Risk and Impact: None

Link to Police and Crime Plan: Drug offending is included in the Police and Crime Plan

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – HMICFRS Inspection report – ‘Both sides of the Coin’.

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – HMICFRS Inspection report – ‘Both sides of the Coin’.

Persons to Contact

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