

PCC and CC Force Inspection response record

Version:

Force	Staffordshire
Police and Crime Commissioner	Ben Adams
Chief Constable	Emma Barnett
Title of inspection	An Inspection of the effectiveness of the Regional Organised Crime Units
Inspectorate	 <p>Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services</p>
Summary of inspection	<p>In this inspection, we examined how effectively and efficiently the Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCUs) tackle the threat from serious and organised crime (SOC). SOC remains one of the greatest problems for policing in the UK and overseas. Our last inspection report on ROCUs was published in 2015; Regional Organised Crime Units – A review of capability and effectiveness. Since then, the ROCU network has made substantial progress in some areas.</p> <p>We wanted to see how well ROCUs led the response to SOC while working with local police forces and other law enforcement agencies.</p> <p>We found evidence of some good work, but we also found some inconsistencies. We make six recommendations.</p>
Grade	
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By March 2021, the Home Office should consider what changes to legislation can be made to allow the NCA to formally task ROCUs. • By February 2023, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) lead for SOC, with the Home Office, should devise a technical solution to make exchanging sensitive intelligence between organisations more efficient, and then encourage its adoption and adherence by all relevant forces and the NCA. • By February 2022, chief officers responsible for SOC in each region, with the chief officers of the affected forces, should make sure that systems are in place for senior investigating officers (SIOs) and lead responsible officers (LROs) to work effectively together. • By February 2022, the chief constable with the lead for SOC in each region, with the chief officers of the affected forces, should ensure that a chief officer is appointed with responsibility for each ROCU, as far as practicable working autonomously of force responsibilities. • By August 2021, the NPCC lead for ROCUs, with the NPCC lead for counter corruption, should publish an anti-corruption strategy for ROCUs and then encourage its adoption and adherence by all relevant forces. • By February 2022, the NPCC lead for SOC should design a national function that can make sure ROCUs operate in a co-ordinated and consistent way across England and Wales; the Home Office and other relevant interested parties should adopt the arrangements so devised and provide the necessary resources to ensure their successful operation. • Cause of concern We found that the complexity and short-term nature of ROCU funding has a significant detrimental effect on how well they operate. We also found that local interests, rather than regional and national threat, risk and harm, affected prioritisation
Areas for improvement	

Staffordshire Commissioner and ROCU response

As the Staffordshire Commissioner I welcome the HMICFRS inspection report on Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) but would suggest that the recommendations do not go far enough. ROCUs are at the heart of police efforts to address organised crime, and they need to be properly funded, properly tasked and properly governed. The report is evidence of the urgent need for a sustainable funding model and appropriate guidance required from Government to address these ongoing issues.

ROCU currently rely on fragmented, annual funding streams that often affect their recruitment, planning and operational ability. As the report indicates, PCCs been raising this problem for years, and but the issues remain as they ever were. It was expected that the national review of serious and organised crime by Sir Craig Mackey would again highlight these issues and but this has never been published. Without a sustainable funding model, ROCUs have no alternative than to set an annual budget without getting confirmation of how much money they will receive until well into the financial year. A single, national multi-year serious and organised crime grant for each ROCU would go some way to remedy these problems. I would also recommend that government considers moving to a lead Force model, whereby the budget for ROCUs is held by a single Force, instead of being spread across a range of Forces that can have very different threat profiles. This model works well for counter-terrorism and it should be considered for serious and organised crime.

With regards to the call for the National Crime Agency to have more tasking powers, I recognise this need, but the NCA has to be answerable for these decisions. National tasking decisions can have significant local implications, and at present there is no meaningful mechanisms that allow for a proper two-way discussion about the local implications of national decisions, or the national threats and priorities that require a local response. Police and Crime Commissioners are critical to ensuring the public are represented in those discussions, making sure the NCA is aware of the implications of its activity and is answerable for what it does. ROCUs need to remain “owned” by a local police force so they understand and are responsive to local circumstances, just as counter-terrorism units are.

There are several other issues that need to be reformed that were not covered by the HMICFRS report. I would therefore recommend that a considered and cohesive response to the following issues would better enable a more effective response to serious and organised crime:

- The need for effective local democratic oversight of police use of covert surveillance powers.
- A review of the Proceeds of Crime arrangements. The current legislation around processing cash and assets seized from criminals disincentivises police forces from targeting criminally obtained wealth because Home Office retain too big a share.
- National strategies for serious and organised crime need to be classed as statutory guidance for Police and Crime Plans, and PCCs need to be able to demonstrate how they and the Force they govern are responding to national threats, such as that posed by serious and organised crime.
- PCCs need stronger powers to convene the range of partners that can prevent and respond to serious and organised crime.
- Government needs to act more quickly to address new serious and organised crime threats that emerge, such as the rules around “exempt accommodation”.
- The national policing response to organised fraud needs to be urgently reviewed.

Police and Crime Commissioner's overall comments

More generally, there needs to be more development around preventative work to stop people becoming involved in or vulnerable to serious and organised crime. The harm from organised crime is huge, and our job, whether for Forces, PCCs, or the Home Office, is to give policing and its partners the intelligence, capacity and capability to prevent and detect serious and organised crime, safeguard the vulnerable and bring offenders to justice. This remains a priority for me and I am committed to ensure that we keep the people of Staffordshire safe.