

REPORT TO COMMUNITIES' SERVICES COMMITTEE - 20 FEBRUARY 2020

POLICE SCOTLAND - THEMATIC REPORT: PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF OPERATION CORNER

1 Reason for Report / Summary

- 1.1 To advise members regarding the content of the Preliminary Assessment and findings from the analysis of data obtained during the period February 2019 to October 2019 in respect of Operation Corner.

2 Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 2.1 **Note the attached report regarding the Preliminary Assessment of Operation Corner.**
- 2.2 **Note the presentation delivered by Detective Chief Inspector Finn McPhail (Police Scotland), Annette Strachan (Housing) and Dawn Leslie (HSCP).**

3 Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 Performance monitoring and thematic reports provide a regular opportunity for elected members to maintain scrutiny of significant police activities, in order to achieve good outcomes for the residents of Aberdeenshire.
- 3.2 This report has not already been considered by this or any other committee.
- 3.3 In terms of the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, it is worth noting the respective powers and duties that are relevant to the Committee's consideration of police matters.

The Chief Constable is responsible for:

- policing of Scotland and must account to the Scottish Police Authority
- ensuring adequate arrangements are in place for the policing of each local authority area
- designating a constable as Divisional Commander after consultation with the local authority

The Divisional Commander is responsible for:

- involving the local authority in setting of priorities and objectives for policing of its area
- providing to the local authority information it may reasonably require
- preparing and submitting a local police plan to their local authority for approval and, if approved, publishing the local police plan

- preparing and submitting replacement plan to the local authority for approval following a review (local police plans must be reviewed at least once every 3 years)

The local authority may:

- monitor and provide feedback to the Divisional Commander on policing of its area
- specify policing measures it wishes the Divisional Commander to include in a local policing plan

3.4 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and their comments are incorporated within the report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

4. Discussion

4.1 Operation Corner is a multi-agency operation which commenced in June 2018, with a Police operation which included a 2 week enforcement phase, seeking to not only disrupt 'County Lines' Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) but to provide appropriate and effective multi-agency support to the most vulnerable members of North East communities being 'Cuckooed' or otherwise exploited by these groups.

4.2 Following the enforcement phase and initial multi-agency intervention there were 47 individuals identified that were permanently resident in the North East. It is the anonymised data pertaining to these individuals that has been analysed in an Academic study led by Dr William Graham, Abertay University, Dundee, in an effort to identify any distinctive profiles, evaluate the trajectories and transitions of the individuals involved and to evaluate the overall impact of Operation Corner.

4.3 This report seeks to summarise the findings from the Preliminary Assessment and also to answer questions raised at Committee in December regarding the percentage of vulnerable people in respect of Operation Corner who we are still working with and the proportion of drug supply figures directly attributable to County Lines OCGs.

4.4 The Preliminary Assessment of Operation Corner was submitted on 10 January 2020, following review of the data provided and also following interview of the stakeholders.

4.5 The data provided suggests that Operation Corner is most successful at engaging vulnerable individuals at an early stage of being caught up in organised crime. Similarly, it also seems that it is effective at establishing trust and affecting change over time, despite working with individuals with highly complex support needs.

- 4.6 The Preliminary Assessment identifies five profiles which relate to differences in engagement levels and behaviours associated with being an 'accused or suspect' in the periods prior to and following intervention. These five profiles were identified as:
- engagers
 - non-engagers
 - cuckooing victims
 - people with mental health disorders
 - prisoners
- 4.7 The Preliminary Assessment provides a statistical summary and evidence of the levels of engagement from each profile group, which is further broken down into various categories including but not limited to: age groups, gender, drugs used/supplied and services previously provided or utilised.
- 4.8 In answer to the question regarding the number of individuals involved in Operation Corner who we are still working with, the Preliminary Assessment provides the specific data that 15 of the 47 individuals that were initially identified are currently fully engaging. The percentages of those partially engaging are contained later in this report. However, we are continuing to monitor and aim to work with all of those identified and anticipate that multi-agency support will continue to be offered and provided to each of them at varying levels with a view to achieving further levels of engagement. It is mentioned throughout the Preliminary Assessment that perseverance and building of trust is a key element in the success of this operation.
- 4.9 The question regarding the proportion of drugs recovered being attributable to County Lines Organised Crime Groups is more challenging to answer directly. The initial source of drugs recovered can vary greatly between areas. Although the assumption can be drawn in areas with high levels of County Lines OCG activity that the majority of drug recoveries originate from these groups, it is not possible to define or measure this with any degree of certainty. Intelligence suggests that in North Aberdeenshire a substantial portion of the Diamorphine and 'Crack' Cocaine recovered would originate from County Lines OCGs and this is supported by regular seizures of this drug type in the area.

Statistics

- 4.10 A brief overview of some of the findings contained within the Preliminary Assessment provides a positive picture overall that Operation Corner is having a significant impact on those engaging. Data will continue to be collected and analysed over the next twelve months in order to provide a consistent assessment of the results. The following figures highlight some of the positive outcomes to date. This provides direction for the next twelve months and informs the stakeholders of those who would be most likely to engage and also indicates those less likely.

- Number of individuals identified during initial enforcement phase - 47
- Number of individuals currently fully engaged - 15
- Number of individuals currently non-engaged - 17
- Number of individuals currently partially engaged (fluctuates) - 15
- Overall percentage of those partially/fully engaged - 64%
- Average instance of accused/suspect - pre-engagement - 1.93
- Average instance of accused/suspect - post-engagement - 0.53

4.11 The significant reduction of instances where 'engagers' have been flagged as accused/suspect in crime reports suggests that these individuals are desisting from criminal activity or certainly changing their offending behaviour or habits, which is another positive outcome in respect of disruption and/or prevention.

Summary

4.12 The findings of the Preliminary Assessment provide that Operation Corner is having a positive impact on those who are engaging. It is clear that due to the perseverance and strength of the partnerships involved it is anticipated that these successes in engagement should increase as the operation continues. The ongoing operational data will be captured for continued assessment. The most notable conclusions at this stage are that the levels of engagement are fluctuating but generally increasing and likely to continue to increase. Furthermore, there is a clear reduction in the instances of those who are engaging being labelled as an 'accused' or a 'suspect' on any Police Report since the period of the Operation.

4.13 Moving forward the Operation Corner multi-agency activity will continue and utilising the data and findings of the Preliminary Assessment will focus efforts on increasing the engagement levels of those currently recognised as 'non-engagers', while encouraging those engaged in the support available to continue to build on this positive journey.

5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

5.1 N/A

5.2 This report helps deliver on all three LOIP Priorities.

5.3 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is(are) agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial			X
Staffing			X
Equalities			X
Fairer Scotland Duty			X
Town Centre First			X
Sustainability			X
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing			X

- 5.4 An equality impact assessment is not required.
- 5.5 There are no Risks directly identified in respect of this matter in terms of the Corporate and Directorate Risk Registers as the Committee is monitoring the performance of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service as required under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012 however links to the Corporate Risk of Working with Other Organisations.

6 Scheme of Governance

- 6.1 The Committee is able to consider/comment on this item in terms of Section D.1.1 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as it relates to matters concerning Police Scotland.

Report prepared by Chief Superintendent Campbell Thomson
Date 27/01/2020

List of Appendices – N/A

