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| For Information | |
| Public | |
| Report to: | Strategic Resources & and Performance |
| Date of Meeting: | 2nd November 2021 |
| Report of: | Chief Constable Guildford |
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| Agenda Item: | 7 |

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County Lines – Safeguarding Children from exploitation and victimisation

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner regarding Nottinghamshire Police's performance and response to county lines (CL).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the force's performance and response to County Lines is noted.

3. Reasons for Recommendations

- 3.1 To ensure that the Nottinghamshire Police & Crime Commissioner is aware of the Force's performance and response to County Lines.

4. Summary of Key Points (this should include background information and options appraisal if applicable)

- 4.1 Given CL drugs trafficking most commonly involves child criminal exploitation (CCE) to operate a drugs trafficking network and therefore engages offences proscribed by the sections 1 and 2 of the Modern Slavery Act (MSA) 2015, this report should be read in conjunction with the modern slavery (MS) report to the Nottinghamshire Police & Crime Commissioner.
- 4.2 The County Lines Unit (CLU) which is a constituent unit of the force's Serious and Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) and positioned within the vulnerability strand of the department, has principal responsibility for the policing of CL. The uplift of an additional SOCU Detective Sergeant (DS) in October 2020, as provided by the Chief Constable, allowed for the creation of a dedicated CLU, separate to but closely aligned with the Modern Slavery and Organised Immigration Crime Unit (MSCOIU). Prior to that restructure, the force's policing of CL had been conflated with the disruption of all categories of MS.
- 4.3 The CLU establishment currently comprises 1 DS and 5 Police Constables (PCs), including 1 Local Intelligence Officer (LIO) whose role in summary is to

continually assess the diverse range of intelligence received by the force so that policing activity across both SOCU and neighbourhood policing is targeted where the greatest threat, harm and risk exists insofar as CL offending, including cuckooing¹, is concerned. The CLU operates across the Prepare (intelligence), Prevent (reducing offending), Protect (safeguarding) and Pursue (investigations) spectrum, commonly referred to as the 4P approach.

- 4.4 Given CL intelligence is increasing, which should be viewed as a positive Prepare metric and one that is intrinsically linked to the force’s investment in local policing and community engagement, it is accepted that an uplift in resources is required within the CLU. As part of the SOCUs annual department assessment (ADA) 2022/23, the Chief Constable has authorised uplift of the CLU by a further 7 PC’s and 1 Police Sergeant (PS) and as such the establishment will now increase to 2 x DS / PS and 12 x PCs. SOCU will seek to enhance the investigative capability of this uplifted officer establishment through induction of staff onto the Professionalising Investigations Programme level 2 (PIP2) as a matter of continued professional development (CPD).
- 4.5 The table below shows the year-on-year increase in CL intelligence indexed by the force, with the increase over a 24-month period standing at 89%.

| Year | Intelligence | ↑ increase |
|---------|--------------|------------|
| 2018/19 | 413 | |
| 2019/20 | 637 | 54% |
| 2020/21 | 779 | 22% |

- 4.6 The number of recorded MS offences where the index exploitation was CL has remained stable over the last 24 months. In 2019/20 there were 23 such offences recorded and in 2020/11 there were 22 offences. These recorded crime figures do not accurately reflect the extent of CL criminality, given unless such offending is specifically disclosed by the victim or detected by the police, the interception of drugs trafficking by law enforcement will be crimed as an offence under s.4 or s.5 of the Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) 1971.
- 4.7 In the last financial year, 28 individuals were entered into the National Referral Mechanism (NRM)² having been victim of CL offending.
- 4.8 2 CCE Coordinator posts were established in 2020/21 (1 for each of the 2 policing divisions) and have now been recruited to, with the staff positioned in Integrated Offender Management (IOM). The CCE Coordinator’s primary duty is to act as single points of contacts (SPoCs) for Children’s Social Care (CSC) and other key partners across the sector in providing for a joint safeguarding response to children involved in drugs trafficking, knife crime, most serious violence and gangs who are often being exploited by high harm criminals and

¹ The practice of taking over the home of a vulnerable person in order to establish a base for illegal drug dealing, typically as part of a CL operation.

² UK’s mechanism to identify, assess and support potential victims of modern slavery independent of any criminal investigation and can only be completed by a first responder. A NRM must be completed for all children that are suspected to be a victim of modern slavery. Adults must give their consent in relation to the NRM.

OCGs. These dedicated CCE Coordinators provide continuity of police representation at both (i) multi-agency CCE strategy meetings and (ii) the monthly Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire Child Criminal Exploitation Panels (CCEPs).

- 4.9 As per the MS report to the Strategic Resources & Performance meeting, the greater Nottingham monthly Slavery and Exploitation Risk Assessment Conference (SERAC) with its multi-disciplinary membership now caters for referrals where there is a suspicion that a child is being exploited for the purposes of facilitating CL offending.
- 4.10 With these dedicated CCE Coordinators now established, the force has increased its effectiveness in initiating multi-disciplinary CCE strategy meetings. In 2020/21, Nottinghamshire Police participated in 212 such meetings, compared to 133 the previous year and equating to a 59% increase within a 12-month period. In therefore increasing our partnership engagement with both statutory partners and the third sector e.g., Barnardos, the force has led more disruptions across the 4P spectrum through a wide range of multi-agency interventions. This has led to a 23% reduction over 12 months in the number of children recorded on the force's CL Vulnerability Tracker (CLVT), which currently stands at 48 (a decrease from 62 children).
- 4.11 Since August 2020, Nottinghamshire Police, through its Force Intelligence analytical function scores the risk posed by all known and mapped CLs that are active across Nottingham City and Nottinghamshire. The Management of Risk in Law Enforcement (MoRILE) assessment tool is used to score the said risk and allows the SOCU to prioritise its resources across the strands of vulnerability, prosperity and commodity. Details of risk assessed CLs are shared with both the East Midlands Special Operation Unit (EMSOU) and the NCA using the NCA Agency and Partner Management Information System (APMIS). This new software was introduced into the force in September 2021 as part of the national Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) systems tasking arrangements.
- 4.12 In the last quarter the number of active mapped CLs recorded by the force has reduced by 50%, with current intelligence indicating inactivity of criminal drugs trafficking operations. Some of this is attributable to the enforcement activity set out at paragraph (para.) 4.15.
- 4.13 There are currently 5 exporting lines and 1 importing lines mapped as impacting Nottinghamshire, but having reviewed working practices in 4 other forces nationally over the course of the summer 2021, the SOCU's professional assessment is that the department is under recording the formal mapping of CLs impacting Nottinghamshire. As such, further improvements will be made to the force's Prepare response and the number of CLs mapped by the force is predicted to increase. The increase in resources detailed at para. 4.4 will allow the CLU to focus effectively on the forecasted rise in the mapped CL.
- 4.14 Despite finite resources, the CLU and wider SOCU has a relentless focus on the pursuit of high harm serious criminals and Organised Crime Groups (OCGs)

perpetrating CL offending. Given the richer CL intelligence picture aided by the force's Operation Reacher activities across the 12 Neighbourhood Policing Areas (NPAs), the number of investigations and disruption activity launched by the CLU and SOC Task Force (SOCTF), the latter of which specialises in covert policing, has increased. In addition to SOCU initiated disruption, Operation Reacher teams continually enforce against drugs trafficking intelligence both on their own initiative and in collaboration with CLU and SOCTF to complement the pursuit of those perpetrating CL offending.

4.15 As with the MS report, for reasons of investigative integrity and to safeguard the right to a fair trial, viz-a-viz article (art.) 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the author is limited on the level of operational detail that can be revealed within this public facing report. However, the following represents key pursuit disruption activity since the establishment of a CLU and within the SOCU over the last 12 months:

- Under a SOCU operation, 10 defendants have been charged with both conspiracy to human traffic and supply drugs relating to CL exporting activities to a home county. Given overlaps in organised criminality, the prosecution of this case has now been combined with an East Midlands Special Operations Unit (EMSOU) investigation that comprises 13 defendants charged with conspiracy to supply drugs relating to CL exporting operations into a neighbouring county.
- The above complex pursuit activity was in addition to the force supporting a neighbouring force in the enforcement of a drugs trafficking investigation, which ultimately resulted in 10 nominals being convicted for drugs trafficking offending indexing to an exporting CL into neighbouring force area.
- In partnership with a neighbouring force, enforcement on an exporting CL from Nottingham to that county has resulted in 7 Nottingham nominals being charged and remanded. Prosecution of this case is not yet complete, but to date 5 defendants have pleaded guilty to offences charged. This is in addition to a CLU operation that led to the arrest of 3 individuals, who remain under investigation, for exporting a CL into another area of that same county.
- Under a SOCU operation, 4 members of a Nottinghamshire Urban Street Gang (USG) have been arrested and are currently under investigation for the alleged operation of a CL from Nottingham to a neighbouring county. The core members responsible for this criminality have now been mapped into a distinct OCG and remain under active investigation.
- 9 individuals are currently under investigation for the trafficking of a teenager from Nottingham to a Nottinghamshire town where it is alleged that child been forced to supply drugs.
- A SOCU operation saw the arrest and charge of the holder of an exporting CL from Nottingham to another Nottinghamshire town

facilitated by the exploitation of children from a neighbouring county. Trial is impending for the defendant both in respect of this case and a prior CL investigation from 2020.

- Under the latest SOCU operation which is examining an importing CL from a neighbouring city to a Nottinghamshire town and sequenced with a period of intensification set by the National County Lines Coordination Centre (NCLCC), 10 suspects have been arrested in October 2020 and remain under active investigation.
- A further operation remains an impending prosecution at Crown Court where 4 defendants are charged with conspiracy to commit human trafficking in relation to exporting CL criminality to two counties in the South Central and East of England.

5. Financial Implications and Budget Provision

5.1 None

6. Human Resources Implications

6.1 In respect of the officer uplift referred to at para. 4.4, release of resources into the SOCU-CLU from other force departments will be authorised and coordinated by Tactical Workforce Planning (TWP).

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1 The SOCU has a Representation (Diversity and Inclusion), Attraction, Recruitment, Progression and Retention (RARPR) strategy. The department strives to increase its establishment of officers and staff who identify with minority protected characteristics, in order to be more reflective of the communities it serves.
- 7.2 The Code of Ethics is central to all decisions taken in the policing of CL. The SOCU acts with fairness and impartiality and does not discriminate unlawfully or fairly.
- 7.3 Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) provides for the prohibition of torture. Nottinghamshire Police has a positive obligation to ensure that no one shall be subject to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. CCE CL by the unlawful act of another constitutes degrading treatment.

8. Risk Management

8.1 Not applicable

9. Policy Implications and links to the Police and Crime Plan Priorities

9.1 The four main strategic priorities of the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Plan 2018 to 2021 are central to the policing of CL, specifically (i) protecting people from harm, (ii) helping and supporting victims, (iii) tackling crime and antisocial behaviour, and (iv) transforming services and delivering quality policing.

10. Changes in Legislation or other Legal Considerations

10.1 In the last 12 months, there have been no changes to statutory legislation proscribing against MS. The key primary legislation remains the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

11. Details of outcome of consultation

11.1 Not applicable

12. Appendices

12.1 None

13. Background Papers (relevant for Police and Crime Panel Only)

13. None