# PEEL 2022/23

# An inspection of the north-west regional response to serious and organised crime

# Contents

# Introduction

## About our inspection

As part of our police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy (PEEL) inspections, we inspected how well police forces tackle serious and organised crime (SOC). In 2022, we changed how we inspect this aspect of policing, to incorporate inspections of the ten regions, as well as the nine regional organised crime units (ROCUs) throughout England and Wales, and the 43 police forces. This improves our understanding of how well forces and ROCUs work together to tackle SOC.

## About us

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) independently assesses the effectiveness and efficiency of police forces and fire and rescue services, in the public interest. In preparing our reports, we ask the questions that the public would ask, and publish the answers in an accessible form. We use our expertise to interpret the evidence and make recommendations for improvement.

## About our report

This report includes sections on the following:

- Regional findings – a summary of inspection evidence that identifies good or poor performance within the region; in other words, involving or relating to the ROCU and constituent forces. The performance of the region is not given a graded judgement. Instead, we highlight areas for improvement, causes of concern and innovative and promising practice in this section, where applicable.

- The ROCU and individual forces – the ROCU and each individual force are given a graded judgment, with a summary of the findings from our inspection and highlighted sections for areas for improvement, causes of concern, and innovative and promising practice.

## Terminology used in this report

Our reports contain references to, among other things, 'national' definitions, priorities, policies, systems, responsibilities and processes.

In some instances, 'national' means applying to England and Wales. In others, it means applying to England and Wales and Scotland or the whole of the United Kingdom.

## About ROCUs

Each ROCU serves between three and seven constituent forces (see map in Appendix 1).

The Strategic Policing Requirement defines ROCUs as:

"collaboration arrangements between forces that deliver specialist policing capabilities" that is the "primary interface between the NCA [National Crime Agency] and forces".

It sets out that:

"The ROCU network mission is to protect communities by disrupting organised crime groups, individual criminals and those who enable them."

The Government's 2018 SOC strategy states:

"ROCUs will lead the operational response to serious and organised crime on behalf of forces within their regions, taking tasking from the NCA on national priorities, and working together in a more networked way, allowing capacity and capability to be shared where appropriate."

Police forces should work closely with ROCUs, following the objective set out in the national *Serious and Organised Crime Strategy* to achieve a 'whole system' approach to tackling SOC. ROCUs provide a range of specialist capabilities to forces. These include the regional organised crime threat assessment units (ROCTAs), surveillance, undercover policing, sensitive intelligence units, regional asset recovery teams, cybercrime teams, the Government Agency Intelligence Network, prison intelligence units and others.

ROCUs are set up under collaboration agreements (made under section 22A of the Police Act 1996) between the chief constables and police and crime commissioners (PCCs) in each region. ROCUs aren't statutory bodies. They rely on forces to supply the administrative and support functions they need, including human resources, finance and IT. As a result, each ROCU is set up differently, under different terms of collaboration.

Each ROCU's financing is largely provided by chief constables and PCCs, with additional financing from the Home Office. In each region, forces negotiate their financial contribution to the ROCU.

## Changes to how SOC threats are managed nationally

Our previous PEEL inspection reports have referred to how well forces have managed and mapped or assessed organised crime groups (OCGs).

In this report, we refer to SOC threats, which encompasses OCGs, SOC priority individuals and SOC vulnerabilities.

This reflects changes introduced nationally in response to the SOC strategy's goal to provide a "single picture of demand". This has been achieved by establishing a national database of SOC threats (APMIS), which holds information from the National Crime Agency (NCA), ROCUs, police forces and government agencies that tackle SOC. This database is referred to as the SOC master list and is used to assess which SOC threat is a priority for each agency or force. It is also where forces, ROCUs and other agencies record their disruption activity against SOC threats.

# Regional findings

The north-west region consists of six forces (Cheshire Constabulary, Cumbria Constabulary, Greater Manchester Police, Lancashire Constabulary, Merseyside Police and North Wales Police) and their ROCU, the North West Regional Organised Crime Unit (NWROCU).

The region experiences high levels of SOC when compared to the other regions of England and Wales. Data taken from the APMIS on 4 January 2023 showed that the north-west region had identified 938 SOC threats. This is the highest number of threats identified in any region and more than double the number in any other region.

Merseyside Police and Greater Manchester Police are respectively the second and fifth largest forces in England and Wales (based on workforce per 1,000 population). They both host cities with historic links to serious and organised crime gangs and experience high SOC demand.

## The forces and the NWROCU work together to tackle SOC

Throughout our inspection, representatives from all forces in the region spoke positively about their interactions with the NWROCU. They feel supported and confirmed that they often refer to the NWROCU for tactical advice. We were pleased to find this level of positivity, which is something we haven't seen in our other regional inspections. We found that representatives from the NWROCU attended and contributed to the force tasking meetings in the region.

Following a pilot in the south-east region, the north-west region will be the first to have full access to APMIS. At the time of our inspection, this was being piloted in Merseyside Police. The other regional forces will adopt it during 2023. This means that forces will be able to directly record SOC threats and disruption activity onto APMIS. The NWROCU is helping with training in forces, to encourage consistency in the way they record threat assessment and disruption activity.

**Area for improvement: The North West Regional Organised Crime Unit and its constituent forces could further improve how the region works together to tackle serious and organised crime**

The North West Regional Organised Crime Unit (NWROCU), with constituent forces, should:

- improve the effectiveness of the lead responsible officer role;

- improve the quality and consistency of 4P plans;

- develop a regional approach to the management of 4P plans;

- improve how serious and organised crime (SOC) disruptions are recorded to accurately reflect regional performance; and

- identify and promote good practice.

These themes have been identified from our findings in the regional forces and are outlined throughout this report.

Lead responsible officers should prepare 4P plans to manage SOC threats. These plans are important and should support joint working with relevant partner organisations. The content and quality of the operational 4P plans we reviewed across the region were inconsistent.

We found that across the region, different IT systems were used to store and manage 4P plans. Some forces reported that their IT systems don't allow them to easily track and manage 4P actions. The region has procured a new IT system, presenting an opportunity for the NWROCU and constituent forces to develop a consistent approach to managing 4P plans.

The NWROCU and its constituent forces record SOC disruption activity in different ways. This makes it difficult for the region to fully understand how effectively SOC is being tackled. The regional rollout of the national database (APMIS) may improve the accuracy of disruption recording.

The NWROCU has recruited two SOC community co-ordinators. Their role is to link local delivery throughout the region by, for example, supporting Clear, Hold, Build initiatives in forces. This role is ideally placed to identify and share good practice in the north-west region.

## There is effective strategic governance to manage priority threats

The NWROCU manages its control strategy priorities through a series of strategic governance groups (SGGs). Each SGG has a senior responsible officer, who is generally a detective superintendent from either the ROCU or a force. Each SGG has established terms of reference as well as 4P and intelligence collection plans, which direct activity to tackle priorities across the region.

In previous inspections of other regions, we found examples of forces not fully engaging with SGGs. This wasn't the case in the north-west. We found SGGs were well attended and senior responsible officers appeared to take their role in leading the response seriously. Actions from SGGs are reviewed and tracked. Members of the SGG who are given actions are held to account.

## Regional forces are committed to meet the Police Uplift Programme

The forces across the region are supporting recruitment to the NWROCU to achieve the commitment to the Police Uplift Programme. The NWROCU is helping this by working with forces to lessen the impact of transferring officers and staff to the ROCU. For example, it carefully considers the timing of recruitment campaigns.

## The region faces some challenges in recruiting and retaining officers and staff

The NWROCU and some of the forces reported that they are facing difficulties in recruiting into specialist roles, such as analysis and financial investigation. This isn't unique to the north-west region. We were frequently told that one of the main challenges in the north-west is that some forces pay more than others for the same role.

**Area for improvement: The North West Regional Organised Crime Unit should work with its constituent forces to improve the management of serious and organised crime offenders**

The forces in the north-west region have different processes to manage offenders, and some are more effective than others. For example, some forces have dedicated personnel who oversee the management of ancillary orders, such as serious crime prevention orders. Other forces don't. This makes it difficult for the NWROCU to co-ordinate the management of serious and organised crime offenders.

Due to inconsistent force arrangements, the North West Regional Organised Crime Unit finds it difficult to assign the management of serious crime prevention orders to forces at the end of regional investigations. Interviewees in one force expressed the view that the North West Regional Organised Crime Unit should take more responsibility for managing offenders who operate across force borders.

# North West Regional Organised Crime Unit

Outstanding

The North West Regional Organised Crime Unit (NWROCU) is outstanding at tackling serious and organised crime.

## Understanding SOC and setting priorities to tackle it

**Promising practice: The North West Regional Organised Crime Unit, in collaboration with other agencies, uses intelligence techniques to disrupt county lines**

The North West Regional Organised Crime Unit has worked with Merseyside Police and the Home Office to develop a process to proactively target county lines. It has developed an automated process to identify vehicles suspected of trafficking drugs. The details of these vehicles are passed to other forces for them to either carry out stops or develop an investigation. Since January 2021, the NWROCU reports that this work has resulted in 336 vehicles being identified, 119 vehicles being stopped, 107 people being arrested, £350,000 cash being seized and substantial quantities of drugs being recovered. This has been identified nationally as good practice and is being developed into a national programme.

**Innovative practice: The North West Regional Organised Crime Unit has improved processes to map and record disruption activity**

The North West Regional Organised Crime Unit has introduced a process to improve the recording of disruption activity on the national database (APMIS). For instance, it maps threats in the region's prisons, including corruption, violence and the use of drones. This means that relevant disruption activity can then be assigned against these threats. To maximise this, the North West Regional Organised Crime Unit has created a prison disruption team to work with the HM Prison and Probation Service to tackle criminal activity in prisons. This process is being extended into other areas, such as economic crime. This has been recognised nationally as good practice and is being introduced to other ROCUs.

**The NWROCU has a good understanding of threats affecting the region**

Since 2021, the ROCTA unit has had its staffing increased. This has allowed the team to provide leadership in mapping threats across the region. Forces in the north-west still carry out their own assessments of SOC threats. These are then moderated by the ROCTA unit. We found that the team routinely sourced data from [partner](#) agencies to enhance threat assessments.

**The NWROCU co-ordinates the regional response to serious SOC threats**

The NWROCU has supported forces when responding to some of the highest SOC threats. One of the highest threats identified in the north-west is from [intellectual property crime](#), specifically the sale of counterfeit goods. In response, the NWROCU has set up an intellectual property team, funded by the City of London Police. This is the only team of its kind outside the City of London. The team works closely with other agencies, such as National Trading Standards, to carry out effective enforcement activity. It also works with small business owners to raise awareness of the law relating to the sale of counterfeit goods.

## Resources and skills

**Innovative practice: The North West Regional Organised Crime Unit plans its requirements for tackling serious and organised crime and sets clear expectations for its workforce**

The senior leadership team in the North West Regional Organised Crime Unit review its workforce, estate and equipment annually. It has a financial plan that is based on the three-year spending review provided by the Home Office.

To explain its aim to the workforce, the North West Regional Organised Crime Unit has introduced a 'plan on a page' based on the [4P](#)s. It is interactive and allows [personnel](#) to select specific areas of the plan to see details about the different units and their performance. The plan is underpinned by a set of behaviours that personnel are expected to demonstrate, known as 'the ROCU way'. Overall, personnel we interviewed at the North West Regional Organised Crime Unit understood the plan and how they contributed to it.

This is the first time we have seen such a plan in a regional organised crime unit. The Home Office and the [National Police Chiefs' Council](#) are keen to use this as a blueprint for business planning in other regional organised crime units.

**Innovative practice: The North West Regional Organised Crime Unit actively seeks to improve the expertise of its workforce**

The North West Regional Organised Crime Unit (NWROCU) has assessed its future staffing levels, including a planned increase in posts created by the Police Uplift Programme. The constituent forces in the region have agreed to fund these additional posts when initial Home Office funding ends in March 2024.

The NWROCU has previously struggled to fill vacancies with accredited personnel. As a result, it has started to recruit unqualified personnel, who it trains and develops while in post. As well as helping the NWROCU to achieve its recruitment targets, this approach has also attracted applicants with a variety of skills and experience. Overall, the personnel we spoke to were positive about it.

The NWROCU has introduced a week-long induction course that all new personnel must complete. This includes input from all regional organised crime unit departments and an interactive case study to illustrate how they all work together. Many personnel we spoke to told us that they had enjoyed the course and recognised its value.

The NWROCU has introduced two new teams called 'task forces' located in the north and south of the region. The purpose of these task forces is to maximise disruption opportunities against serious organised crime by working closely with the forces and partners in those locations.

The introduction of the task forces has improved recruitment from forces, which had previously been challenging. Two further teams are planned for the east and west of the region, which should have a similar positive effect on recruitment.

**The NWROCU is developing a system to improve the management of SOC threats**

Previously we have found that ROCUs experience difficulties when accessing the different IT systems used by forces across their region. The north-west region is no different, with forces using different crime and intelligence systems.

The NWROCU is working with an external company to develop a digital platform for regional SOC threat management, which all forces in the region will be able to use. This will integrate information from all force IT systems and contribute to more efficient management of SOC threats. The ambition is to develop this further by including national systems, such as the Police National Database and APMIS. While this is still in its early stages, it shows great promise to further improve regional collaboration.

## Tackling SOC and safeguarding people and communities

### The NWROCU is proactively combatting SOC in prisons

The north-west region has a large number of prisons containing high-risk SOC offenders. The NWROCU works closely with HM Prison and Probation Service (HMPPS) and other SOC partners under the multi-agency response to serious and organised crime arrangement. The NWROCU has a team that concentrates its activity on high-risk individuals, seeking opportunities for enforcement and disruption. This includes interventions against those serving custodial sentences and those who have recently been released into the community.

### The NWROCU would benefit from improved management of 4P plans

The NWROCU has 4P plans that are created by the senior investigating officer for each of the operations it carries out. We found inconsistencies in the storage and management of these plans. The NWROCU would benefit from a single system that measures disruption activity against the aims of the 4P plans. This would provide it with a consistent method for performance management.

# Cheshire Constabulary

Adequate

Cheshire Constabulary is adequate at tackling serious and organised crime.

## Understanding SOC and setting priorities to tackle it

**The constabulary should continue to improve training on recording SOC threat assessments and disruption activity on APMIS**

As of 4 January 2023, Cheshire Constabulary had recorded 118 SOC threats on APMIS. However, none of these assessments were completed for SOC vulnerabilities, such as county lines. For the year ending 31 December 2022, the constabulary recorded 373 disruptions on the APMIS, of which 312 (84 percent) were recorded as pursue activity. When we interviewed members of the constabulary, it appeared that they lacked understanding of the different SOC threat types. This means they aren't properly assessing all SOC threats and then prioritising them to be managed.

A review of the data on 1 April 2023 showed that the constabulary had reclassified some SOC threats. It had recorded 37 SOC vulnerabilities, which indicates that it has started to improve its process.

Later in this report, we detail the constabulary's activity aimed at protecting vulnerable victims or preventing people from becoming involved in SOC. The constabulary may not be capturing all this good work. At the time of our inspection, it was in the process of recruiting a SOC co-ordinator who, once in post, will support further improvements in the way disruption activity is recorded.

**The constabulary effectively manages its SOC priorities**

The constabulary is frequently targeted by SOC and county lines offenders travelling into its area. It has developed a strong relationship with the NWROCU and frequently makes use of its specialist capabilities.

The constabulary has a strategic assessment and control strategy. This establishes the constabulary's priorities and includes a section on SOC. It also uses the MoRiLE assessment model to assess the risk posed by specific SOC threats and then prioritise its response.

The constabulary has completed SOC local profiles for each of its three local policing areas. These include data from partners, such as local authorities, health and education. These profiles are available on the constabulary's intranet and are shared with partners.

**The constabulary monitors its SOC performance**

The assistant chief constable who has overall responsibility for SOC performance chairs the constabulary's strategic SOC meeting and the tasking and co-ordination meeting. We found that these meetings allocated resources to the highest SOC threats. Additional meetings are held locally to manage the response to incidents that have occurred in the previous 24 hours.

**Frontline officers and staff understand their role in tackling SOC**

The constabulary has adopted 'Impact' as its brand for tackling SOC, and this is communicated internally and to the public. To supplement this, all personnel have been provided with a document called Everybody's business. This sets out what is expected from different roles in the constabulary when tackling SOC. We found that these key messages were visible in all police stations. We also found that personnel we spoke to had a very good understanding of their roles in tackling SOC.

**The constabulary targets SOC using local resources**

The constabulary's force intelligence bureau (FIB) analyses SOC data to identify hot spots. These are shared with local policing teams, which allows them to direct patrols to these areas. Work is underway to integrate the hot-spotting maps with their crime and intelligence IT systems. Between April 2022 and April 2023, the constabulary recorded significantly more disruptions, which it attributes in part to this hot spotting.

## Resources and skills

**The constabulary has teams dedicated to tackling SOC**

The constabulary has several teams dedicated to tackling SOC. These include a SOC disruption team that works alongside its surveillance unit to provide a mobile response. It reacts to intelligence and intercepts criminals when they are using public roads for their criminal activities. Since January 2022, it has arrested 106 suspects, many for serious offences.

The constabulary has secured Home Office funding to create the Operation Apollo team to tackle county lines, which is a priority. It makes use of covert and overt policing tactics to pursue county lines offenders and protect people who are being exploited. It works closely with the NWROCU and other forces in the region.

The constabulary told us that since November 2022, the team has closed 58 county lines. It has successfully used technical solutions to tackle county lines, which it reports has significantly increased arrests. The constabulary assesses that there has been a 42 percent reduction in the number of active county lines gangs operating in its area.

The constabulary has recruited expert witnesses to support its drug supply investigations. This has reduced the need to seek expert evidence from external companies and, therefore, has saved the constabulary money.

The constabulary's SOC unit has three teams. However, at the time of our inspection, we found there was a significant number of vacancies, which had resulted in only two teams operating. Some officers had been redeployed to other units, such as the county lines team.

The constabulary has a detective academy in its SOC unit, which aims to upskill officers from across the constabulary who show aptitude and interest in SOC investigation. Their training involves rotation through other investigative departments, such as the criminal investigations and protecting vulnerable persons units. This may help address the shortages in the SOC unit teams.

**There is no head of intelligence analysis, which places additional demand on senior analysts**

The role of head of intelligence analysis is recognised nationally by the College of Policing. They should oversee analytical teams to make sure that they are professionally competent and can provide strategic and tactical analytical functions. At the time of our inspection, Cheshire Constabulary didn't have a head of intelligence analysis. We found analysts and senior analysts were being managed by a detective sergeant. Senior analysts spend significant amounts of time attending meetings, which diverts them from managing their teams.

**Lead responsible officers have enough capacity to manage SOC threats**

The constabulary has five lead responsible officers (LROs). One is based in the SOC unit, while the others are in local policing units. LROs have access to a tactical adviser who guides them on the use of covert tactics. Generally, we found that they felt supported in their roles. Locally based LROs told us that they have teams at their disposal to target SOC.

Generally, we found that LROs worked well with partners in the local authority and felt that they had enough analytical support to help them tackle SOC threats. They are supported by plan managers who specialise in protecting vulnerable victims and preventing people from becoming involved in SOC. LROs have recently been provided with Home Office approved training.

## Tackling SOC and safeguarding people and communities

**Area for improvement: Cheshire Constabulary should improve the quality of its 4P plans**

Following a review in 2022, the constabulary introduced a new format for its 4P plans. During our inspection, we reviewed several of its 4P plans. We identified several concerns:

- It wasn't always clear who the plan owner was.

- Actions weren't always clear.

- Some plans were out of date.

- Some plans appeared to be generic and contained actions that weren't tailored to tackle the specific serious organised crime threat.

We were told that the constabulary intends to improve these plans. However, we found there was still work to do and we weren't assured that 4P plans are currently driving operational activity or being used to monitor performance.

**The constabulary prevents people from becoming involved in SOC and protects vulnerable victims**

The constabulary has a hidden harm team in each of its three basic command units. The teams work with partners, such as private landlords and recruitment agencies, to identify and safeguard victims who are being exploited. They concentrate on specific offences, including modern slavery and human trafficking and organised immigration crime.

We reviewed an operation led by one of the hidden harm teams that targeted an OCG that was exploiting vulnerable females. We found evidence of the team carrying out safeguarding activities. We also found good examples of working with partners, including immigration enforcement and hotels that house asylum seekers.

We were told about several other examples of prevent and protect work:

- The constabulary operates a mini police scheme that is run across four schools. Children under the age of 12 apply to be a police officer and, if successful, have a ceremony to get 'sworn in'. The recruits work with local police community support officers throughout the academic year and act as peers to raise awareness of issues such as online safety. They also take on wider community engagement duties, such as speaking to communities about road safety.

- The constabulary has allocated police community support officers to 70 schools across Cheshire as part of the Safer Schools and Young People Partnership. Their role is to reduce victimisation, criminality and antisocial behaviour.

- The constabulary works with local education organisations and [Queensbury AP](#) to provide diversionary opportunities to at-risk children. Queensbury AP seeks to divert children aged 11–17 into more positive behaviours through, for example, its boxing academy and mentoring support network.

- The constabulary appointed a financial abuse and safeguarding prevent officer in March 2019. The officer supports victims to recover funds they have lost because of fraud. At the time of our inspection, £500,000 had been returned to victims of fraud.

**The constabulary has adopted the Clear, Hold, Build approach to tackling SOC**

The constabulary identified Murdishaw in Runcorn as a suitable area to pilot [Clear, Hold, Build](#). During the 'clear' phase, several search warrants were executed, and eight suspects were charged with drug supply offences. Immediately following this, the constabulary worked with several partners in the local authority and the community to prevent SOC activity from returning. They used targeted social media campaigns, introduced initiatives such as 'Murdishaw against SOC' and established Murdishaw community groups.

**The constabulary should make sure officers and staff understand how serious crime prevention orders are managed**

The constabulary has secured several serious crime prevention orders (SCPOs). Information about these SCPOs is held on the constabulary intranet. At the time of our inspection, all subjects of these orders were in prison.

Responsibility for managing and enforcing ancillary orders is currently assigned to the team managing the original investigation, which may not be appropriate. LROs appeared to understand the offender management processes. But some interviewees we spoke to weren't clear on the process to manage SCPOs when offenders are released back into the community. The constabulary should review its process and make sure that personnel understand their role in managing SCPOs.

# Cumbria Constabulary

<span style="background-color:red;color:white">Requires improvement</span>

Cumbria Constabulary requires improvement at tackling serious and organised crime.

## Understanding SOC and setting priorities to tackle it

**Area for improvement: There isn't enough analytical capacity in Cumbria Constabulary to fully understand and manage the threat from serious and organised crime**

During our inspection, we found that the constabulary didn't have enough analytical capacity to meet demand. It has recognised this, and a report recommending additional analytical staff has been submitted to chief officers.

At the time of our inspection, there was no head of intelligence analysis. As a result, we found senior analysts were taking on additional responsibilities and providing leadership to analytical teams. However, we found that the demands of their own roles were making this difficult to sustain.

Some constabulary intelligence officers told us that they struggle to access analytical support. Similarly, we found that lead responsible officers got little analytical support to help them progress 4P plans and serious organised crime investigations. The lack of analytical capacity could undermine the regional rollout of the national database (APMIS) because analysts are needed to input and interpret the data.

At the time of our inspection, Cumbria Constabulary hadn't completed any serious organised crime local profiles. These profiles provide an understanding of serious organised crime and vulnerability at local levels and play an important role in co-ordinating a multi-agency response. The constabulary should address this issue.

**The constabulary has introduced a process to manage SOC priorities**

In September 2022, the constabulary completed a strategic assessment identifying SOC as a priority. There is also a separate SOC strategy that outlines how SOC threats, such as serious theft and drug supply, will be tackled using a 4P structure. However, we were concerned that the lack of analytical staff explained in the area for improvement above, may limit the constabulary's ability to monitor performance and identify any emerging threats.

The constabulary is now using the MoRiLE assessment model to assess SOC threats. However, this hasn't yet been applied to every SOC threat identified. The constabulary should complete this process as soon as it can.

The constabulary uses several meetings to co-ordinate its response to SOC. Every two weeks, the intelligence assessment response meeting reviews current intelligence and the management of OCGs. It also decides how to allocate resources. A meeting to consider individual OCGs has recently been reintroduced. However, senior officers accept that they need greater involvement of SOC partners for this meeting to become effective.

## Resources and skills

**Area for improvement: Cumbria Constabulary should improve the quality of its 4P plans, how it uses them to disrupt serious and organised crime and how it records disruptions on the national database**

During our inspection, we found that 4P plans were used inconsistently. Some investigations had no 4P plan at all. We also found limited understanding of the benefits of using this approach to disrupt serious organised crime. The constabulary told us that it is working to improve the way it uses 4P plans.

We found that some officers weren't fully aware of how to identify and record disruptions on the national database (APMIS). For example, local officers are tasked to monitor identified organised crime group members and submit intelligence. But some local officers weren't familiar with the process of recording their disruption activity. This creates a risk of disruptions being missed, particularly those carried out to protect vulnerable people or prevent people from becoming involved in serious organised crime.

**Area for improvement: Cumbria Constabulary should make sure it has enough resources in its economic crime unit to target criminal finances**

During our inspection, we were told that there aren't enough officers and staff in the economic crime unit to manage demand. They don't always have enough time to proactively identify criminal assets for confiscation. Personnel in the unit get little analytical support, and financial investigators are carrying out their own research and analysis.

The constabulary recognises that the work of other proactive units is increasing demand in the economic crime unit and is planning to address this.

## LROs have received training but need continuing support

The constabulary generally appoints detective inspectors from local policing teams to the role of LRO. At the time of our inspection, training had recently been provided to LROs. We welcome the introduction of this training. During our inspection, we saw little evidence that LROs are supported with continuing professional development. We have since been reassured that this will be in place later in 2023.

LROs can access tactical advice on covert techniques from SOC specialists. However, this is on an informal basis. Some LROs explained to us that competing demands mean they struggle at times to dedicate enough time to SOC.

## The constabulary has a roads crime unit targeting SOC activity

Since 2022, the roads crime unit has successfully recovered over £2 million in cash and illegal drugs. The unit has four officers who work to identify and intercept vehicles suspected of being involved in SOC. However, like the personnel in the economic crime unit, they get little analytical support and must analyse their own data.

## The constabulary should increase its capacity to proactively tackle SOC at a local level

The constabulary has a dedicated SOC unit to investigate OCGs that pose the highest level of threat. We found that the personnel in the unit were experienced and appropriately trained to carry out specialist covert investigations.

However, in comparison, we found that the resourcing of local proactive teams was challenging. During interviews and focus groups, we heard that in some areas there aren't enough officers to carry out the investigations that are referred to these teams. We also found that some local teams were generating and working on tasks that were outside the tasking process. This process should identify constabulary priorities to make sure resources are used efficiently and effectively. If tasking teams work outside this process, it may mean that SOC threats aren't investigated at an appropriate level.

## Tackling SOC and safeguarding people and communities

**Changes to local government structures in Cumbria have affected SOC partnership working**

On 1 April 2023, local government arrangements in Cumbria changed. Cumbria County Council and the six district councils were replaced by two unitary authorities.

During our inspection, we were told that the new arrangements have led to some uncertainty and adversely affected partnership working arrangements. This is largely outside the constabulary's control and has affected other partners, such as health and probation services.

The constabulary has tried to mitigate this by establishing a partnership board to develop information sharing and partnership working. The group includes representatives from several organisations, including children's social care, adult social care, the local authority and HMPPS. At the time of our inspection, this process was new, so we were unable to assess its effectiveness.

**The constabulary aims to prevent people from becoming involved in SOC and protect vulnerable victims**

Child-centred policing teams have been established in each local policing area. Specially trained officers work with children and their parents at home and in school. The teams work with partners, including local authority child safeguarding teams and children's care homes. They use a range of diversions and interventions intended to divert children from criminal activity. For example, the PCC has made funding available for officers to work with the RISE project, which is an early intervention mentoring service provided by Barnardo's that aims to help those aged 10–17 to make positive life choices.

We were also told that the constabulary:

- works closely with Barrow Football Club to prevent young people from getting involved in football violence;
- raises awareness about cybercrime in schools through local officers or police community support officers by giving presentations that reach as many as 600 children and parents a week; and
- appointed a financial abuse safeguarding officer in 2021 who has supported over 3,000 victims of fraud and recovered over £1 million.

**The constabulary has invested in personnel to prevent people from becoming involved in SOC**

The constabulary has funded several posts focused on preventing SOC offending and victimisation linked to vulnerability. This includes:

- a prevent co-ordinator whose role requires expertise in the application and management of ancillary orders to prevent reoffending; and

- a county lines co-ordinator who works with partners to divert vulnerable people away from this type of criminality.

Analysis of disruption data for the year ending 31 December 2022 shows that the constabulary had the highest proportion of prevent disruptions (30 percent) when compared to other forces in the region. This suggests that these roles are having a positive influence on preventing people from becoming involved in SOC.

# Greater Manchester Police

| Good |
|------|

Greater Manchester Police is good at tackling serious and organised crime.

## Understanding SOC and setting priorities to tackle it

In 2021, we inspected how good Greater Manchester Police was at tackling SOC. We identified several significant issues, which amounted to a cause of concern. We wrote to the chief constable informing him of this cause of concern. During this current inspection, we were pleased to note that significant improvements have been made to address these issues.

**The force has developed how it strategically assesses the threat from SOC**

The force has a strategic assessment and control strategy, which defines its SOC threats. Each local policing area has individual SOC local profiles, which allow police and partners to better understand their local threats. We did, however, find that the content of these SOC local profiles varied considerably. Some had action plans, while others didn't. It would benefit the force to standardise the appearance and content of these profiles.

**The force has restructured the intelligence command to improve its understanding of SOC threats**

When we inspected the force in 2021, we found that overt and covert intelligence functions were separate, under two different commands. This meant that the force wasn't able to analyse all available intelligence to fully understand the threats from SOC. During this inspection, the force told us that it has invested an additional £2 million in the FIB. This has allowed a restructure of the intelligence function. The central intelligence teams have moved into the FIB under the management of the head of intelligence. Within this new intelligence structure, the force has created threat desks for each of the priorities identified in its control strategy. Nominated senior officers are appointed for each priority and have dedicated analytical support. This has resulted in better management of these priorities.

**The force is developing better performance management processes**

The force has developed a meeting and performance structure to examine its SOC performance. This new structure allows resources to be allocated to target the threats that pose the highest risk. In the meetings that we observed, there was a focus on strategic 4P plans, which link to the force's control strategy. We observed senior leaders identify and challenge areas requiring performance improvement. Generally, the personnel that we interviewed welcomed this new structure.

**The force needs to encourage the workforce to submit intelligence**

The force acknowledges that over the last three years, there has been a significant reduction in the submission of intelligence reports. This is concerning and may indicate that some intelligence isn't being recorded.

The main reason for this appears to be that personnel have lost confidence in the force's crime and intelligence system. They find it difficult to use and it has limited functionality. We previously reported that the force faced difficulties and risks when it introduced this system in 2019. The force is in the process of replacing it. When a new system is introduced, it is vital that personnel are trained to use it confidently.

## Resources and skills

**Area for improvement: Greater Manchester Police needs to improve its capacity to tackle serious and organised crime**

Greater Manchester Police faces some challenges in its capacity to tackle serious and organised crime (SOC).

It doesn't have an on-call surveillance capability and relies on other forces for support if needed outside core hours.

At the time of our inspection, the force also had a significant number of vacant posts in SOC specialist roles.

The situation in the force intelligence bureau has improved since our last inspection, but vacancies remain. Analyst recruitment and retention are still an issue for the force. This is in part due to it being the lowest-paying force in the region for this role. Senior leaders we spoke to explained that the force is running recruitment campaigns and expect the situation to improve further.

During interviews, we were told that the SOC group, which undertakes specialist SOC investigations, had a 28 percent vacancy rate. This included several vacancies in the force surveillance team. This means that the SOC group can't always meet the demand for specialist SOC investigations. The force has decided to recruit unqualified officers into the SOC group and then train them while in post. Since our inspection, the force has told us that this unit is now fully staffed. We welcome this, but it is likely that it will take time for new officers to become fully competent.

### LROs understand their role in tackling SOC

The LRO role is allocated to divisional detective superintendents. The LROs we spoke to felt well supported by other units, such as the SOC group and FIB. They have access to specialist tactical advice through the force covert commissioning services meetings. The force invites the NWROCU to this meeting to identify any further specialist support.

We found that LROs had received specific training developed by the Home Office. The LROs we interviewed explained that their primary role is to assist with preventative elements of 4P plans. However, some told us that they haven't yet received training in how to write 4P plans. The force has informed us that there is a plan to train all LROs in this area.

Often, day-to-day management of 4P plans is undertaken by locally based inspectors and chief inspectors. We found that this process was working well. LROs attend force-level SOC performance meetings and are held to account for the progress of

their plans. We also found that there was an informal process of LROs peer reviewing each other's 4P plans and investigations.

**The force has a team that deals with threats to life in one local area**

In response to a high number of threats-to-life incidents in the Salford area, the force introduced a dedicated team to manage these sensitive investigations. The investigators in this team have developed specialist skills and experience, which enables them to manage these types of threats. The unit regularly provides advice and guidance on threats-to-life investigations to personnel in other areas of the force.

**The force is introducing an intelligence training academy**

The force's new intelligence training academy will provide the training required by its intelligence professionals. The aim is to reduce delays in training and improve the standard and consistency of intelligence products. It will also provide mandated accreditation for intelligence personnel.

**The force should develop an IT strategy to improve efficiency and effectiveness**

We have already described issues with the force's crime and intelligence system. The force uses several other IT systems to manage its SOC intelligence and investigations. It is also part of the regional rollout of APMIS, which means that personnel will be inputting and accessing information on a further IT system. The use of multiple systems across the force is likely to create disparate sources of information. This makes it difficult for analysts and investigators to access available information. This is inefficient.

## Tackling SOC and safeguarding people and communities

**Promising practice: Greater Manchester Police successfully targets criminal finance**

The economic crime unit contains several specialist teams that perform different functions, including freezing bank accounts and confiscating criminal assets. Financial investigators are based locally and in serious organised crime unit. The economic crime unit benefits from good analytical support. Last year, the force reported that it had recovered £13.7 million in criminal assets.

We were told about an operation where the force seized £16 million of fraudulently obtained cryptocurrency. The force's cybercrime team has developed an innovative process to return most of this money to victims; this has traditionally been a challenge for law enforcement agencies. This process has been shared through the national cybercrime network.

> **Promising practice: Greater Manchester Police effectively targets serious and organised crime in high-harm locations**
>
> The force has launched Operation Vulcan, which follows the Clear, Hold, Build model, in the Cheetham Hill area in response to public concerns about the effects of organised crime. Principally, this was to tackle issues resulting from the sale of counterfeit goods, such as modern slavery, enforced labour, sexual exploitation, money laundering, serious violent crime and the sale of illicit medicines. Over 30 organised crime groups have been identified as operating in this area.
>
> Using funds confiscated from criminals, the force has funded a dedicated team for three years. It has employed a range of tactics, which is having a positive effect in the Cheetham Hill area. During focus groups, we were told that there is no longer any open drug dealing in the area and that the sale of counterfeit goods has been eradicated. One officer explained how a member of the community told them that they now feel safe in the area.
>
> Over 65 agencies participated in this operation, including Trading Standards, Immigration Enforcement and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service. The force is working with intellectual property crime teams in the City of London Police and the NWROCU.
>
> The force has achieved some significant results, including the seizure of 255 tonnes of counterfeit clothing, £1.2 million worth of class C drugs and £248,000 cash.
>
> The force has also introduced Operation Avro to deploy officers in problem areas. The operation is widely publicised throughout the Greater Manchester area, including on the force website. Senior leaders told us that this is having an impact on organised crime. They shared some performance data that highlights the successes achieved, including nearly 600 arrests, the seizure of 250 vehicles and the recovery of drugs and cash amounting to nearly £2 million.

**The force should continue to improve how it records disruptions on APMIS**

In the year ending 31 December 2022, the force recorded 490 disruptions. Most (70 percent) were for pursue disruption activity.

Personnel we spoke to demonstrated a strong knowledge of activity undertaken to prevent people from becoming involved in SOC and to protect vulnerable victims. But it seems likely that some of this work isn't being recorded.

During our inspection, we were told that the force is recording disruptions more accurately on its own IT system. Having checked APMIS since our inspection fieldwork, we can see that there have been demonstrable improvements in disruption

recording by the force. It is good to see that it has responded to our feedback on this issue. The force expects this to improve further with the regional rollout of APMIS.

**The force works well with partner agencies**

The force and partners, such as Trading Standards and health, work together to tackle SOC and associated exploitation through the multi-agency initiative Programme Challenger. We also found some examples of police and partner agencies being co-located. Generally, this appears to be effective, and partners are well engaged. One partner representative told us that they feel like an equal partner and that it's "not just the police and the rest of us".

We were pleased to see that information sharing with charities is good. In fact, the force has given the charity Justice and Care access to its crime recording system so that it can identify and contact victims of crime to offer them support. However, we found that local authority structures didn't fully align with the local force areas, which sometimes makes it difficult to adopt the same processes in all areas.

The force has a modern slavery team to co-ordinate a partnership approach to tackling this threat. There is a dedicated analyst who assesses intelligence relating to modern slavery. A network of tactical advisers and victim liaison officers provide training and support to officers across the force to make sure that they know how to support victims of slavery.

**The force is delivering its commitment to tackle county lines**

In 2022, the force established a county lines investigation team. A Home Office grant was used to fund this. The force told us that since its creation, the team has closed 63 identified drug lines and is likely to exceed the target set by the Home Office.

We were shown examples of preventative work undertaken to tackle child criminal exploitation:

- *Breaking barriers* is a play to warn young people about exploitation linked to county lines gangs. This has been delivered in 44 schools and has reached over 1,500 pupils.

- WeMove, funded through the Asset Recovery Incentivisation Scheme and the Greater Manchester Command Authority, has provided mentoring to 45 young people. The project is being independently assessed by the Open University.

**The force is tackling firearms-enabled organised criminality**

The force tackles firearms-related crime under its strategic priority of serious violent crime. It has introduced a new process to improve its response to intelligence relating to gun crime. The force told us that firearms discharges have reduced by 29 percent since 2021. While recorded discharges have declined across England and Wales over the last two years, this figure is still significant.

# Lancashire Constabulary

Good

Lancashire Constabulary is good at tackling serious and organised crime.

## Understanding SOC and setting priorities to tackle it

**The constabulary identifies and manages its SOC priorities**

Lancashire Constabulary uses data from a range of sources, including from community safety partners such as the local authority, to understand its SOC threats. The MoRiLE assessment model is then used to individually assess these threats. The threats with the highest scores are included in the constabulary's control strategy, which is aligned with the regional control strategy. The constabulary has threat desks to analyse and develop SOC intelligence.

The constabulary has funded four community safety partnership analysts who produce several documents outlining the threats from SOC, including:

- the constabulary's strategic threat assessment and control strategy; and
- strategic needs assessments for each local policing area, which include a SOC local profile.

These assessments contain data from police and the community safety partnership as well as information collected through a community survey tool. They also include data from Trading Standards through its 2020 young persons' survey.

**The constabulary has governance structures to monitor SOC performance**

During our inspection, we found that the constabulary had established processes to manage SOC threats. Fortnightly serious crime tasking meetings are held in each local policing area. These report into a monthly meeting chaired by an assistant chief constable. We found these meetings were well attended and those present appeared to understand the threats from organised crime.

All new SOC operations are considered at a weekly meeting chaired by a dedicated senior officer. This meeting also assesses any appropriate covert policing techniques needed to gather intelligence or evidence on SOC investigations. This is supplemented by a quarterly meeting to discuss intelligence being provided by covert

human intelligence sources. This meeting aims to make sure that any gaps identified in constabulary intelligence requirements are filled. We found that this was beneficial to the management of covert human intelligence.

## Resources and skills

**Innovative practice: Lancashire Constabulary has an effective network of lead responsible officers**

The constabulary allocates serious organised crime investigations to the appropriate lead responsible officer (LRO), depending on the level and nature of threat. Generally, LROs are inspectors or chief inspectors from neighbourhood policing, intelligence or specialist investigations.

LROs demonstrate a good understanding of how to be effective in their role. They are supported by a local organised crime group co-ordinator, who provides newly appointed LROs with initial training and ongoing support. The co-ordinator also helps them to develop 4P plans and work with partner agencies. LROs have access to an online community area, which contains up-to-date guidance and best practice as well as a menu of tactics to assist them when formulating 4P plans. Peer support is available to new LROs from those who have more experience. Those we spoke to told us that they are able to manage LRO responsibilities alongside their core roles.

During our inspection, we found that there was a 4P plan for every organised crime group. These plans are recorded on a central IT system. We reviewed some of them and found that they were regularly updated, actions were tailored to the specific SOC threat and partners were consulted to develop the plans. We found that 4P plans were well managed and LROs were held to account for achieving the plans.

**The constabulary has dedicated teams to tackle SOC**

We found that SOC investigations were allocated to the most appropriate team. The serious crime unit undertakes specialist investigations that target the highest SOC threats. It has its own investigative and surveillance capability. Most other SOC investigations are undertaken locally. Each of the three local policing areas has a dedicated team, which provides local capability for tackling SOC.

The constabulary has established a roads crime team. It is deployed following analysis of intelligence to identify vehicles suspected of being involved in organised crime. Officers told us that almost £900,000 has been seized and the money is being reinvested by the PCC.

**The constabulary promotes a culture that tackling SOC is everyone's responsibility**

The constabulary has branded its activities to tackle SOC as Operation Warrior. Generally, personnel that we spoke to displayed a high level of awareness of Operation Warrior and the need to work with partners. The PCC's 'fighting crime plan' recognises the threat from SOC and the need for the chief constable to work with partners to respond effectively.

**The constabulary and partners share information about SOC threats**

Operation Genga is a collaboration between the constabulary and local authorities to manage their response to SOC. Meetings are chaired by the constabulary's OCG co-ordinator. We observed some Operation Genga partnership meetings and noted effective information sharing. We found that representatives from partner agencies were fully involved and able to access information from their own systems during the meetings. Appropriate actions to manage SOC threats are then put in place.

## Tackling SOC and safeguarding people and communities

**Innovative practice: Lancashire Constabulary is tackling exploitation linked to modern slavery and human trafficking**

For the last six years, the police and crime commissioner has funded a permanent modern slavery and human trafficking (MSHT) co-ordinator. Their role is to develop the constabulary's response to MSHT with partner agencies. To support this, the constabulary has a dedicated team to tackle MSHT and foreign national offenders.

We found that the MSHT team and the co-ordinator were working with relevant partners to tackle this type of crime. This is facilitated by Operation Genga and the Pan Lancashire Anti-Slavery Partnership (PLASP). Statutory partners, community groups and third-sector organisations, such as the Medaille Trust, Hope for Justice and Emmaus, are part of the partnership. The overarching aim is to tackle MSHT and improve the experience of victims.

The PLASP has developed an online toolkit to be used by police and partner agencies to standardise the approach to dealing with victims of MSHT.

The PLASP has delivered training and awareness to various sectors including:

- *Achieving best evidence* training to third-sector partners who work with victims;
- training for medical professionals, GPs, pharmacists and other service providers, such as taxi drivers and fast food outlets;
- the 'freedom bus', which is used to communicate with the public to raise awareness about MSHT;
- work with Crimestoppers to develop media in multiple languages; and
- tools to raise public awareness.

The constabulary can demonstrate an increase in MSHT threats identified from 2018 to 2020. We were told by interviewees that referrals for potential victims to the constabulary and the national slavery helpline have increased. Officers from the NWROCU also told us that they have used the services of PLASP to support regional MSHT investigations.

**Area for improvement: Lancashire Constabulary should improve how it records disruptions on the national database**

Data extracted from the national data base (APMIS) on 4 January 2023 showed that Lancashire Constabulary had identified and assessed 243 serious organised crime (SOC) threats. In the year ending 31 December 2022, the constabulary recorded 635 disruptions on APMIS, of which 85 percent were for pursue activity.

In this report, we have explained Lancashire Constabulary's response to tackling SOC. It has resources dedicated to tackling SOC and has developed effective multi-agency approaches. The proportion of recorded disruptions that relate to pursue activities remains high. We conclude, therefore, that not all disruption activity is being recorded, particularly activity linked to protecting victims and preventing people from becoming involved in SOC.

**The constabulary seeks to reduce the threat to those vulnerable to SOC**

New recruits and trainee detectives have been provided with SOC and vulnerability training. This highlights how everyone can manage the effect of SOC. Each local policing area has an exploitation team working with partners, such as the Department of Work and Pensions, to provide diversionary activities to those at risk of becoming involved in SOC. For example, the 180 project offers young people considered at high risk from SOC alternatives such as sporting activities.

During reality testing, we saw that analysts have used social network analysis to identify those on the periphery of criminal networks who may be suitable for diversionary activities. This information is then communicated to LROs to work with

partner agencies in order to mitigate the risk to these individuals and give them access to support schemes.

The constabulary has a community messaging service with over 100,000 subscribers. Operation Warrior messages can be sent out via this service to alert members of the public about emerging SOC threats and to empower the community to prevent crime from happening.

Lancashire Constabulary uses Home Office funding as part of Project ADDER to protect victims of cuckooing. In Blackpool, there is a dedicated partnership with housing and social care. Vulnerable premises are recorded on the intelligence system and partners then regularly visit them. Victims are given support or moved to suitable alternative accommodation. Where appropriate, closure orders or notices are issued to prevent offenders from continuing to target the premises.

During interviews and focus groups, we heard about several instances of the constabulary working with partners to make use of all available legislation to tackle SOC. These include using the powers of the fire and rescue service to prohibit access to premises that don't comply with fire regulations and using the local housing authority to prevent landlords from letting properties to criminals. Local businesses are being supported to improve their resilience to cyberattacks.

The Lancashire Violence Reduction Network was established in 2019. It aims to reduce serious violence and make communities safer. Lancashire Constabulary is a key partner in this network, which has secured funding to develop initiatives to tackle serious violence. For example, it deploys navigators in accident and emergency departments to liaise with victims of stabbing and assaults. It has bought equipment to detect when someone is carrying a knife and for the anonymous and safe disposal of weapons. We found that the constabulary had a clear appreciation of the link between serious violence and SOC and was working with partners to tackle both issues.

**The constabulary has increased its capacity for offender management**

The constabulary has enhanced its approach to the lifetime management of organised criminals to minimise the risk they pose to local communities. This includes regular consideration of ancillary orders and consistent monitoring arrangements to deter organised criminals from continuing to offend.

The constabulary makes use of available legislation and orders to assist the management of SOC offenders. Guidance is given to personnel regarding how to apply for SCPOs. The constabulary has a dedicated civil order team and has appointed a co-ordinator in each basic command unit. They oversee ancillary orders that target SOC offenders, including the enforcement of existing orders.

The constabulary has close working relationships with HMPPS Service, including an agreed protocol to allow the sharing of intelligence. It has created management plans for offenders who are in prison.

# Merseyside Police

<div style="background-color:#1a6334; color:white; display:inline-block; padding:10px 40px;">Outstanding</div>

Merseyside Police is outstanding at tackling serious and organised crime.

Since 2016, Merseyside Police has been graded as outstanding at tackling SOC. In the force's 2021/22 PEEL inspection report, we identified two areas of innovative practice relating to SOC. These remain relevant to Merseyside Police's success.

## Understanding SOC and setting priorities to tackle it

**The force has effective governance and leadership to monitor SOC performance**

Throughout the force, we found evidence of strong leadership when tackling SOC. The force has a five-year SOC strategy, which is broken down into seven thematic areas. Each of these has a senior responsible officer and an accompanying strategy.

The assistant chief constable with responsibility for SOC demonstrates effective management. Personnel are held to account through strategic and tactical-level meetings. The force has a daily 'one team' meeting to manage the response to serious incidents in the previous 24 hours.

**The force makes effective use of analysis to understand and prioritise its SOC threats**

We found that the FIB was central to the force response to SOC. The force has sufficient analytical capacity and capability to produce intelligence products that direct activity against its SOC threats.

The force produces SOC local profiles that are refreshed each year and fully reviewed every three years. They explain the levels of organised crime in each area and make use of case studies and academic findings. We found these profiles were detailed and included information from a variety of sources, including local authorities, education and health. We found a clear link between these profiles and local activity.

**The force is good at recording disruptions**

We found that the force is committed to capturing data about its SOC disruptions in order to monitor performance. At the time of our inspection, the force was about to start using APMIS to directly record its SOC disruptions. It consistently records high levels of disruption but is determined to improve further. For example, it is concentrating on enhancing how it records data about preventative activity that wasn't always previously recognised.

## Resources and skills

**Innovative practice: Merseyside Police has an effective network of lead responsible officers**

We found that lead responsible officers (LROs) were trained and supported in their role. The force makes sure that its LROs' knowledge is up to date. For example, LROs have been trained in the use of the national database (APMIS) to support the rollout across the force.

Newly appointed LROs attend a week-long foundation course that establishes what is required of the role. This includes the management of 4P plans and disruption recording. The force also has an internal chat function that allows LROs to share knowledge and good practice.

To improve its response to serious organised crime (SOC), the force has a SOC community co-ordinator along with two assistants. The community co-ordinator has several responsibilities including:

- providing tactical advice to LROs;
- quality assuring and developing 4P plans;
- sharing best practice between police and partners;
- identifying and applying for funding; and
- improving community resilience and developing Clear, Hold, Build.

The SOC community co-ordinator has developed a section on the force's intranet for LROs. It contains a newsfeed and a place to retain best practice on 4P methodology and Clear, Hold, Build. This information isn't only accessible to police practitioners but also to partner agencies.

Continuing professional development is provided through mentoring from experienced LROs, the FIB and the SOC community co-ordinator.

**The force collaborates effectively with the NCA**

In 2021, the force and the NCA established an organised crime partnership unit. It is similar to existing units in London and Scotland and targets OCGs based in Merseyside, which focus on drugs and firearms. Through the partnership, the force can access the specialist capabilities that the NCA provides. The unit has achieved some notable results, including the recovery of firearms and criminal assets.

**Frontline personnel understand their role in preventing SOC**

We were impressed by the level of knowledge of neighbourhood policing teams relating to SOC threats in their local area. We were told that personnel are regularly briefed about local SOC activity and patrol plans include requirements for intelligence gathering. Personnel we spoke to appeared to understand the signs of vulnerability and how to identify those being exploited by OCGs. They also displayed a good understanding of 4P plans and the use of ancillary orders, such as gang injunctions and closure orders.

**The force infrastructure facilitates collaborative working in tackling SOC**

The force has invested in the operational control centre. This allows all SOC investigative and intelligence functions to be co-located. We observed teams working closely and information being shared. For example, we were told by personnel in the organised crime partnership that they can access the force's drone unit quickly to facilitate surveillance in areas where traditional surveillance is difficult.

## Tackling SOC and safeguarding people and communities

**Promising practice: Merseyside Police continues to prevent people from becoming involved in serious and organised crime and to protect vulnerable victims**

The force works with many statutory and non-statutory bodies as well as charities to provide prevent initiatives.

Operation Stonehaven is Merseyside Police's preventative and diversionary pathway for young people who are on the cusp of criminality and at risk of being exploited. Between November 2020 and October 2022, Operation Stonehaven involved over 10,000 children and young people. The force has worked with the Sports Traider charity, which uses funds to invest in sports participation projects. Four stores across the force have been opened, which provide young people with paid and voluntary work experience.

In 2019, the force, together with Everton Football Club, established a trainee detective programme. This programme takes groups of schoolchildren aged 14–16 who have some degree of vulnerability to being drawn into serious and organised crime. They are inducted into a week-long programme where they work alongside detective constables through a knife crime scenario. This helps to raise awareness about knife crime and helps them make better choices.

None of the children involved in the trainee detective programme have come to the attention of the force since completing the course. Other forces are planning to implement similar programmes based on this model.

The serious organised crime co-ordinator has developed a database of partner and third-sector organisations that can provide diversion and intervention activities to prevent serious organised crime. This is a valuable tool for lead responsible officers and other personnel who wish to access these services.

**Partnership structures are well established**

Merseyside Police has a well-established relationship with partners to tackle SOC. The Merseyside strategic policing and partnership board oversees the response to SOC. A series of tactical subgroups responsible for individual SOC threat areas report progress to the strategic board every quarter.

We found that partners at all levels were fully committed with the force to tackling SOC and contributing to 4P planning. There was a clear commitment from partners to work with the force to identify people at risk and share information. When meeting with partners, we found a sense of shared responsibility.

**The force works effectively to disrupt the criminal use of firearms**

The force has identified the criminal use of firearms as a priority. It demonstrates strong leadership in tackling this threat and brings learning from national and regional forums back into the force. The senior officer responsible for managing firearms threat in the force has assumed the regional leadership role.

The force owns the highest threat SOC operation in the region, which targets the supply of illegal weapons. The force is working with the NWROCU and regional forces to reduce this threat. This work is underpinned by extensive analysis of intelligence to understand the threat and identify suspects who may be involved in the supply of these weapons.

The FIB works to develop intelligence that may identify where illegal weapons are hidden by criminal gangs. The force is also working to review firearms licence holders and identify individuals with access to firearms who may be vulnerable to exploitation.

**The force effectively targets groups involved in illicit drug supply**

The force has established Operation Toxic as its response to county lines. Rather than concentrating on low-level street dealers, the operation targets those who control the phone lines used to run drugs networks. This approach has been adopted by other forces and is understood by the public. The force reports that between November 2020 and October 2022, over 500 people were prosecuted and over 600 phone lines were closed. The force maintains other operations alongside Operation Toxic to tackle vulnerability, criminal finance and transport networks linked to county lines.

The force is part of Project ADDER, which combines targeted and tougher policing with enhanced treatment and recovery services. We saw examples of this across the force and clear commitment from partners who acknowledge a cultural change in the police response to exploited drug users. For example, the project works with social landlords to help them identify the signs of cuckooing so that victims can be offered help and support. The force has worked with the Department of Health so that officers can use their handheld devices to refer vulnerable drug users to support services.

**The force works with partners to improve communities and build resilience against SOC**

The force has secured Home Office funding to support the creation of three Clear, Hold, Build sites. This is part of a three-year plan called Evolve that will see five such sites across Merseyside.

The force and its partners have allocated significant resources to the three pilot sites. This includes a dedicated superintendent lead, a communications unit to promote the work to local communities and dedicated analytical resources.

Governance is provided through a delivery board, which is chaired by a senior representative from the local authority. Beneath this, there are working groups that focus on key strands of activity. These groups work with partners such as fire, health, housing and members of the community to jointly develop solutions to reduce criminality and build community resilience.

In our last SOC inspection, we highlighted the work that the force was doing to reinvest cash seized from criminals into community projects. This work continues as part of the Evolve project to strengthen and improve local communities.

**The force evaluates how effectively it prevents people from becoming involved in SOC**

The force uses a variety of methods to assess the results of the prevention initiatives delivered by partners, the third sector and the force itself. Some agencies produce their own evaluations on a quarterly basis. These give detailed breakdowns of outcomes, such as the take-up of schemes and the reduction of reoffending.
In addition to this, the force commissions independent academic evaluations from Liverpool John Moores University. This process allows the force and its partners to identify those funded schemes that aren't delivering anticipated outcomes so that steps can be put in place to help them get back on track.

We saw evidence of community feedback on the delivery of Clear, Hold, Build. This was extremely positive and demonstrated a sense of greater resilience and community spirit.

# North Wales Police

<div style="background-color:darkred; color:white; padding:10px;">Inadequate</div>

North Wales Police is inadequate at tackling serious and organised crime.

**Cause of concern: North Wales Police should make sure that it has enough resources to tackle serious organised crime effectively. It must also make sure that its workforce understands that serious organised crime is a priority**

This cause of concern is raised in response to several issues we identified that are affecting the force's ability to tackle serious organised crime (SOC). These are summarised below (additional detail is provided in the body of this report):

- The force has a corporate plan that identifies SOC as a priority threat. However, some personnel didn't fully understand this.

- The force doesn't have enough analytical resources to fully understand its SOC threats.

- The force has three locally based proactive units. However, two of them aren't fully operational, which limits the force's capacity to tackle its SOC threats.

- Lead responsible officers are managing significant other demands, which limits their effectiveness in tackling SOC. Lead responsible officers, force specialist senior investigating officers and other teams don't work together consistently.

- Tactical 4P plans aren't of the quality or consistency required to provide an effective response.

- The force doesn't routinely record learning in relation to SOC. This was an area for improvement given to the force in 2016 and hasn't been addressed.

**Recommendations**

By 1 November 2024 the force should:

- make sure that the workforce understands the importance of SOC and its role in tackling it;

- increase its analytical capacity to improve the understanding of emerging SOC threats;

- review its resourcing model to improve how SOC threats are identified, managed and investigated, which should include a review of the lead responsible officer role and how they manage 4P plans; and

- develop a process to identify learning and good practice and apply this to improve operational performance.

## Understanding SOC and setting priorities to tackle it

**The force identifies SOC as a priority**

The force has a corporate plan that identifies 11 priority threats, 1 of which is SOC. However, we found that some of the officers and staff we spoke to didn't fully understand this. We found that most local officers knew which OCGs were active in their areas. However, they didn't always have sufficient details of the groups' activities or the threats they posed in order to disrupt them.

During our inspection, we didn't find an accepted culture that SOC is everyone's business. Conversely, officers and staff demonstrated a good understanding of vulnerability and safeguarding, but some were unable to explain the link between vulnerability and SOC.

The force manages its response to SOC through a series of local and force tasking meetings and co-ordination meetings. During our inspection, we observed some meetings and found them to be well structured and supported by analysis to inform decision-making.

**Local profiles inform and direct partnership work on SOC**

The force has produced community local profiles to identify the threat from SOC in each of its community policing areas. These profiles are updated annually. The profiles are produced by community partnership analysts and include data from other agencies such as local authorities, education and health. They are used in community safety partnership meetings and appear to inform activity. The local authorities contribute to the funding of the partnership analysts.

We examined some of these profiles and were impressed with their structure and the detail contained. Partners we spoke to recognised the benefits of them. However, some LROs didn't appear to understand how they should be used to tackle SOC.

## Resources and skills

**The force is unable to meet some analytical SOC demands**

The force analytical team comprises strategic, tactical and partnership analysts. We found that the force wasn't always able to manage its analytical demand effectively.

The head of analysis must make difficult decisions when prioritising analytical work. We found that analysts were able to support reactive investigations being managed by the SOC unit. However, they didn't always have time to undertake proactive work to enhance the force's understanding of SOC. We were told by some analysts that the demand to carry out work on telecommunications data has increased significantly.

We were told that LROs seldom receive analytical support to drive 4P planning activity. We were also told that there is a lack of analytical services available in the force, which may explain this.

Some analysts and their managers expressed their frustration that some pieces of completed analytical work weren't being acted on. This appears to be due to limited availability of frontline resources.

In other forces, we often find analysts dedicated to tackling SOC, and in some cases, they are assigned to specific threat areas. This allows analysts to proactively examine and assess SOC threats and identify emerging issues. The analytical resourcing in North Wales Police doesn't allow this.

The force leadership is aware of this issue, and it has been formally recorded as a risk. The force should review how analytical work is allocated and make sure there is enough capacity to undertake proactive analysis. Furthermore, the force would benefit from raising the profile of analytical work across the workforce to encourage requests for support and make sure that recommendations are considered for action.

**The force should deploy its resources more effectively to combat SOC threats**

The force has a well-resourced SOC unit comprising four specialist teams undertaking covert investigations.

Each local policing area should also have a local proactive unit. We found that only one of the three local proactive units was fully operational. This limits the force's capacity to tackle its SOC threats. Local senior officers rely on their local policing teams to manage SOC threats. However, these teams are also required to respond to other local demands, such as burglary.

We found that the allocation of SOC investigations between specialist and local resources appeared disproportionate. The force should review its SOC resources to make sure that there is enough capacity and ability to flexibly deploy resources to carry out SOC investigations across the entire force.

**The force should make sure it has sufficiently trained LROs to tackle SOC**

The force designates the LRO role to local chief inspectors. Their effectiveness is limited by their other responsibilities. LROs attend a monthly forum chaired by a detective chief superintendent. This meeting includes other specialist leads and it reviews the progress of 4P plans.

Some LROs we spoke to told us that they feel unsupported in their roles. We found some evidence of a lack of contact between LROs, force specialist senior investigating officers and other teams. We were told that for some investigations, senior investigating officers manage the pursue element while LROs manage the preventative and protective elements. Senior investigating officers and LROs don't always work to formulate 4P plans together and co-ordinate an effective response to SOC threats.

Not all LROs we spoke to were aware of some critical SOC procedures, such as applying for ancillary orders or the benefit of SOC local profiles. It was evident to us that not all LROs worked effectively with partners and there was no consistent approach to 4P delivery.

**The quality, consistency and application of 4P plans need to improve**

During our inspection, we examined several of the force's 4P plans and found them to be inconsistent. It appeared that some plans had been completed by several authors and, on occasions, were too generic to be effective. We found little evidence of plans including information from community profiles or consultation with partners. Plans appeared to lack evidence of being reviewed and updated by relevant LROs. The force should review its approach to 4P plans to make sure they are tailored to tackling specific threats and are of a consistent quality.

**The force doesn't routinely record learning in relation to SOC**

In 2016, we gave North Wales Police an area for improvement to increase its understanding of the effectiveness of its operations and to make sure that it learns from this. During this inspection, we found that the force was still not routinely identifying learning from operational debriefs. We were also told that during fieldwork, the force and its partners don't undertake routine evaluation of prevent and protect activity.

## Tackling SOC and safeguarding people and communities

**The force should improve how it works with partners to tackle SOC**

We found that in some SOC investigations, there was little evidence that partners had been consulted when developing 4P plans. We were also told that some investigation leads aren't clear on what level of information they can share with partners. Improving confidence in information sharing may be beneficial.

The force has successfully piloted Clear, Hold, Build in one of its geographical areas. We were told that, as a result, community resilience has increased. Senior leaders told us about their plans to increase the use of this approach in other areas of the force. However, we found that some partners hadn't been briefed about this approach. The force should make sure that future Clear, Hold, Build initiatives are widely communicated to its personnel and partner organisations.

**The force has sufficient resources to carry out financial investigations**

We were told during interviews that all SOC investigations are allocated a financial investigator. They work proactively to identify criminal assets for subsequent seizure. The force seeks independent expert advice on the value of high-value assets, including cryptocurrency.

**The force has improved its recording of SOC disruptions**

During the strategic presentation, we were told that the force has improved its recording of disruptions. It had previously recorded the fewest disruptions in the region, which was mainly due to the force not fully understanding the process for recording disruption activity. The force has now revised its process following consultation with another force.

However, much of this work fell to a senior analyst in the force. Other officers and staff involved in managing SOC threats weren't consistently involved in recording disruption activity. At the time of inspection, the force told us that by summer 2023, it will be able to record disruptions directly onto APMIS. And it has plans to increase resilience to further improve disruption recording once APMIS is available.

**The force works to safeguard vulnerable victims of SOC**

The force has created a partnership called the 'prevention hub', which aims to prevent people from becoming victims of crime. It consists of several teams and other agencies, including community safety and youth justice. LROs told us that this resource supports them when formulating 4P plans. We also heard positive feedback when interviewing partners.

During our inspection, we found several examples of the force working with partners to protect people who are vulnerable to exploitation. The force has established an operation to support victims of county lines. We saw examples of personnel working with housing partners to protect victims of cuckooing. Generally, they appeared to understand their role in safeguarding.

The force has introduced a programme called 'Checkpoint.' It aims to offer adult offenders voluntary alternatives to prosecution. People identified on the edge of criminality enter a contract and are supported to prevent continued offending. At the time of our inspection, the force reported that 147 individuals had been dealt with in this way and only 3 had reoffended.

The force has introduced a [mini police](#) initiative in 13 schools. It aims to raise the awareness of children aged 9–11 about local policing issues and staying safe. The force aims to expand this scheme into more schools. Similarly, the force has 16 dedicated officers working in secondary schools who aim to divert young people from becoming involved in SOC.

**The force uses ancillary orders to support the management of SOC offenders**

At the time of our inspection, the force reported that it had secured 31 SCPOs against SOC offenders, of which 11 were living in the community. The remaining offenders were serving prison sentences. The force has an SCPO co-ordinator to administrate these orders and work with HMPPS to manage those offenders in prison.

# Appendix 1: Map of regional organised crime units

There are ten regions in England and Wales containing nine regional organised crime units:

1. The East Midlands Special Operations Unit covers Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire.

2. The Eastern Region Special Operations Unit covers Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Kent, Norfolk and Suffolk.

3. The North East Regional Special Operations Unit covers Cleveland, Durham and Northumbria.

4. The Regional Organised Crime Unit for the West Midlands Region covers Warwickshire, West Mercia, West Midlands and Staffordshire.

5. The South East Regional Organised Crime Unit covers Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex and Thames Valley.

6. The South West Regional Organised Crime Unit covers Avon & Somerset, Devon & Cornwall, Dorset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire.

7. Tarian covers Dyfed-Powys, Gwent and South Wales.

8. The North West Regional Organised Crime Unit covers Cheshire, Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Merseyside and North Wales.

9. The Yorkshire & the Humber Regional Organised Crime Unit covers Humberside, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire.

10. The Metropolitan Police Service, the City of London Police and British Transport Police work collaboratively in the London region.

There is a separate collaborative arrangement for the London region, incorporating the constituent forces of the Metropolitan Police Service, the City of London Police and British Transport Police. The forces share some ROCU capabilities. For the purposes of this inspection the London region has been inspected, but as it is not conventionally considered a ROCU, it has not been awarded a ROCU grading.

# Appendix 2: Data methodology and caveats

The data used in this report was extracted from the national database: the Agency and Partners Management Information System (APMIS).

APMIS contains data that is recorded by police forces throughout England and Wales, regional organised crime units, the National Crime Agency and other agencies, such as His Majesty's Revenue and Customs and Home Office Immigration Enforcement.

APMIS data:

- The serious organised crime (SOC) master list contains all the MoRiLE assessments for the SOC threats identified by forces and agencies.

- Event-based disruption data (disruption data) is recorded in accordance with national minimum standards. At the time of our inspection, minimum standards stipulated that disruption data should only be recorded against organised crime groups and not priority individuals or SOC vulnerabilities.

- Police forces across England and Wales and regional organised crime units submit disruption data to APMIS differently. Police forces can only record disruptions that they have led. Regional organised crime units can record disruptions that they have led and disruptions they have carried out to benefit another force or agency. The latter are known as support disruptions. We report on lead disruptions. We exclude support disruptions and only report them by exception. We make it clear in the report when we are referring to support disruption data.

MoRiLE assessment data was extracted from APMIS on 4 January 2023, and therefore any changes made to assessments since that date won't be accounted for in the analysis. The following filters were used on columns to extract this data: Type is Tactical, Moderation status is Moderated, SOC is SOC, Tier isn't Tier 5 and Phase not contains closed.

Disruption data was extracted from APMIS for lead disruptions made between 1 January 2022 and 31 December 2022. At the time of inspection, an extraction carried out on 4 January 2023 was available, which covered lead disruptions added to APMIS by that date.

A further extraction was carried out on 13 July 2023 to examine further disruptions for the 1 January 2022 to 31 December period, which were added to APMIS after 4 January 2023. The data from the extraction carried out on 13 July 2023 is referenced in this report.

The following filters were used on columns to extract this data: Disruption type is Lead Disruption; Record data is greater than 1 January 2022, less than 1 January 2023; and Assessment Category is Major, Minor and Moderate.