

Operation Sentinel - multi-agency organised crime disruption panel

A police and multi-agency disruption panel aimed at disrupting and preventing serious and organised criminality through the timely sharing and tasking of information.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Prevention
Topic	Intelligence Investigation Serious organised crime
Organisation	Durham Constabulary
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2021/22 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of Durham Constabulary
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Key details

Partners	Police Community safety partnership Criminal justice (includes prisons, probation services) Education Government department Local authority Voluntary/not for profit organisation
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.
Start date	January 2010
Scale of initiative	Local
Target group	Offenders

Aim

- To disrupt serious and organised crime by utilising partner agencies' wide range of enforcement powers and expertise.
- To ensure that partner agencies understand the current threat from serious and organised crime, and identify new potential threats and trends.
- To ensure two-way timely sharing and tasking of information in relation to serious and organised crime.

Intended outcome

- Increased disruption of serious and organised crime through a multi-agency collaboration.
- Reduction in opportunities for serious and organised crime to occur.
- Increased awareness of serious and organised crime by partnership agencies.
- Increased identification of new serious and organised crime threats and trends to enable timely interventions.

- Reduction in time taken to share information around serious and organised crime.

Description

Durham Constabulary implemented the organised crime group (OCG) disruption panel in 2010. Organised crime is not just a police problem, it is more widespread and impacts across all communities, and across multi-agency partnerships. Therefore, a partnership approach was required to combat the issue.

It was clear at an early stage that partner agencies were being impacted by serious and organised crime (SOC) and that they were not clearly sighted on the extent of the threat, or aware of the information held by the police that would be of benefit to them. The police were also not aware of what information partner agencies held in relation to SOC individuals.

The OCG disruption panel is held every two months and lasts for two hours. Meetings alternate between Microsoft Teams and in person at Durham Constabulary headquarters. The panel is chaired by a detective superintendent (Durham Constabulary crime command) and is attended by practitioners and middle managers across partner agencies. The panel follows a detailed agenda and encourages a two-way collaboration with the police and partner agencies.

Police attendance can include:

- SOC
- intelligence
- safeguarding
- neighbourhoods
- lead response officers managing crime groups
- representatives from the Police and Crime Commissioner

Partner agencies involved include:

- UK Border Agency
- British Transport Police
- Crimestoppers
- Local authorities (for example, planning, trading standards, education, licensing, community safety and fraud)

- Durham Agency Against Crime
- County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Environment Agency
- Gangmasters Licensing Authority
- Health and Safety Executive
- HM Prison and Probation Service
- HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)
- Stop Loan Sharks
- Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)
- Security Industry Authority

The panel ensures that all partner agencies have a clear understanding of what the current SOC threat is, as well as the current picture in relation to organised crime groups in Durham. The panel also discusses new SOC groups and shares details of all individuals involved, with a view to identify disruption opportunities. Partner agencies regularly bring issues to the group for discussion and tasks are allocated to the relevant agency for action.

Although the meeting is held every two months, this is a continual process with all agencies working together and sharing information throughout, which may require a timely intervention. Police and partner agencies have agreed the importance of information sharing for the success of the panel.

There are no costs associated with the OCG disruption panel, apart from refreshments being provided by Durham Constabulary for the face-to-face meetings. All partners and organisations are members of the panel on a voluntary basis.

Overall impact

The OCG disruption panel has been seen as a success by all agencies involved. Some of the impacts observed include:

- increased understanding and awareness of the threat of serious and organised crime across partner agencies
- increased information sharing between organisations
- reduced opportunities for SOC individuals to conduct criminality

- increased ability to identify SOC threats and trends
- increase in panel membership figures and a high attendance rate for new members

Several police forces across the country have attended Durham Constabulary's OCG disruption panel as observers, to see how it works in practice to take back and implement in their own force. In addition, His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary Fire and Rescue Services have recognised the panel as good practice.

Learning

Key learning identified includes:

- Senior leadership buy in is crucial across all organisations for the panel to be a success. At Durham Constabulary, this support goes all the way to the chief constable.
- At the beginning, Durham Constabulary would go and visit different organisations to educate them about SOC and the threats their organisation may face. This helped to highlight the shared goals to help prevent and tackle SOC. This helped increase panel membership as organisations were made aware of the benefits of joining.
 - To help maintain this awareness and the importance of the panel, once a year Durham Constabulary present to these organisations to educate them of the threat of SOC.
 - In 2010 when the panel started, there were only a few organisations represented at the panel, now attendance is regularly between 30 and 40 members.
- It is important to have good working relationships with partner agencies so that the running of the panel goes smoothly. This involves organisations sharing information and having a space to contribute, so that all panel members can benefit from the meeting. Having a chair and an agenda helps guide the discussion so that the meeting can run efficiently.
- It is important for the success of the panel to identify who the right people are from each organisation to join the panel. Durham Constabulary work with organisations to identify who in their organisation should join. Factors taken into consideration include the area where they work, and the level of influence they have to share information and take action. There has been little change to panel members throughout.
- Information sharing can be a barrier to multi-agency working, it is important that information sharing agreements are considered by all organisations.

- Partner organisations self-fund to be a part of the panel, due to the shared benefits it has for them attending and sharing information. This means funding the panel is not an issue and the only costs are refreshments at the face-to-face meetings which are provided by Durham Constabulary.

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