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NCA Performance in Northern Ireland

Q3 2022/23 (October - December 2022)

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Introduction

About the NCA

The NCA leads the UK's fight to cut serious and organised crime (SOC), a chronic and corrosive threat, affecting UK citizens more often than any other national security threat. The most recent National Strategic Assessment assessed that the overall SOC threat to the UK has continued to increase and has been largely resilient to the impacts of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Global networks, the UK border and current and emerging technology all play key roles as enablers of SOC offending. The latest estimated social and economic cost of SOC to the UK (approximately £37 billion¹) is assessed to be a significant underestimate of the true cost.

Our approach is to identify and disrupt high-harm, high-impact criminals (and organised crime groups), diminishing their capability, infrastructure and influence. In particular, we target those who:

- Exploit the vulnerable through child sexual abuse and exploitation, trafficking, servitude, fraud and other forms of abuse.
- Dominate communities, and chase profits, in the criminal marketplace - through criminal reputation and/or the use of violence in the supply of drugs and firearms.
- Undermine the UK's economy, integrity, and infrastructure & institutions, through their criminality.

Meeting the challenges of the changing nature of the SOC threat is a critical objective for the NCA, and wider law enforcement community, where substantial developments in SOC's complexity, scale, and volume, have been observed.

The NCA's 2022/23 Performance Ambitions

The NCA's Senior Leadership Team and the NCA Board are responsible for setting annual ambitions. These are tracked in our operational and strategic governance forums. To ensure the NCA deliver exceptional services and results across the Devolved Administration during 2022-23, the main objectives are as follows:

1. Continue to achieve branch-led disruptions in Northern Ireland and Scotland to build on our achievements in 2021/22.
2. Maximise the impact of our capability deployments in support of the SOC response in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Over 2022/23 these goals will be actively pursued with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), Police Scotland, and other partners, to demonstrate the NCA's commitment to build even stronger relationships with our partner agencies. The NCA will continue to actively pursue these goals for 2022/23 and support wider agency performance ambitions at the high end of high harm in the Devolved Administrations.

¹ Home Office, 'Understanding Organised Crime: Estimating the Scale and the Social and Economic Costs', November 2018.

About this report

The aim of this report is to summarise NCA performance and activities within quarter three 2022/23 (October – December 2022 inclusive) related to Northern Ireland and the resulting impact on protecting communities from serious and organised crime. This includes the work of the Paramilitary Crime Taskforce (PCTF).

The NCA develops, deploys, and maintains a range of national capabilities and provides them to police forces and other partners. These capabilities create opportunities to identify and take action against those engaged in SOC, as well as providing specialist expertise to support broader law enforcement activity. Examples of support provided to PSNI are included within Annex B and throughout the narrative. The report also considers wider NCA activity where its global nature is likely to have had some impact in Northern Ireland. The OFFICIAL classification of this report prevents the detailed inclusion of live operational activity and tactics.

The PSNI also submit a report to the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) setting out its performance against SOC during this period. The two reports can be read in conjunction to give an overview of law enforcement activity impacting Northern Ireland. In certain instances, there may be some overlap between cases reported in the two products, reflecting the close working relationship between the two agencies.

We have responded to feedback from recent Board meetings and made NCA and PSNI reports easier to read alongside each other. The structure of the NCA report has further evolved to provide additional clarity to the reader. It now includes extracts from the most recent National Strategic Assessment (Official version, published in 2021), and other relevant documents, in order to provide greater context. We will continue colleagues to ensure that both reports are aligned as closely as possible.

Our impact in Northern Ireland

Disruption Assessment	Jan-21 to Dec-21		R12 Total	Jan-22 to Dec-22		R12 Total
	Lead	Support		Lead	Support	
Major	4	1	5	12	0	12
Moderate	37	3	40	41	8	49
Minor	84	15	99	40	31	71
Total	125	19	144	93	39	132

Figure 1: NCA Disruptions with impact in Northern Ireland January 2021 to December 2022

12 Month Comparison

Figure 1 above shows that recorded disruptions in Northern Ireland over the last 12 months, were 8% lower (12 fewer disruptions) when compared to the previous 12 months. However, the number of disruptions assessed as having either a major or moderate impact was 35% higher (16 more disruptions). The increase in major and moderate disruptions is in line with the Agency’s strategy to increase the proportion of disruptions targeting high-harm offending.

Quarter Comparison

Figure 2 shows the overall trend for major disruptions is increasing. The highest number of major disruptions over two years to date were conducted in quarter three. Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) remains the threat area where the highest proportion of disruptions were recorded accounting for 37% (10) of all disruptions this quarter. NCA also delivered a greater number of disruptions in Drugs, Cyber Crime and Fraud threats in this quarter compared to quarter two.

The remainder of this report will set out examples of NCA activities which directly or indirectly had an impact on SOC in Northern Ireland. Performance figures regarding our wider impact against SOC are contained within Annex A and updates from our specialist support services are provided in Annex B.

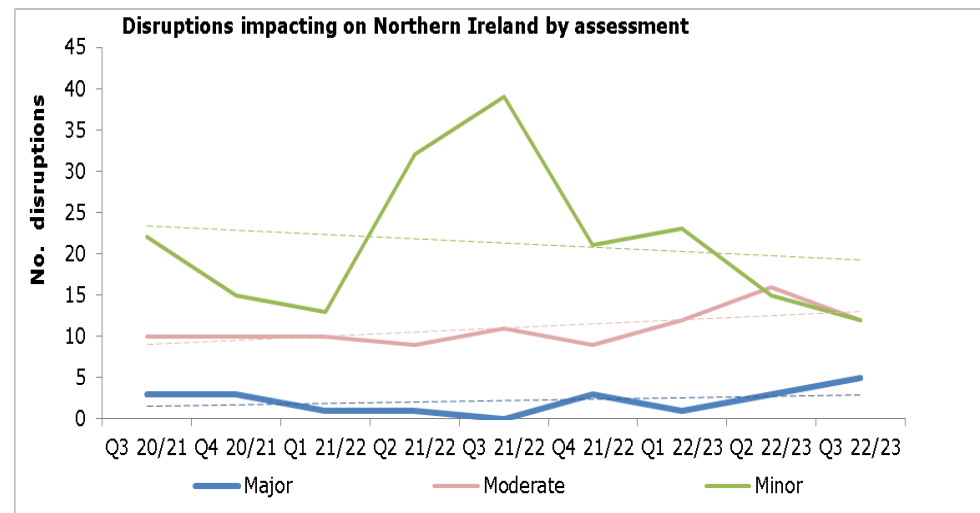


Figure 2: NCA Disruptions with impact in Northern Ireland by Assessment

Those who seek to exploit the vulnerable

Child Sexual Abuse

UK Threat Picture derived from the National Strategic Assessment:

- The 2021 National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime estimates that there are between 550,000 and 850,000 UK-based individuals posing varying degrees of risk to children.
- Platforms allowing children to interact with strangers increase the risk of technology assisted grooming, which can result in both online and contact offending. While some offenders build trust with children, others elicit sexual abuse following minimal interaction, using methods including manipulation, threats and sextortion. The ability for children to be groomed online within the safety of their own homes requires vigilance from those able to intervene.

The updates below incorporate our most significant operational and partnership activities (from Q3) against Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) likely to affect Northern Ireland and/or those with a direct Northern Ireland link/impact:

Northern Ireland Impact

- Over quarter three, the NCA issued 110 CSA disseminations to PSNI which included high priority referrals involving self-generated Indecent Images of Children (IIoC). PSNI arrested 19 subjects and safeguarded 48 children following NCA disseminations. PSNI also identified 26 victims from indecent images of children. Victim identification supports child safeguarding and reduces duplication of victim ID efforts across the globe.
- PSNI arrested the subject of a warrant issued by German law enforcement partners in quarter three. NCA intelligence located the subject, who had been sentenced in Germany to eight years imprisonment for committing serious sexual offences against a child. Extradition proceedings are currently underway.
- Nine CSA disruptions reported in this quarter focused on activities which prepare and protect the UK against the CSA threat. For example, NCA's Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Education team provided 'Understanding Online Child Sexual Abuse' training to 13 Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) members, including representatives from PSNI, Parenting Northern Ireland and Education Authority Northern Ireland. The course aims to increase knowledge and awareness of the threat to children and young people and methods for ensuring their safety online. NCA also provided advice to PSNI in support of their website content development on child exploitation awareness.

Organised Immigration Crime

UK Threat Picture derived from the National Strategic Assessment

- Organised Immigration Crime (OIC) involves moving a person across borders without legal permission or documentation with the assistance of an OCG. It can also involve individuals illegally remaining in a country. The movement of migrants across the Channel using small boats steeply increased in 2020 and continues to rise.
- The NCA established the Joint Intelligence Cell (JIC)/ Unité de Recherches Operationnelles (URO) with French law enforcement, which sees UK officers based in France to specifically target small boat smugglers. So far the JIC/URO has dismantled 21 organised crime groups in France.

The updates below incorporate our most significant operational and partnership activities (from Q3) against Organised Immigration Crime (OIC) likely to affect Northern Ireland and/or those with a direct Northern Ireland link/impact:

Northern Ireland impact

- The Causeway Multi-Agency Hub (MAH) provided direct intelligence in support of an operation conducted in Northern Ireland and England by Immigration Enforcement officers. The operation successfully disrupted an Organised Immigration Crime (OIC) network suspected of facilitating entry into the UK by exploiting the Common Travel Area. Immigration Enforcement officers arrested three leading members of the network and executed search warrants at key London addresses where cash and electronic devices were seized. During the search officers arrested two migrants in possession of false documentation and having no right to enter / remain in the UK. The Causeway MAH is comprised of a number of UK law enforcement and Government partners (including PSNI) jointly working to identify and combat criminal exploitation of the Common Travel Area.

SOC Exploitation of the UK Border

UK Threat Picture derived from the National Strategic Assessment

- The international nature of SOC means that the ability to exploit and circumvent the UK Border is a crucial aspect of many OCG operating models.
- OCGs have shown agility and resilience in their ability to move between different forms of transport. Examples include a shift to using small boats to facilitate organised immigration crime during periods of disruption at ports rather than road networks. Some OCGs have also diversified to exploit postal services to move illicit commodities across borders, whilst others have attempted use of private air travel for criminal gain.

The updates below incorporate our most significant operational and partnership activities (from Q3) against SOC exploitation at the Border likely to affect Northern Ireland and/or those with a direct Northern Ireland link/impact

Northern Ireland Impact

- The Causeway MAH arrested a subject suspected of possession of Class B controlled drugs under a joint organisational intensification. The purpose of this activity is to provide a scaled-up proactive presence at ferry ports as a means to target and intercept suspicious hauliers and passengers who may be associated to or engaged in drugs trafficking, money laundering, OIC and other SOC offences. An aspect of this joined-up response is to present a visible and credible deterrent at the border.
- Over 2022 the Causeway MAH have opened 275 intelligence development operations and made over 2,200 intelligence disseminations to partners. This increase put the number of intelligence referrals on a par with pre-Covid 19 figures in 2019. In addition the Causeway MAH have seized over 450kg of cannabis, 2.7m cigarettes, 1.2m litres of Alcohol and detected cash up to £1.8m. The Causeway MAH also support cross-agency initiatives to target criminality using the Irish land border as well as attending conferences and meetings to offer support to agencies/ task forces dealing with the problem.

Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking (MSHT)

UK Threat Picture derived from the National Strategic Assessment

- The term 'modern slavery' refers to human trafficking, slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour. The most commonly reported form of exploitation in the UK is coerced criminality, where victims are forced to commit criminal offences, with UK nationals as the most commonly identified victim group. Labour exploitation, sexual exploitation and domestic servitude are also commonly identified, but underreported.
- It is likely that at least 6,000-8,000 offenders are involved in the exploitation of people in the UK. This figure is indicative of the complexity involved in recruiting, moving, controlling, and successfully monetising the services of victims of Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

The updates below incorporate our most significant operational and partnership activities (from Q3) against Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking (MSHT) likely to affect Northern Ireland and/or those with a direct Northern Ireland link/impact

Northern Ireland impact

- PSNI conducted safeguarding visits to suspected brothels in Northern Ireland under joint organisational intensification within operation AIDANT. The Europe-wide operation is coordinated in the UK by the NCA and focuses on safeguarding victims of trafficking and exploitation in the UK. During the visits two subjects were arrested for their suspected involvement in human trafficking, controlling prostitution, brothel keeping and money laundering. MSHT teams in NCA and PSNI will continue to plan and conduct disruptive activities targeting this threat.
- During quarter three the NCA received two requests for tactical advice from PSNI. NCA supported coordination efforts with NGO International Justice Mission (IJM) in support of a victim in Romania. NCA also provided specialist advice to a PSNI operation which resulted in two arrests.

Those who dominate communities and chase profits in the criminal marketplace

Firearms

UK Threat Picture derived from the National Strategic Assessment

- High demand for firearms in the criminal market continues. Several investigations led to the recovery of a wide range of weapons, including automatic firearms, which disrupted supply networks linked to OCGs.
- Handguns remain the most common firearm used by criminals. Most shootings are from original lethal purpose firearms, closely followed by discharges from converted, modified and reactivated handguns. Converted models and firearms from lesser known manufacturers with fake premium brand markings have also been increasingly recovered.

The updates below incorporate our most significant operational and partnership activities (from Q3) against Firearms offending likely to affect Northern Ireland and/or those with a direct Northern Ireland link/impact:

Northern Ireland impact

- There were no reported NCA disruptions in Northern Ireland targeting the Firearms threat in this quarter; however, NCA Firearms teams conducted disruptive activities which impact the whole of the UK. For example, new legislation in Spain will significantly impact the ability of UK based OCGs to convert blank firers purchased online. Spanish retailers will now require proof of identity, a verified electronic signature/digital authentication and an authorisation letter from the Police before sale. NCA worked closely with the Spanish Government in support of this change in legislation and are continuing to work with other National Governments and blank firer manufacturers to reduce the UK firearms threat.

Drugs

UK Threat Picture derived from the National Strategic Assessment and Home Affairs Select Committee

- Drugs trafficking is the most prominent serious organised crime threat in Northern Ireland, where 64% of OCGs being monitored by PSNI are involved in the drugs market. Cannabis is the most commonly seized drug in Northern Ireland seizures but the availability of cocaine and heroin is increasing.
- Most large-scale seizures of drugs in Northern Ireland are detected at ports and are most commonly hidden on board trailers or containers which have entered Northern Ireland from Great Britain.
- Afghanistan is the main source for heroin entering Europe. Ukraine was assessed as a strategic point in the Black Sea region for the trafficking of heroin and cocaine destined for Western European markets, including the UK. However, it is highly likely that OCGs involved in multi-commodity drugs trafficking will have been displaced to other Black Sea ports following the invasion of Ukraine.

The updates below incorporate our most significant operational and partnership activities (from Q3) against Drugs likely to affect Northern Ireland and/or those with a direct Northern Ireland link/impact:

Northern Ireland impact

- In this quarter the subject of an NCA led operation was issued a 48 month custodial sentence (assessed as a moderate disruption). The investigation into drug smuggling of cannabis into Northern Ireland resulted in the arrest of the offender and the seizure of 17.7kg of cannabis with an estimated value of £177,000.
- NCA supported a PSNI disruption targeting an OCG suspected of committing drugs, firearms and money laundering offences in this quarter. The disruption resulted in the arrest of two subjects suspected of importing and distributing large volumes of controlled drugs in Northern Ireland.
- The Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF) arrested and charged a subject for possession of Class A and Class B drugs with intent to supply. The PCTF conducted address searches in Northern Ireland as part of their investigation into members of the Ulster Volunteer Force. PCTF officers seized cocaine and cannabis, with an estimated value of £6,000, along with paramilitary emblems and drug paraphernalia.

Undermining the UK's economy, integrity, institutions and infrastructure

Economic Crime

UK Threat Picture derived from the National Strategic Assessment

- The economic and social consequences of fraud affect the whole of UK society, from the public and private sectors to the individual. The cost of fraud to the UK is in the billions, and is assessed to be increasing. Between January 2020 and December 2020, Action Fraud reported £3 billion in losses impacting individuals and organisations. However, providing an accurate figure is constrained by significant underreporting, with much fraud remaining undetected or hidden.
- Over 2020 money launderers adapted in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and resultant restrictions on physical movement, new technology and regulation. Measures were adopted to bring crypto assets into the scope of UK Money Laundering Regulations to mitigate the risk of their criminal exploitation. It is highly likely that over £12 billion of criminal cash is generated annually in the UK, and a realistic possibility that the scale of money laundering impacting on the UK (including through UK corporate structures or financial institutions) is in the hundreds of billions of pounds annually.

The updates below incorporate our most significant operational and partnership activities (from Q3) against Economic Crime likely to affect Northern Ireland and/or those with a direct Northern Ireland link/impact:

Northern Ireland impact

- Over the quarter PSNI denied £122,497 of suspected criminal assets from Defence Against Money Laundering (DAML) requests referred by the NCA. Requests are made where the reporter is at risk of committing one of the principal money laundering offences under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (POCA) because they suspect or know that property they intend to deal with is in some way criminal.
- The NCA and the Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF) are conducting three Civil Recovery and Tax investigations using powers under the Proceeds of Crime Act. These powers are used extensively in Northern Ireland by both the NCA and PCFT to recover proceeds of crime/ evasion of exercise duty and tax and to significantly disrupt the capacity of OCGs to participate in and profit from serious organised crime.

Cyber Crime

UK Threat Picture derived from the National Strategic Assessment

- The estimated cost, both direct and indirect, to UK victims ranges from the several hundreds of millions to billions of pounds per year. Despite an obligation to report data breaches to the Information Commissioner's Office, underreporting and inaccurate estimates continue to impact our ability to understand the true scale and cost of cybercrime to the UK. This is partly because of low rates of awareness, monitoring and understanding of the costs associated with cyber breaches. In some cases victims are reluctant to report because of potential reputational damage or uncertainty over what needs reporting and to which agencies.
- Ransomware continues to dominate law enforcement and media attention due to the financial, data and service losses incurred by victims. This year has been notable for the increasing use of an accompanying threat to publish stolen data by ransomware operators. Industry partners estimate that over 50% of all ransomware activity includes this additional threat.

The updates below incorporate our most significant operational and partnership activities (from Q3) against Cyber Crime related criminality likely to affect Northern Ireland and/or those with a direct Northern Ireland link/impact. Details of NCA activities against this threat cannot be fully reported at this Government Security Classification.

Northern Ireland impact

- The subject of a cybercrime operation in Northern Ireland has been arrested and charged with Computer Misuse Act offences following a joint NCA and PSNI operation in quarter three. The subject is suspected of being involved in a Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attack in 2016. The prosecution has been co-joined with the linked PSNI investigation to maximise the effect of any Serious Crime Prevention Orders that could be imposed post-conviction.
- In this quarter the NCA supported the PSNI response to an email compromise cyber incident targeting a victim based in Northern Ireland. The NCCU also continues to provide support via upstream enquiries, sharing of information and the provision of specialist capabilities.

ANNEX A: Our wider impact against SOC performance

Our wider impact against SOC

The NCA’s work is aligned to threat, risk, and harm, and is agnostic of geography. The criminals NCA target operate across the UK and internationally. Aside from our work in Northern Ireland, the NCA continues to lead other activities which we assess will have an impact on protecting communities in Northern Ireland. Examples include removing dangerous content from the internet, shutting down distribution channels for drugs and guns, creating a hostile environment for SOC criminals to operate in, raising public awareness and driving policy changes to provide greater resilience to fraud.

The table below presents headline figures incorporating both NCA-led activity and activity in support of our Law Enforcement (LE) partners, working together to tackle SOC in communities across the UK and further afield.

Disruption Assessment	Jan-21 to Dec-21		R12 Total	Jan-22 to Dec-22		R12 Total	▲ ▼
	Lead	Support		Lead	Support		
Major	90	65	155	140	83	223	▲
Moderate	678	471	1,149	772	683	1,455	▲
Minor	1,504	909	241,3	1,348	1,622	2,970	▲
Grand Total	2,272	1,445	3,717	2,260	2,388	4,648	▲

Figure 3: Total NCA Disruptions, January 2021 to December 2022

There were 931 more NCA disruptions between January 2022 and December 2022 when compared to the preceding 12 months to date, an increase of 25%. Disruptions assessed as major were 44% higher (68 more major disruptions) over this same period and disruptions assessed as moderate were 27% higher (306 more moderate disruptions).

Lead disruptions assessed as major also increased compared to the previous 12 months: the NCA conducted 50 more disruptions assessed as major (56% more major disruptions) and a further 94 disruptions assessed as moderate (14% more moderate disruptions).

There were 348 disruptions led or supported by NCA’s international teams over quarter three bringing the year to date total to 1,589. Around 55% of quarter three disruptions were conducted against the Drugs (30%), CSA (16%) and Fraud (9%) threats and resulted in the seizure of over 79,000kgs of Class A drugs (heroin and cocaine), bringing the year to date total to 170,000kgs.

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The case studies below provide examples of high impact disruptions we have delivered during this reporting period.

Drugs

- In this quarter, five leading members of an UK based OCG were given a combined custodial sentence of 140 years for conspiracy to import 448kg of MDMA to Australia. The OCG which had an international reach has been completely dismantled in this major disruption. It is believed that this OCG is responsible for five other exportations of drugs using plant machinery. MDMA is often used by younger people and has been responsible for deaths caused by overdose or severe dehydration.

OIC

- In December 2022 a small boat carrying between up to 48 people sank off the Kent coast resulting in the deaths of at least four people, including a teenager. The search and rescue operation required the joint efforts of HM Coastguard, Royal Navy, Border Force, RNLI lifeboats, French Navy and three fishing vessels, together with South East Coast Ambulance and Kent Police. The NCA supported the Kent Police investigation by facilitating and supporting coordination with international law enforcement partners and in providing intelligence. Kent Police arrested a key subject who is currently remanded in custody awaiting trial for facilitating illegal entry into the UK offences.

CSA

- NCA and international partners worked together over a two year long operation to destabilise a significant CSA dark web platform. NCA developed intelligence and disseminated cases to multiple international and European partners which included Australia, USA, Germany, Estonia, Romania, and Netherlands among others. In quarter three, international enforcements were coordinated across the US, UK and Germany against the site administrators and other high value targets. As a result of this activity the website is now offline, depriving 90,000 registered accounts of access to CSA material. Further activity to bring other site users to justice has already commenced with international partners.

Cyber

- In this quarter an international operation removed a significant proportion of online Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) services impacting the ability of criminals to execute DDoS attacks and making it less attractive for entry-level cyber offending. Collaborative efforts between the NCA, Europol, Netherlands Police and the FBI resulted in 48 websites offering DDoS services being shut down and the arrests of seven suspected site administrators, including a UK national. DDoS cyber-attacks are designed to overwhelm targeted websites and force them offline; they have the potential to cause significant harm to businesses and to critical national infrastructure websites. The sophistication and availability sites offering DDoS as a service make it possible for criminals to execute attacks within minutes of setting up an account, making it more accessible to people with low-level cyber skills.

ANNEX B: Supporting partners with our Specialist Capabilities

The NCA leads the UK SOC response through a combination of intelligence development, enforcement and investigation. Within this, the NCA has developed a range of niche capabilities - from advanced analysis to technical solutions - that service both our investigations and those of our partners. A snapshot of how these have impacted the SOC threat in Northern Ireland are provided below.

Support Area	Significant Q3 Updates
<p>Major Crime Investigation Support (MCIS)</p> <p><i>The team provide advice and support to PSNI in 18 instances; deploying officers into force on 13 occasions. These cases included murder, rape, suspicious/unexplained deaths and non-accidental injury (NAI).</i></p>	<p>The NCA’s Major Crime Investigative Support (MCIS) provided advice and support to PSNI on 18 cases, and deployed officers on three occasions. Cases included murder, sexual offences and non-accidental injury (NAI). Three main cases MCIS assisted with were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An investigation into the murder of a pregnant 32 year old female which occurred on 18th December. • An investigation into a homicide involving a 44 year old male victim who was shot by masked gun men in Belfast in October 2022. • An investigation into suspected fraud at a healthcare clinic.
<p>UK Financial Intelligence Unit (UKFIU)</p>	<p>UKFIU continues to conduct work that directly impacts Northern Ireland, assisting PSNI with disseminating Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) and requests for Defence Against Money Laundering (DAMLs).</p> <p>During quarter three, UKFIU assisted with the following;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two international requests (relating to drugs and theft) • 13 SARs relating to suspected vulnerable persons, nine relating to suspected child exploitation and 4 relating to suspected Human Trafficking SARs for fast-tracking to PSNI. • 14 counter terrorism related search requests on behalf of PSNI. • 185 requests for a Defence Against Money Laundering (DAML) received under the Proceeds

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	<p>of Crime Act (POCA) 2002 were allocated to PSNI and NCA CRT Belfast for advice (based on the location of the suspect, victim or other geographical factors). Five DAMLs was refused and PSNI took action to deny assets of £122,497 from the above.</p> <p>During Q3 of FY 2022/23, the SARs Exploitation officer with responsibility for Northern Ireland liaised with PSNI, Northern Ireland Environment Agency and Law Society Northern Island for matters pertaining to the exploitation of SAR data.</p>
Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP)	The Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) team provided training to Northern Ireland delegates from PSNI, third sector and public sector under the 'Understanding Online Child Sexual Abuse' and 'Online Safety Coordinator' for reviewing online safety website content.
Anti-Kidnap & Extortion Unit (AKEU)	AKEU received fifteen requests for support from PSNI in this reporting period. AKEU provided appropriate support for each request, including proactive assistance in eleven kidnap investigations, and four blackmail investigations.
UK National Central Office (UKNCO) for the Suppression of Counterfeit Currency and Protected Coins	The UK National Central Office (UKNCO) for Counterfeit Currency processed and analysed a total of seven counterfeit and currency seizures submitted by the PSNI. The Northern Ireland Issuers confirmed that they have withdrawn all paper denominations up to £20 and replaced them with polymer notes. No withdrawal date has been set for the Northern Ireland paper £50 pound notes.
UK Protected Persons Service (UKPPS)	The NCA Central Services Unit provides, as a part of the UK Protected Persons Service (UKPPS), operational support to the PSNI Protected Persons Unit which is aligned to the UKPPS. In this quarter, the UKPPS has provided 6 new instance of support to PSNI.
UK International Crime Bureau (UKICB)	<p>The UK International Crime Bureau (UKICB) carried out a number of high profile operations with links to Northern Ireland and/or in conjunction with colleagues in PSNI to successfully identify and target SOC individuals and international OCGs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Slovakian Authorities circulated the wanted subject via INTERPOL channels, for an offence of homicide. Location checks identified a possible address in Belfast and a subject was arrested

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	<p>by PSNI in October 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Centre Bureaus (NCBs) Dublin requested help in locating a missing four year old child believed to be with his mother in the UK. Safeguarding concerns included drug use by the mother. The mother fled a Gardaí police road check with the child in the car. NCA provided intelligence that enabled the child to be successfully located and safeguarded by PSNI.• A report was received from Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) regarding a missing person who had gone missing in Thailand while kayaking in the 'Khaosok National Park'. Family believed that Police in Thailand had already been alerted and there was currently a search and rescue operation taking place. An urgent request was sent to National Central Bureau (NCB) Bangkok, requesting confirmation of activity. NCB Bangkok advised a body, identified as that of the missing person, had been found. The exact cause of death was yet to be determined and enquiries are ongoing.
Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit (MSHTU)	<p>The NCA MSHTU received a total of two requests for tactical advice from PSNI:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Advice and information was provided by a tactical advisor regarding the NGO International Justice Mission (IJM) for future contact and coordination with a victim in Romania.2. Tactical advisors provided advice leading up to a day of action for a PSNI operation which led to 2 arrests
The UK Missing Persons Unit (UKMPU)	<p>The UK Missing Persons Unit (UKMPU) assisted PSNI across two cases:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Following a male falling overboard. UKMPU provided support around biometric retrieval, loading to the Missing Persons DNA Database and also circulated a Coastal Alert to other UK Forces and a Maritime Alert to Ireland should his remains wash ashore.2. Long term missing person from 1986 – UKMPU assisted in a long term missing person case from 1986, providing finger print advice and enquiries made on behalf of PSNI with Interpol and the National Fingerprint Office to establish whether comparisons can be made against potential unidentified remains.

ANNEX C: Data by Threat Area

Figure 4: Breakdown of NCA Disruptions impacting on Northern Ireland by SOC threat, September 2022- December 2022²³

SOC Area	Threat	Q2 2022/23				Q3 2022/23				R12 Total	R12 Total	Trend
		Major	Moderate	Minor	Total	Major	Moderate	Minor	Total	Jan 21 - Dec 21	Jan 22 - Dec 22	
Those who exploit the vulnerable	Child Sexual Abuse	0	9	0	9	0	10	0	10	27	36	▲
	Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking	1	1	3	5	0	0	1	1	27	15	▼
	Organised Immigration Crime	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	1	▼
Those who dominate communities and chase profits in the criminal marketplace	Drugs	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	4	12	11	▼
	Firearms	1	1	1	3	0	0	0	0	10	4	▼
Those who undermine the UK's economy, integrity, infrastructure and institutions	Cyber	1	0	2	3	4	1	4	9	30	23	▼
	Fraud	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	6	11	▲
	Money Laundering	0	2	1	3	0	0	2	2	4	8	▲

³Note that this reflects disruptions against the main SOC threats; there are additional disruptions not shown in this table, categorised as 'other'.