

NCA Northern Ireland Performance Narrative**Quarter Two (July – September 2016)****1. Summary**

The NCA is committed to a close working relationship with the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and other operational partners in the fight against serious and organised crime. In addition to its operational role, the NCA continues to provide investigative and operational support to PSNI activities within Northern Ireland, across the UK and internationally. This includes the provision of specialist capabilities, advice and guidance.

A total of six disruptions have been recorded in Quarter 2 (Q2) (two moderate and four minor). Two of the minor disruptions were the result of activity undertaken by NCA officers in Northern Ireland, with one relating to the arrest of an individual for possession of indecent images of children (IIOC) and the other for the conviction and sentencing of an offender on a drugs operation. Three further disruptions were achieved by Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Command with one assessed as having a moderate impact as it will substantially restrict the activities of a sexual predator. The other moderate impact related to the conviction of members of a drugs trafficking organised crime group (OCG), with UK-wide impact. Three subjects received custodial sentences following an investigation by the NCA in Birmingham.

The total number of disruptions recorded in the first six months of 2016/17 is 23. This compares to 29 disruptions after the first two quarters of 2015/16. It should be noted that last year's totals include significant operational activity to tackle Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA) activity in Northern Ireland under Operation JARRA.

There have been three arrests reported in Q2, all relating to CSEA (two Operation JARRA and one Operation FLUTY).

2. NCA Investigations

The NCA has continued to undertake a range of criminal investigations in Northern Ireland in collaboration with PSNI. While such investigations are progressing, priority has primarily been focused on Operation PUMPLESS and on Operation JARRA, as cases progress to prosecution.

- **Operation PUMPLESS** is an ongoing investigation into allegations of financial irregularities and corruption arising from the sale of the Irish National Asset Management Agency's Northern Ireland loan book. NCA is leading this investigation and has received support from PSNI. To date NCA have interviewed seven people under criminal caution. Six of the

seven remain under investigation and criminal suspects. We have also interviewed more than 40 witnesses. We have also arrested and interviewed two people under caution, who were subsequently released from bail. No inference should be drawn on the decision to release these people from bail. Eight searches of property have been conducted and Court Orders obtained to gather material from public and private institutions. The investigation remains ongoing.

- **Operation JARRA** - this significant joint PSNI/NCA investigation into the accessing, sharing and distributing of IIOC by individuals within Northern Ireland has continued in the reporting period. A further four individuals were charged with offences linked to IIOC and two children and a vulnerable adult safeguarded.

As a result of the original Operation JARRA referrals, in November 2015, an individual from Belfast was arrested on suspicion of possessing and distributing IIOC. Forensic investigations of his computer showed images of a young female and indications that he had groomed her for sexual activity. Investigations showed that the girl was from England and enquiries were sent back to CEOP Command to identify and trace the potential victim. The victim was identified and in July 2016 the individual was convicted of offences involving the grooming and engaging in sexual activity with a child. He was sentenced to four years imprisonment, will be on the sexual offender register for life and subject to a Sexual Harm Prevention Order for 10 years.

- **Operation TORCEL** is an NCA investigation into the postal importation of high-purity cocaine into Northern Ireland. In August a Nigerian male was sentenced to six months imprisonment, suspended for 12 months, for money laundering offences. The offences were connected to the detection of high-purity cocaine with a street value of £2.3 million by customs in French Guiana. The cocaine was hidden inside Ferrero Rocher chocolates, glass vases and shoe brushes. The cocaine, weighing 2.2kg was sent through the postal service and was destined for addresses in Belfast. A second individual is currently wanted in connection with the drugs importation.
- **Operation ITALICI** commenced after detection of several shipments of steroids and other pharmaceuticals to Northern Ireland addresses. The investigation to date indicates that Northern Ireland was used as a major redistribution hub for the supply of steroids and other pharmaceuticals across the EU. Additional UK and International hubs have been identified. The investigation has uncovered a sophisticated attack on drug licensing regulations which has resulted in the diverting of multi tonne shipments of steroids from their intended destination, to the illegal market place. To

date there have been five arrests, an illicit lab dismantled and criminal funds seized in overseas bank accounts.

- **Operation FLUTY** is a joint investigation by the NCA and the PSNI targeting those possessing and distributing IIOC. Ten suspects, arrested during the first phase of action in February 2016, attended various police stations in Northern Ireland on the 22 and 23 August 2016 to answer their police bail. They were further interviewed in relation to images and data recovered from the forensic examination of their digital media and have been re-bailed pending a decision to charge. One suspect answering bail was further arrested for voyeurism offences identified as a result of digital media examination. He was interviewed and re-bailed to allow for further enquiries with the victims.

The assistance of PSNI custody and operational staff was again crucial to delivery of the processing of so many suspects in a short period of time.

3. Development and joint working

Joint working activity remains ongoing to further develop the following investigation:

- **Operation WHARWICK** – In support of PSNI, NCA facilitated cross border surveillance by Dutch Police in December 2015. In July 2016 searches were carried out in the Humberside area and one tonne of benzocaine was recovered. Further searches carried out by Humberside police recovered a further 20 tonnes of benzocaine.

4. Civil Recovery Team (CRT)

Current operational activity by CRT relating to Northern Ireland is as follows:

- **Operation DESENSITIZE:** A Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) referral into fuel and cigarette smuggling and other acquisitive crime. A Property Freezing Order over one property was obtained on 1 August 2016 to prevent its imminent dissipation. The civil recovery investigation into this and other property is on-going.
- **NCA v Hazel Stewart:** A PSNI referral predicated on fraudulent claims made by Hazel Stewart following the murder of her husband in 1991 (in 2010 and 2011 Colin Howell and Hazel Stewart were convicted of murdering their respective spouses). Subject to judicial review proceedings in relation to Hazel Stewart's access to legal aid (I believe the Judge has ruled a review on the legal aid issue), the civil recovery case will go to trial in late 2016/early 2017.
- **Operation CRINOLINE:** A PSNI referral with drug trafficking as the predicate offence. This investigation commenced in Northern Ireland and

rapidly expanded into a civil recovery investigation into more than 30 properties in England and Northern Ireland linked to a Birmingham based OCG. One of three properties in Northern Ireland, has already been recovered through summary judgment in April 2016, valued at around GBP 80,000. A trial's scheduled for October 2016 in the High Court in London in relation to the remaining properties.

5. CEOP

PSNI is engaged in the strategic governance arrangements to tackle child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA).

- **Missing Children Team (MCT)** recently supported a case of a high-risk missing 15 year old child believed to have travelled from Great Britain into Northern Ireland or Ireland. The boy absconded from Manchester Youth Court in July and, as he was from Northern Ireland, it was thought that he may travel there. A force alert was issued and MCT engaged with Greater Manchester Police (GMP), PSNI and the An Garda Siochana in an effort to locate the child. The boy was located in August at a family address in the GMP area and arrested for burglary offences. The force alert was cancelled.

MCT have collaborated with partners, through the Ministry of Justice (MoJ)-chaired Child Abduction Coordination Group, to request revision of the Parental Child Abduction Guidance (produced by MCT). This is to ensure that it accurately articulates the differences in legislation that may affect how police can respond to these cases.

- **Missing Persons Bureau (MPB)** received one missing person referral from PSNI during Q2. September.
- **Operation PERIAXIAL:** A 15 year old female victim of online grooming was traced, safeguarded and interviewed in accordance with achieving best evidence guidelines; a referral was made to local social services.
- **CSE Referrals Bureau (CSE RB)** is the central point within the NCA for receipt of referrals from industry of information relating to online child sexual exploitation, predominantly via the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) in the USA. NCMEC provides a centralised mechanism for the public and electronic service providers to report suspected IIOC. NCMEC sends all referrals relating to UK suspects to the CSE RB.

Based upon referrals from NCMEC and others, during Q2 the CSE RB made 17 disseminations to PSNI.

- **Education Team:** The next Ambassador Course due to be delivered in Northern Ireland is scheduled to take place in Belfast during October 2016.

During July and August, two new schools (including St. Mary's High School in Downpatrick) signed up to the information sharing portal Parent Info, bringing the total to date to 60. It is hoped that more schools will avail of this free facility which can be hosted directly for use by parents/guardians on school websites.

A written update was provided to the Northern Ireland E-Safety Forum in September by the CEOP Education team, focusing on a number of areas including the Thinkuknow Parents and Carers media campaign, details of the Parent Info portal, a copy of the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) sexting guidance for schools, updates on new materials and details of an upcoming Ambassador Course scheduled to take place in Belfast in October 2016. Further engagement and follow up work is planned during Q3.

6. National Cyber Crime Unit (NCCU)

PSNI are investigating an OCG for involvement in Human Trafficking and Cyber offences. As a result of this investigation, the NCCU and PSNI have uncovered significant worldwide cyber criminality whereby the suspects are harvesting the personal and banking details of victims through the deployment of various malware strains. Following examinations of the device, the suspect has been found to have an interest in a large number of the bitcoin wallets. NCCU is assisting and have analysed and assessed the potential significance of the bitcoin wallets.

NTS/16/0323 - NCCU Officers have completed the technical work, provided PSNI with an evidential package, and the investigation has been subsequently closed. NCCU received a formal letter of appreciation from PSNI for their work on this investigation.

NTS/16/0280 - NCCU conducted intelligence enquiries and passed all leads to PSNI. Suspect subsequently arrested, charged and remanded by PSNI.

NTS/16/0385 - NCCU is continuing to provide technical assistance to PSNI in support of an ongoing investigation.

7. NCA Specialist Operations Centre (SOC) and Crime Operational Support (COS)

There has been the provision of support and advice to PSNI on 16 instances in the review period, including cases of murder and extremism where access to experts in fields such as Arabic, bite marks, CCTV and car tracking were facilitated.

The COS team provided support to PSNI during the investigation into the discovery of arms and explosives caches in Northern Ireland. This involved advice around investigative strategies, behavioural science and forensic issues. A serving Royal Marine, Ciaran Maxwell, has since been arrested in Somerset by Counter-Terrorism officers.

8. Anti-Kidnap and Extortion Unit (AKEU)

One blackmail case in Northern Ireland relating to sextortion was notified to the AKEU in Q2. There were no kidnap cases during the period.

AKEU facilitated a debrief with PSNI, the Risk and Liaison Overseas Network (RALON) and other NCA departments concerning the kidnap of a 15 year old boy in Ethiopia whose mother was resident in Northern Ireland. The boy was subsequently returned to his family. The debrief was productive and provided a number of learning points as well as good practice from this crime.

9. Proceeds of Crime Centre (PoCC)

Liaison and discussion took place with Department of Justice Northern Ireland around the formation, wording and content of the new statutory instrument (SI) (Northern Ireland factors) relating to the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 due to be laid in September. The SI aims to standardise the position between Northern Ireland and England and Wales.

The PoCC Joint Asset Recovery Database (JARD) Team have sent out four updates around JARD in Q2 to all JARD SPOCs, which has been cascaded to all Northern Ireland JARD users.

10. UK Financial Intelligence Unit (UKFIU)

During the period, the UKFIU received 17 requests for a Defence Against Money Laundering (DAML) received under POCA 2002 were allocated to PSNI for advice (based on the location of the suspect, victim or other geographical factors). This is a mechanism which gives law enforcement an opportunity to take action against the proceeds of crime within a statutory time limit whilst providing protection for the reporter. The UKFIU exercised its power under POCA to refuse a DAML in one of these requests allowing NCA CRT Belfast to take action.

UKFIU sent three requests to overseas partners for financial intelligence on behalf of PSNI. These related to current money laundering and drug trafficking investigations.

UKFIU identified ten Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) relating to vulnerable persons for fast-tracking to PSNI (no SARs relating to human trafficking or child exploitation were identified for fast-tracking to PSNI).

The UKFIU received feedback from PSNI regarding a vulnerable adult who had potentially been a victim of a scam: detectives visited the victim who had sent monies overseas. Action Fraud has been notified on the victim's behalf.

11. UK National Central Office for the Suppression of Counterfeit Currency and Protected Coins (UKNCO)

The UKNCO continues to provide substantial assistance to PSNI in an investigation relating to the discovery of a 'hot foiling press and dye', through the provision of evidence for a potential prosecution, including coordination of expert evidence.

The UKNCO processed 570 submissions from PSNI in Q2 and 13 witness statements were provided to support Police prosecutions and investigations relating to counterfeit currency offences.

12. UK International Crime Bureau (UKICB)

Three new European Arrest Warrants (EAW) cases have been received from the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland in Q2 for offences of fraud and murder. These have been circulated Europe-wide via the Schengen Information System (SIS II).

There have been two successful extraditions of subjects back to the UK in July and August; one from Spain relating to possession of Class B drugs with intent to supply and the other from Ireland relating to indecent assault and historic child sexual abuse offences. A further case in September related to an individual wanted by PSNI for a particularly violent assault against a male, who suffered serious injuries including brain damage, and sexual assault against his female partner. A EAW was issued and transmitted by the NCA via SIRENE. The subject was arrested in Lithuania on 11 August 2016 and was successfully returned to the UK on 29 September 2016.

A European Arrest Warrant (EAW) was issued by Ireland for murder in connection with the gangland style shooting in a Dublin hotel in February 2016, using assault rifles. Intelligence indicated that he was residing at an address in Northern Ireland. The UKICB received the EAW on 5 September and immediately certified it and sent it to PSNI. The subject was arrested in the early hours of the following morning and has been remanded in custody, pending his extradition. This case is ongoing, as extradition proceedings are still underway. (the details of EAWs are usually released by the arresting/requesting force)

13. Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit (MSHTU)

The UK Human Trafficking Centre (UKHTC) has now been re-branded as the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit (MSHTU), to bring greater clarity to the work of this NCA unit as well as highlighting the services it can provide to

investigations and follows the introduction of the legislation on Modern Slavery that underpins the NCA's ability to help tackle one of the agency's priorities.

MSHTU maintains a close working relationship with law enforcement partners in Northern Ireland and intelligence support and tactical advice remain available as required. One tactical advisor call was received from PSNI during the quarter and eight referrals were made to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) from Northern Ireland.

A NCA representative attended the Northern Ireland Department of Justice Organised Crime Task Force (OCTF) Immigration and Human Trafficking Subgroup on 30 September 2016.

14. UK Protected Persons Service (UKPPS)

The NCA Central Bureau 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. For security reasons it is not appropriate to detail the nine occasions on which support concerning protection arrangements was provided.

15. Update on Cross Border Joint Agency Taskforce

The NCA is a key member of the Joint Agency Task Force which is led by senior officers from the PSNI, An Garda Síochána, the Revenue Commissioners, HMRC, NCA and Criminal Assets Bureau. The delivery strategy for the work of the Task Force includes a Strategic Oversight Group and an Operations Co-ordination Group which meets quarterly. Based on threat, harm and risk it was recommended that consideration be given to adopting six priorities for the Task Force;

- Rural Crime
- Child Sexual Exploitation
- Financial Crime
- Illicit Trade
- Excise Fraud
- Human Trafficking

NCA has the joint lead for Financial Crime alongside the Criminal Assets Bureau.

NCA continues to work closely with PSNI, the Department of Justice Northern Ireland and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to explore the opportunities presented in the wake of the Fresh Start Agreement to develop an impactful joint police/NCA task force.

