

Tackling Serious and Organised Crime

a summary of 'tackling serious and organised crime – a local response' by the Local Government Association

Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) is perpetrated by Organised Crime Groups (OCGs). These groups use intimidation, violence and corruption for unlawful gain. The criminals involved will often prey on vulnerable individuals and communities to profit financially or otherwise.

OCGs undertake the following criminal activities:

- The organised supply and distribution of drugs.
- Theft and robbery.
- Organised Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), including the sharing of indecent images of children online.
- Human trafficking and modern slavery.
- Fraud and other forms of financial crime.
- The supply of firearms or other weapons and counterfeit goods.
- Cyber crime and cyber-enabled crime, including online grooming, harassment and stalking.

As a local authority we need to understand our local vulnerabilities to SOC and address them through integrated multi-agency action plans.

Guidance states that we should work with the police and others to:

- identify and safeguard vulnerable adults exploited by OCGs
- tackle child sexual exploitation, especially where there is clear organised criminality
- protect communities from cyber enabled crime such as fraud
- use local regulation and licensing and powers to disrupt OCGs
- use taxis/private hire vehicles or licensed premises to share essential community intelligence
- tackle those selling counterfeit or illicit goods which may be linked to wider, more organised criminality

What is an Organised Crime Group?

Three or more persons who act together with the intent to carry out criminal activities.

What do these groups look like?

Groups all operate differently. Organisations can run networks that undertake criminal activity across international, national and county borders. Some groups are less organised and engage in criminal offences that require less professional competence (e.g. low level drug supply and distribution).

The internet, low cost transport and international supply chains have made it easier and less risky to do business. In particular it has resulted in the spread of cyber crime and the proliferation of online streaming of real-time child sexual exploitation and abuse.

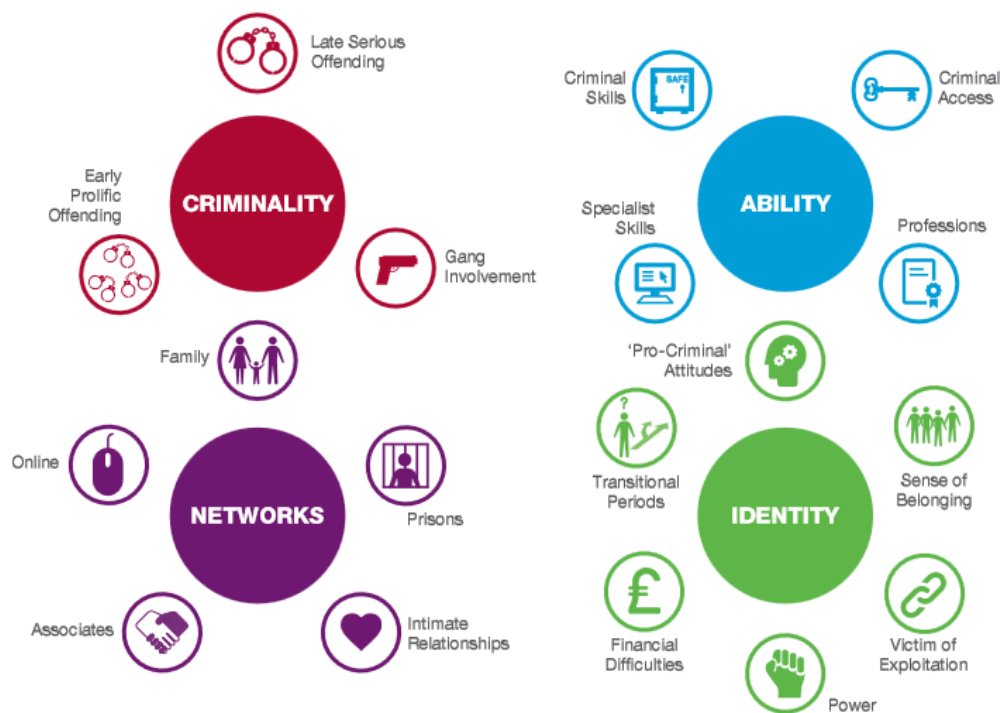
What's the difference between OCG and a gang?

There is an overlap across the activities of OCGs and gangs. Gangs tend to be less organised and more concerned with perpetuating a threat of violence or harm within a specific geographical area. The main difference is the level of criminality, group organisation, planning and control.

How do individuals get involved in SOC?

There are factors that increase the likelihood of an individual participating in organised crime. The Home Office has identified four categories of risk factor that can put people at greater risk.

Factors to assess the risk of being drawn into Serious and Organised Crime



8 Individuals at risk of being drawn into Serious and Organised Crime - a Prevent Guide

Guidance states that partners should work together and share intelligence and knowledge to identify individuals who may be at risk in order to intervene with them at an early stage as early identification, followed by mitigating action, can prevent some individuals from serious and organised criminality as well as deterring reoffending.

Who are the perpetrators of Organised Crime?

The majority of organised crime offenders are men and from all different backgrounds. What is unique about OCGs is that perpetrators often identify themselves as a part of a wider network and not as an individual perpetrator i.e. they see the bigger criminal picture.

- The composition of some OCGs reflects the traditional view of OCGs, namely:
- familial based and highly organised
- single criminal activity type
- use of a high level of both threat and actual violence
- corruption of professionals
- largely motivated by profit, criminality is converted to cash and subsequently laundered.

The longstanding values and close family connections of traditional OCGs mean they are harder to disrupt and tackle. The majority of their business involves controlling drug trafficking and associated markets.

There is a changing landscape, which is reflected more commonly in OCGs, for example, they:

- have multiple crime type operations, where one element of criminality often funds or re-enforces another
- operate a loose network of criminal associates, based on trust and mutual cooperation fulfilling different roles within the group
- have no boundaries regarding criminal associations
- make use of professional (finance, law, technology) enablers for criminal activity
- are highly adept at exploiting new and emerging technology
- continually seek early identification of potential new criminal opportunities from the above,
- are motivated by profit, used to support overt 'glamorous lifestyles' to reflect status

Who are the victims of SOC?

Victims include local people, communities and businesses. The sole purpose of SOC is personal gain. Communities can be harmed by:

- the supply and distribution of drugs within communities that harm users and can also impact on the local environment
- putting children and young people at risk of child sexual exploitation, online grooming or exposure to adult or illicit material online
- fraud, identity theft and other forms of financial crime can harm the wellbeing of individuals within a community
- the supply of firearms or other weapons to threaten or harm individuals
- support, enable or profit from human trafficking and modern slavery

The national policy context

The national strategy uses the framework that has been developed for national counter-terrorist work and has four thematic pillars, often referred to as the 4Ps:

- PURSUE - prosecuting and disrupting people engaged in serious and organised crime
- PREVENT - preventing people from engaging in this activity
- PROTECT - increasing protection against serious and organised crime
- PREPARE - reducing the impact of this criminality where it takes place

New powers to tackle SOC

In 2015, the Serious Crime Act improved the legislative powers available to local partners to tackle serious and organised crime. They include a new offence of participating in the activities of an organised crime group and a strengthened preventative capability through Serious Crime Protection Orders.

The new participation offence, which applies in England and Wales, carries the potential to prosecute effectively the full spectrum of criminality engaged in organised crime. The serious crime prevention order ('SCPO') is intended for use against those involved in the most serious offences, including drugs trafficking, fraud and money laundering.

The SCPO is a court order that is used to protect the public by preventing, restricting or disrupting a person's involvement in serious crime. Breach of this order is a criminal offence. These enforcement powers will tackle serious and organised crime in a more complete way, capable of addressing the complexity of organised crime. We should work alongside law enforcement agencies, sharing relevant intelligence, to make the best use of these new powers to disrupt and halt such crime.

The role of the local authority and others in tackling SOC

Under section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act councils have a responsibility to do all that they reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in their area. Publically commissioned private and voluntary sector providers must also contribute to prevention efforts through due diligence and information sharing to protect communities from serious and organised crime.

Established community safety partnerships (CSPs) are well placed to lead on the strategic coordination of this activity. These partnerships have a statutory duty to: reduce reoffending; tackle crime and disorder; anti-social behaviour; alcohol and substance misuse; and any other behaviour which has a negative effect on the local environment.

These partnerships also have access to a wealth of powers available to councils and partners that can disrupt the activity of local OCGs. Just within a council: Trading Standards, planning enforcement, licensing, environmental health, anti-social behaviour and safeguarding powers can minimise the harm of OCGs on local people and communities.

What can the local authority do?

Disruption activity relies on good, appropriate information sharing between local partner agencies. Local multi-agency partnership arrangements such as community safety partnerships (CSPs), serious and organised crime partnerships (SOCPs), multi-agency safeguarding hubs (MASH) and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (MARAC) are likely to hold valuable intelligence that can aid law enforcement agencies to pursue organised crime groups and individual perpetrators.

We should work with partners to further understand the pathways and vulnerability factors that may result in individuals participating in organised crime and put interventions in place.

One local intervention already in place is the Troubled Families programme. We should discuss the Prevent strand with our local Troubled Families programme manager to discuss any cross-over activity.

Councils have a responsibility to ensure communities are protected from such crime and build resilience within communities themselves so that they too can deter and disrupt serious and organised crime. Guidance states that councils may wish to consider:

- raising local awareness about serious and organised crime and its impact on local communities and businesses
- mapping the tools and support available to communities to help them protect themselves
- building resilience and developing protective controls within councils where they might be vulnerable to fraud, bribery and corruption
- working with local victim's services to ensure that there are adequate pathways of support for those who may take some time to seek, engage and accept help

Bidding for public service contracts is attractive to OCGs who may seek to benefit from public procured services in different ways, including to raise money through fraudulent activity or to use businesses offering public services to launder illicit profits.

Controls and safeguards that deter, detect and investigate both internal and external fraud must remain resilient with more frequent or substantial procurement of services. More information can be found in Fighting Fraud and Corruption Locally www.cipfa.org/services/counter-fraud-centre/fighting-fraud-and-corruption-locally.

The role of the Community Safety Partnership

The national Serious and Organised Crime Strategy requires Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) to establish local partnership groups to lead multi-agency work to disrupt and minimise harm from organised criminal groups. However PCCs have the discretion to decide whether to establish new arrangements or to look to existing partnership structures.

Some may feel that existing partnerships can take on this responsibility. CSPs are well established partnerships where SOC is already discussed in a number of areas and should be closely involved in any work aimed at tackling SOC.

Organised Crime Local Profiles and Partnerships

In November 2014, guidance was issued by the Home Office which asked each police force to produce a Local Profile of the threats from serious and organised crime in their area. The profile should include input from a range of local partners to ensure a comprehensive picture is developed, along with a 4P action plan for tackling the OCGs at the local level.

In addition, PCCs were asked to develop serious and organised crime partnership boards in their area. One response to this request has been the expansion of the CSP agenda to cover serious and organised crime, whereas in other areas new boards have been developed for this purpose. Councils can significantly contribute local intelligence via the Troubled Families programme,



Community Safety Partnerships and health data from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA).

The local profiles should make clear recommendations to deal with any identified threats, vulnerabilities and risks. They should include appropriate background and contextual information so that recommendations can be translated into local actions. These should be considered by local partners so that an appropriate course of action can be instigated. The local partnership should develop the recommendations into an agreed set of actions with timescales, milestones and named owners. This should be used to inform the local serious and organised crime programme of actions to ensure that recommendations are acted upon locally by partner.

In Torbay the Community Safety Partnership is imminently due to receive its Organised Crime Local Profile on Modern Slavery and a profile on Child Sexual Exploitation.

How can the local authority and partnerships prevent residents and communities participating in SOC?

Community safety partnerships (CSPs) and local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs) should work together to ensure there are integrated pathways of support for vulnerable children, good awareness amongst local practitioners and services available that can support children and young people away from this complex criminal activity.

How can the local authority ensure the right controls and practices are in place to safeguard individuals?

Councils must continue to work closely with partners to safeguard vulnerable individuals. This includes safeguarding both children and adults who may be vulnerable for many different reasons. Councils and partners need to be aware of the links between trafficking, sexual exploitation, prostitution, cuckooing and SOC.

The relevant safeguarding pathways must be aware of these links and ensure that early intervention and support is offered as soon as possible. Information about potential or prolific perpetrators that pose a risk to vulnerable people should also be shared in appropriate settings such as local Serious and Organised Crime Partnerships or Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hubs (MASH).