

National Crime Agency Northern Ireland Performance Narrative**Quarter One (April – June 2017)¹****1. Summary**

The National Crime Agency (NCA) works alongside the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and other operational partners in the fight against serious and organised crime which impacts on Northern Ireland. The Agency also provides investigative and operational support to PSNI activities within Northern Ireland, across the UK and internationally, including the provision of specialist capabilities, advice and guidance.

Our partnership working with law enforcement and in the public and private sectors, is an integral part of how we operate and we remain focused on building the best intelligence picture of serious and organised crime threats; using that knowledge to relentlessly pursue those that operate at the high end of high risk; and develop and deliver specialist capabilities on behalf of law enforcement and other partners. For example, the National Firearms Threat Centre went live on 2 May 2017 developing closer collaboration and working relationships with CT policing and partners, which includes the dissemination of firearms threat intelligence to Northern Ireland. Over this quarter, the NCA has, in conjunction with our international partners overseas, seized over 9 tonnes of cocaine, 2.5 tonnes of heroin and 1 tonne of opium, that may otherwise have impacted the UK, including Northern Ireland. In May, the NCA led the UK wide investigatory response to the global 'Wannacry' ransomware attack; whilst there was minimal impact in Northern Ireland, PSNI worked with the NCA's National Cyber Crime Unit and provided assistance to enquiries relating to the incident.

17 disruptions have been reported during Quarter 1 (four moderate, 13 minor). Six disruptions relate to Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA), with one of these undertaken by Northern Ireland Investigations Team; four relate to Asset Denial; four relate to firearms, which were all undertaken by Border Investigations (BI) Belfast; two against the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking threat (MSHT); and one against the cyber threat. The number of disruptions (17) is comparable to the quarterly average for 2016/17 (18).

This report provides details of activity taking place in Q1 and is grouped under the headings Vulnerability, Prosperity and Commodity which aligns with the approach in the 2017/18 National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime.

¹ All data relating to 2017/18 will be subject to year-end validation and so may change.

2. Vulnerability

The NCA has brigaded the serious and organised crime threats into three pillars to improve clarity and resource allocation. The Vulnerability pillar includes child sexual exploitation and abuse, modern slavery and human trafficking; and organised immigration crime.

2.1 Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA)

Operation JARRA is a significant joint PSNI/NCA investigation into the accessing, sharing and distributing of Indecent Images of Children (IIOC) by 33 individuals within Northern Ireland. A further two offenders have been sentenced and one offender cautioned in the reporting period. The details are as follows:

- **NT/15/0425** - Gary PARSONS was sentenced at Belfast Crown Court on 5 April 2017. PARSONS pleaded guilty to five charges of possessing prohibited images and was given a one year Sexual Offenders Intervention and Treatment Order.
- **NT/15/0547** - Darren ORR was sentenced at Craigavon Crown Court on 28 April 2017. ORR pleaded guilty to 19 charges including possessing prohibited images of children and making IIOC - he received a 15 month sentence suspended for three years, a seven year Sexual Offences Prevention Order and was placed on the Sex Offenders Register for 10 years.
- **NT/15/0897** - Edward BISHOP was cautioned on 24 April 2017 for two counts of possession of an extreme pornographic image.

Operation FLUTY is a joint investigation by the NCA (CEOP Command and NI Branch) and the PSNI targeting those possessing and distributing IIOC. During Q1, operational activity continued against a number of suspects, with a total of 31 FLUTY-related court hearings having now taken place in NI. These include seven preliminary enquiry (PE) hearings and four arraignment hearings. The first sentencing hearings took place in this quarter:

- A 64 year old retired civil servant charged with 15 counts of making indecent images of children, five counts of possession of prohibited images of children and five counts of possession of extreme pornography, was sentenced at Belfast Crown Court to 12 months imprisonment - suspended for three years, a Sexual Offences Prevention Order for 10 years and to sign the Sex Offender Register for 10 years.
- A 27 year old retail assistant charged with 14 counts of making indecent images of children and four counts of possession of extreme pornography, was sentenced at Craigavon Crown Court to 15 months imprisonment, a Sexual Offences Prevention Order for 10 years, sign the Sex Offender Register for 10 years, and an Order was made that

he must not seek any employment which involves working with children.

NCA CSE Referrals Bureau (CSE RB) - The CSE RB is the central point within the NCA for receipt of referrals of information relating to online child sexual exploitation from industry, predominantly via the National Centre 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 Q1 the CSE RB made 57 disseminations to PSNI.

NCA Single Point of Entry (SPoE) - The NCA SPoE team is the single point of entry for CSE referrals from UK and international law enforcement. During Q1, one dissemination was made to PSNI.

NCA Education Team - The Education team represented CEOP at the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) e-Safety Forum held in Belfast on both 16 May 2017 and 27 June 2017. This forum brings together the members of the SBNI to discuss the latest developments, member activity, research and trends within Northern Ireland on the theme of online safety. At these meetings the Education team have presented and shared with the group updates on CEOP Education/Thinkuknow activity, developments and resources, including the new resource and Thinkuknow website for 8-10 year olds, the new Thinkuknow site for professionals and the Digital Romance research project. Feedback from the group is incorporated into the development of Thinkuknow resources and CEOP Education work. The total number of trained CEOP Ambassadors in Northern Ireland to date is around 140. One school has signed up for the Parent Info service during this quarter.

NCA Missing Persons Bureau (MPB) - MPB received five missing person reports from PSNI during this period. Two of these reports have now been closed, with both missing persons being located safe and well by police. The remaining open cases relate to a medium-risk 65 year old female from Belfast who is believed to be intentionally homeless, and two low risk missing persons, one of whom is a failed asylum seeker who did not attend his most recent appointment after his appeal rights exhausted in 2016. MPB has made contact with PSNI to highlight any relevant investigative opportunities or, where required, to clarify information.

PSNI Cybercrime Department identified multiple images and video clip on a laptop seized as part of a separate and unrelated investigation. The images were of the owner, a 13 year old female and were of an indecent nature. There was evidence that these images and videos had been shared via Skype with users located in several countries. The **NCA UK International Crime Bureau**

(UKICB) managed this request and coordinated correspondence to the relevant INTERPOL bureaus for assessment and action.

NCA Child Exploitation and On Line Protection (CEOP) Command - PSNI continues to be fully engaged in the strategic governance arrangements to tackle child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA). In June officers from the NCA met with Alyson Kilpatrick, who is conducting NIPB's thematic review of CSE, to provide information on the NCA response to CSEA in Northern Ireland.

2.2 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT)

Officers from the NCA's Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit (MSHTU) attend the Department of Justice Northern Ireland (DOJNI) Serious Crime Task Force Organised Immigration Crime and Human Trafficking sub-group meeting which takes place quarterly.

NCA MSHTU Tactical Advisors received two requests for advice from PSNI in the quarter.

As part of the third multi-agency **Project AIDANT** operational intensification week, on 25 and 27 April NCA officers deployed to Belfast International Airport to support two days of joint action targeting flights from Poland. In collaboration with Border Force, PSNI Human Trafficking Unit, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), and Immigration Enforcement (IE), over 1,200 passengers were screened and provided with an anti-Human Trafficking leaflet in both the Polish and English languages. No referrals relating to human trafficking were made at this time.

On 17 May, during the fourth operational intensification week under **Project AIDANT** targeting labour exploitation, which was coordinated by the NCA, two vessels in Belfast Harbour were the subject of screening visits. This activity was completed by the PSNI Human Trafficking Unit and port intelligence with the assistance of a Polish/Russian speaking police officer and PSNI RHIB. Simultaneously, PSNI Hazardous Environment Team checked living quarters to ensure it was at an adequate standard and a National Document Fraud examiner checked documentation. A total of ten crew from both vessels were interviewed, but at this stage no potential victims were identified.

On 19 May NCA officers deployed with PSNI, UKBF and HMRC partners to assist in a day of activity to identify any criminality within and to provide advice to the fishing industry. Officers visited Portavogie Harbour and carried out safeguarding checks on four fishing vessels. A total of six fishermen were interviewed. One individual was found to be working in breach of immigration rules and passed to IE for action.

During Q1 the NCA National Cyber Crime Unit (NCCU) provided support to PSNI in relation to an investigation into human trafficking and fraud.

2.3 Vulnerability - General

During Q1, the NCA's **UK Financial Intelligence Unit (UKFIU)** identified 19 Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) relating to suspected vulnerable persons for fast-tracking to PSNI.

3. Prosperity

The Prosperity pillar includes cyber, money laundering, bribery, corruption and sanctions evasion, economic crime and asset denial.

3.1 Money Laundering

Operation PUMPLESS – An NCA led investigation into allegations of financial irregularities and corruption arising from the sale of the Republic of Ireland's National Asset Management Agency's Northern Ireland loan book. To date the NCA has interviewed nine people under criminal caution. Eight remain under criminal investigation. The NCA has interviewed 68 witnesses and obtained a number of Court Orders to gather material from public and private institutions nationally and internationally. **We are regularly liaising with the Public Prosecution Service NI as the investigation continues.** This is a complex investigation, with an international scope, examining events over a seven year period. It remains on-going and is one of the highest priority operations on the NCA serious and organised crime grid.

32 requests for a Defence Against Money Laundering (DAML) received under POCA 2002 by the NCA's **UKFIU** during Q1 were allocated to PSNI for advice, based on the location of the suspect, victim or other geographical factors. (Submitting a SAR may provide a reporter with a statutory defence to a charge of money laundering or terrorist financing regarding future transactions.) Two DAML requests were refused. (Typically, a request will be refused when a criminal investigation is under way or is initiated with a view to securing restraint of the assets through the courts.)

3.2 Economic Crime

Operation CRINOLENE - 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 the Birmingham based 'Zeb Khan' Organised Crime Group. An application to add two respondents and a further 11 properties to a Property Freezing Order (Operation BISETOSE) - a total of 48 properties - will be made following the respondents indicating their consent to the variation.

Operation DESENSITIZE – An Her Majesty’s Revenue and Customs (HMRC) referral into fuel and cigarette smuggling and other acquisitive crime. A Consent Order is in the process of being obtained over three properties, two in Northern Ireland and one in Nottingham.

The **NCA UKFIU** received a request from a reporter to release funds amounting to more than £40,000. The reporter was suspicious that the subject was committing fraud. The UKFIU liaised with PSNI and, using its power under POCA, refused the DAML; a restraint order was subsequently obtained.

The **NCA UK National Central Office for Counterfeit Currency (UKNCO)** is currently providing significant support to a PSNI Investigation regarding banknote counterfeiting equipment found during a search of premises in March 2015. The UKNCO continues to provide substantial assistance relating to the provision of evidence for a potential prosecution, including coordination of expert evidence. During Q1, the UKNCO processed and analysed 47 counterfeit currency seizures submitted by the PSNI and provided witness statements in 17 instances to support police prosecutions / investigations.

3.3 Cyber

NCA National Cyber Crime Unit (NCCU)

In addition to the collaboration between PSNI and the NCA in response to the global ‘Wannacry’ ransomware attack and its impact in Northern Ireland, the NCA has provided support in the following areas:

- NCCU officers continue to engage and work in collaboration with PSNI counterparts in relation to a Distributed Denial of Service (DDOS) attack and other cyber crime offences being revealed and detected on a national scale. The NCCU and PSNI investigations are a priority, and the NCCU and PSNI are jointly working to gather further evidence to progress criminal justice outcomes whilst developing operations to mitigate the impact of any further criminality.
- Two packages were disseminated to PSNI in relation to a European investigation into customers of a counter anti-virus platform and crypter service. This investigation was coordinated by Europol and resulted in six arrests across Europe.
- The NCCU tasked the PSNI with an investigation into a ransomware attack against a university in Northern Ireland, and shared intelligence and support contacts obtained from another affected UK university.

4. Commodity

The Commodity pillar includes firearms and drugs.

4.1 Firearms

In Q1, the NCA made a total of 107 Fast Parcel referrals to PSNI, which included 22 offensive weapons/firearms cases. The remaining 85 referrals concerned drugs. The term 'Fast Parcel' is used to describe circumstances in which a consignment containing a potentially prohibited or illegal commodity is delivered by courier.

The NCA NCCU also referred an investigation to PSNI relating to the purchase of firearms on the Dark Web.

4.2 Drugs

In Q1 NCA activity having a direct impact on Northern Ireland included the seizure of a parcel containing herbal cannabis on its way to Northern Ireland from Canada. The NCA identified the intended delivery address and requested PSNI to search the address, where the recipient was then located. The **NCA UKICB** are handling enquiries through INTERPOL channels with partners at INTERPOL Ottawa and are conducting intelligence checks relating to the subject and their associates.

5. Other Activity

NCA Major Crime Investigative Support (MCIS) provided advice and support to PSNI on 20 instances in the quarter, including cases of murder, rape and other sexual offences, and unexplained death.

During Q1, the NCA's **UKFIU** disseminated four suspected counter terrorist related Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) to PSNI.

There were three kidnap cases relating to Northern Ireland reported to the **NCA Anti-Kidnap and Extortion Unit (AKEU)** during Q1. 14 blackmail cases were notified in the period.

In September 2016 PSNI circulated a subject who was wanted for a rape committed in 2014. In March 2017 SIRENE UK received a hit report via SIRENE France colleagues, containing details of an address and telephone number for the subject. SIRENE UK relayed this information to PSNI and subsequently CSONI who contacted the NCA UKICB to request urgent assistance with the circulation of a European Arrest Warrant. The UKICB facilitated this request which allowed the French authorities to secure the arrest of the subject on 16/04/2017.

NCA UKICB – In Q1, there were 13 arrests and six surrenders made by PSNI for persons sought on a European Arrest Warrant (EAW) within Europe. There were five new cases received relating to persons sought on EAWs issued by PSNI and three arrests and four surrenders occurred during the period.

The **NCA Europol National Unit (ENU)** provides PSNI access to the Europol SIENA system. This allows them to share intelligence with Europol for analysis as well as with other member states. In Q1 PSNI conducted SIENA exchanges with Latvia, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Romania and Ireland on four operations relating to counterfeiting, drugs trafficking, trafficking in human beings and motor vehicle crime.

The NCA Central Bureau provides, as a part of the NCA's **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 provide detail concerning occasions on which support concerning protection arrangements have been provided. However, in this quarter, the UKPPS provided one new instance of support on behalf of PSNI.

6. Fresh Start Agreement

The NCA remains a key member of the Cross Border Joint Agency Task Force. The joint PSNI/NCA/HMRC bid for Fresh Start Agreement (FSA) funding is still with DOJNI awaiting a decision. The interim FSA funding of £115k for the 2016/17 year has assisted the NCA in planning for the Task Force launch, including scoping of potential targets for civil recovery and tax investigations.

60 subjects have been identified as of potential interest under the Fresh Start Agreement. 13 of these have been deemed unsuitable for a civil recovery or tax intervention. The remaining 47 cases continue to be considered, including seven which have been identified as suitable for civil recovery or tax intervention.

In the absence of a decision on the joint PSNI/NCA/HMRC bid, the NCA has received approval from DOJNI of a further interim bid for £58k for 2017/18 to enable planning to continue pending the final budget decision.

The Fresh Start taskforce has been mandated to tackle the criminality linked to paramilitary groups. Whilst it represents additional activity for the NCA, the agency is determined to play its part in tackling this form of pernicious criminality against communities in NI and will deploy staff to the Fresh Start Taskforce once the funding arrangements have been confirmed. The taskforce's aspirations are consistent with the NCA's mission to protect the public from those serious and organised criminals who present the highest risk to the UK and the NCA has skills, experience and a national and international reach to make a significant contribution to the initiative. Planning is at an advanced stage and the agency is ready to identify staff and start its incremental deployment as soon as funding has been confirmed.

7 August 2017

