



NCA

National Crime Agency

NCA Northern Ireland Performance

Q1 2018/19 (April – June 2018)

Date: 22 August 2018 v1.0

1. Introduction

Tackling the breadth of serious and organised crime (SOC) is beyond the capacity and capabilities of any one body and requires a national response. Agencies can no longer act in isolation to protect the public, and nor can any one agency be expected to hold all the tools required for a comprehensive response. Within Northern Ireland 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. 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 developing and delivering specialist capabilities on behalf of law enforcement and other partners. In Q1, the NCA has continued to undertake activity in or affecting Northern Ireland across a broad range of threats.

SOC has a significant impact across all areas of the UK, but its origins often stretch far beyond our borders. On a global level, the NCA works with international partners and coordinates UK law enforcement support overseas to gather and share intelligence, conduct operational activity and enhance international delivery through a variety of means. This includes capacity building, training, and joint European and International taskforces.

2. Quarter 1 Overview

UK and overseas

Overall NCA activity during Quarter 1 (Q1) 2018/19, in conjunction with its UK and international partners, led to 390 disruptions with over 340 people being arrested and 89 convicted. During this period, 60 firearms were recovered and 823 children were safeguarded. Approximately 14 tonnes of cocaine and five tonnes of cannabis were seized.

A website linked to more than four million cyber attacks across the globe, including those targeting some of the UK's biggest banks, was shut down on 24 April 2018 following an investigation led by the NCA and the Dutch National Police, in collaboration with other international law enforcement partners. The Dutch National Police, with assistance from Germany and the United States seized servers and effected a takedown of the webstresser.org website. Officers from the NCCU identified a criminal infrastructure in the Netherlands as part of ongoing activity against 'DDoS-for-hire' services, and worked closely with the

Dutch National Police to identify the crime group behind the site and execute the coordinated law enforcement operation.

Project AIDANT is the NCA-led law enforcement response to modern slavery and human trafficking. A week of nationwide co-ordinated action took place in May 2018, led by the NCA and the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority (GLAA), focussing on labour exploitation. Dozens of potential victims of slavery were safeguarded. The NCA and GLAA worked with police forces from across the UK, including PSNI, to co-ordinate or support a range of enforcement activity whilst Border Force worked with the NCA and a range of government agencies to carry out additional safeguarding checks on at-risk individuals arriving in the UK from eastern Europe at a number of ports and airports. This activity was supported by prevention work including videos and posts on social media in English, Polish, Romanian and Slovak helping people spot the signs of exploitation.

Activity to counter the threat of Class A drugs reaching Europe is illustrated in two international operations involving the NCA this quarter, which netted more than three tonnes of cocaine.

- In the first, the NCA worked with the Spanish National Police, Air Force and Customs services to intercept a British flagged yacht around 200 miles off the Canary Islands on 20 June. The vessel, which had set sail from South America, was brought in to Gran Canaria where 61 bales of cocaine weighing 1,850 kg were recovered following a search.
- On 21 June the NCA worked with Portuguese Judicial Police, Navy and Air Force to intercept a British Virgin Island yacht south of the Azores en route from the Caribbean. A deep search of the vessel located around 1,400 kg of cocaine hidden in the structure.

These examples are included to highlight the types of activity we have delivered to tackle threats which could impact on any part of the UK.

Northern Ireland

During Q1, **seven** disruptions were reported occurring in or impacting on Northern Ireland (three moderate and four minor¹).

Five of these disruptions (two moderate and three minor) were a result of activity undertaken by the Paramilitary Crime Taskforce (PCTF). The remaining two disruptions related to a UK-wide cyber crime threat and the modern slavery and human trafficking threat.

This report is grouped under the headings Vulnerabilities, Prosperity and Commodities.

¹ Disruption definitions:

Major	Significant, long term disruptive impact on the capability of the OCG or individual and/or similar impact on the community, criminal market or NCS threat/vulnerability.
Moderate	Noticeable, medium- term disruptive impact on the capability of the OCG or individual and/or similar impact on the community, criminal market or NCS threat/vulnerability.
Minor	Minimal, short term disruptive impact on the capability of the OCG or individual and/or similar impact on the community, criminal market or NCS threat/vulnerability.

3. Paramilitary Crime Taskforce

The Paramilitary Crime Taskforce (PCTF) was established to investigate organised crime linked to paramilitary groups, to maximise disruption and, where possible, to disband them.

A number of organised crime groups (OCGs) have been prioritised as causing the greatest threat, harm and risk to the community and investigations have commenced, targeting the leadership of each paramilitary-linked OCG. These cover a wide spectrum from low level crime investigations to complex operations.

Between April and June 2018, PCTF officers conducted 37 searches linked to paramilitary organisations, and the NCA Civil Recovery and Tax (CRT) Department executed four search and seizure warrants.

Operations WAGGEL, MICROSCOPAL and MIDWIFERY (PCTF Operation MOILE) target senior members of a Loyalist paramilitary group involved in money lending/laundry and the supply of controlled drugs. On 15 June 2018 the High Court granted Disclosure Orders and search and seizure warrants, which were served and executed at the individuals' addresses on 21 June 2018. A significant amount of financial material was uplifted which is currently being analysed by the case team. An amount of cash totalling c£10,000 was also seized under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002. The individuals attended disclosure interviews in July.

Operation ACHENE is also part of PCTF Operation MOILE and concerns a senior member of a Loyalist paramilitary group involved in illegal money lending. This is a pure tax case. On 21 June 2018, an opening letter was hand delivered to the subject's address asking him to provide bank statements and various other documentation to the NCA within 30 days.

Case Study – PCTF Operation HATHAWAY

On Friday 13 April 2018 over 200 PSNI officers took part in a PCTF operation to target the Republican group INLA. This resulted in seven arrests following 12 searches in Belfast, Lisburn, Crumlin and Newtownabbey under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) and the Terrorism Act. PACE warrants were executed at four suspected brothels. Three of the premises were found not to be brothels. Women from the fourth premises were safeguarded and taken to a reception centre where they were interviewed by NCA Vulnerable Persons Team officers. A further warrant was executed at an estate agents. The principal Brian GILLAN was charged with money laundering, blackmail with menace and controlling prostitution. Two Romanian nationals were also charged: one with brothel keeping and concealing criminal property; the other with controlling prostitution and brothel keeping.

Operation YETAPA (PCTF Operation ATTINA) is a PSNI referral with extortion, fraud and violence against the person as the predicate offences. The referral relates to property associated with the alleged head of a Republican paramilitary group. On 11 January 2018 the High Court in Belfast granted an application for a Property Freezing Order (PFO) under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 and a Recovery Order (by consent) followed on 16 April 2018. The property is currently being marketed.

4. Vulnerabilities

The Vulnerabilities threats are child sexual abuse and exploitation, modern slavery and human trafficking; and organised immigration crime.

4.1 Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation (CSAE)

This quarter the last defendant was sentenced under Operation JARRA, the joint PSNI/NCA investigation into the accessing, sharing and distribution of indecent images of children (IIOC) by 33 individuals in Northern Ireland. The investigation drew on referrals from CEOP and PSNI and resulted in the identification of thousands of images and videos of abuse. At the operation's conclusion, a total of 25 offenders have been sentenced, with custodial sentences amounting to 15 years and eight months. Probation orders totalling 35 years and six months have also been imposed.

The following results were achieved this quarter:

- Jason WOODROW was arrested in 2015 and pleaded guilty to 21 charges of making IIOC. He was originally sentenced to eight months' imprisonment in May 2018. He appeared at Belfast Court of Appeal on 12 June 2018 to appeal the Crown Court Judge's decision not to grant him leave to vacate his guilty plea in the case and to appeal the custodial sentence. Lord Chief Justice Morgan ruled that the conviction would stand and the sentence was changed to 100 hours' community service and a three year probation order. He had already been banned from working with children, subject to a five year Sexual Offences Prevention Order (SOPO) and placed on the Sex Offenders' Register for ten years.
- Gordon CRAIG was sentenced at Belfast Crown Court on 6 June 2018 having pleaded guilty to 25 charges of making and possessing IIOC. Over 51,000 images were discovered on his devices. He was sentenced to a three year probation order, five year SOPO and placed on the Sex Offenders' Register for five years.

Operation FLUTY is a joint investigation by NCA (CEOP Command and NI Branch) and PSNI targeting those possessing and distributing IIOC. In total 24 people have been arrested on suspicion of possession and distribution of IIOC, of whom three were in positions of trust (judo coach, Gaelic Athletic Association coach,

school caretaker). Lines of inquiry were generated in respect of offences of online grooming and voyeurism. 30 children were either safeguarded or protected.

During Q1 two further suspects appeared at court:

- One individual was sentenced at Antrim Crown Court for making and possessing IIOC to a two year and six months' Probation Order. He is also subject to a SOPO for five years and to Sex Offender notification requirements for five years.
- In the last of the FLUTY cases, at Laganside Magistrates' Court an individual was charged with making, possession and distribution of IIOC, possession of prohibited images of children and possession of extreme pornography. He is due to appear in court in July 2018.

PSNI also engaged in the NCA-coordinated national week of intensification against file sharing of IIOC in week commencing 25 June 2018. This is the first of four weeks of surge activity planned for 2018/19. During the week PSNI executed two warrants and made two arrests.

NCA CSE Referrals Bureau (CSE RB) - The CSE RB is the central point in 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 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 other industry partners, during Q1 the CSE RB made 47 disseminations to PSNI.

NCA CEOP Education Team - The NCA-CEOP Education Team attended the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) E-Safety Forum on 27 June 2018. This forum discusses the latest developments, research, member activity and trends within Northern Ireland regarding online safety. The Education Team shared updates on NCA-CEOP Education activity and developments and resources including the new Thinkuknow resource for 4-7 year olds that is currently being developed. Feedback from the group is incorporated into the development of Thinkuknow resources and education work.

The Education Team delivered an NCA-CEOP Ambassador course in Belfast on 17 May 2018 with 19 delegates attending. The total number of trained Ambassadors in Northern Ireland to date is around 160.

One school has signed up for the Parent Info service during this quarter. To note, a new Parent Info site is due to launch (July 2018); partners in Northern Ireland will be notified accordingly.

4.2 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT)

The NCA's Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Unit (MSHTU), through the NCA Belfast office, is actively involved with the Department of Justice Northern Ireland (DOJNI) Organised Crime Task Force - Organised Immigration Crime and Human Trafficking quarterly sub-group.

Project AIDANT - PSNI focused activity at ports and airports in three locations. At the airport, safeguarding checks were carried out which enhanced the intelligence picture of modern slavery connected to the recruitment of seasonal workers. At two ports, activity focused predominantly on the fishing industry through safeguarding and welfare checks carried out on vessels. Further proactive checks were made by boarding a vessel at sea as part of a joint-agency response.

An MSHTU Tactical Advisor continues to support PSNI and Police Scotland on Operation 'F' and Operation 'S' respectively, linked investigations into the trafficking of Romanian females for sexual exploitation by a Romanian OCG. In June PSNI conducted enforcement activity that saw the arrest of three suspects and led to the safeguarding of five potential victims. NCA's Vulnerable Persons Team provided four specialist interviewers who interviewed the potential victims at a multi-agency reception centre. The investigation continues.

In April an MSHTU Tactical Advisor spent three days supporting the Modern Slavery Police Transformation Unit in delivering a 'train the trainer' event, upskilling PSNI trainers to enable delivery of the College of Policing licensed MSHT Specialist Investigators course within force.

4.3 Organised Immigration Crime (OIC)

The threat posed by Organised Immigration Crime and its impact on Northern Ireland is assessed and actively investigated by NCA Project INVIGOR.

Project INVIGOR continues to explore ways in which a collaborative law enforcement response to OIC and borders can be bolstered, in particular around the abuse of the common travel area (CTA). Planning is underway to arrange a follow up meeting from the provisional workshop highlighting vulnerabilities and responses to CTA abuse that took place last quarter, with a view to embedding partnerships and processes for a more cohesive approach to tackling CTA abuse.

4.4 Vulnerabilities – General

NCA UK Missing Persons Unit (UKMPU) – The UKMPU received five missing person reports (three medium and two low risk) from PSNI during Q1. Of the five reports, one remains open and relates to a 47 year old male missing since 2008 whose disappearance is being treated as suspicious. This case is linked to a

separate report of a 39 year old man who went missing the same year, reported to the UKMPU in February 2018, which is also being treated as suspicious.

Of the four closed reports:

- One of the medium-risk cases referred to a 41 year old homeless male who had absconded from hospital. He was located five days later as a result of PNC checks by UKMPU.
- Another involved a 23 year old female who was reported missing from the Welcome Centre in Belfast. She is a known heroin addict and had gone missing after her mother had caught her injecting heroin in the house. The UKMPU carried out various checks and she was located 14 days later.

The NCA UK Financial Intelligence Unit (UKFIU) identified 21 Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) relating to suspected vulnerable persons for fast-tracking to PSNI.

5. Prosperity

The Prosperity threats are cyber crime, money laundering, bribery, corruption and sanctions evasion, fraud and other economic crime.

5.1 Money Laundering

Case Study – Operation PUMPLESS

The 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. So far the NCA has interviewed nine people under criminal caution and nine remain under criminal investigation. 67 witnesses have been interviewed (some on more than one occasion) and the NCA has obtained a number of Court Orders to gather material from public and private institutions nationally and internationally. The investigation continues to receive large amounts of documentary and digital material and expects to receive further significant amounts in forthcoming months. To date in excess of 150,000 documentary items and over 70 hours of audio material have been reviewed.

During Q1, 58 requests for a Defence Against Money Laundering (DAML) received under the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA 2002) were allocated to PSNI by the **NCA’s UK Financial Intelligence Unit (UKFIU)** for advice, based on the location of the suspect, victim or other geographical factors. (This figure is out of a total 7,351 DAML requests handled by the UKFIU during this period.) The UKFIU exercised its power under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 to refuse three and grant 44 of these requests. The UKFIU issued three international

requests on behalf of PSNI relating to fraud/money laundering and drug trafficking/money laundering.

5.2 Fraud and Other Economic Crime

The **NCA UK National Central Office for Counterfeit Currency (UKNCO)** provided support to a PSNI investigation regarding banknote counterfeiting equipment found during a search of premises in March 2015. The UKNCO is coordinating the expert evidence for the prosecution to assist the PSNI investigation.

During Q1, the PSNI submitted 78 counterfeit currency seizures to the UKNCO for processing and analysis. Witness statements were facilitated by UKNCO to support police investigations or prosecutions for 19 counterfeit currency seizures.

5.3 Cyber Crime

NCA National Cyber Crime Unit (NCCU)

Operation MIDMONTH is an ongoing NCA investigation in response to the DYN DDoS (Distributed Denial of Service) attack in October 2016, which affected internet access for much of the United States. The principal suspect of this investigation is a UK national resident in Northern Ireland. In June 2018 the subject returned for interview, however there was insufficient evidence against him to provide a realistic prospect of conviction. He will be reported to the Public Prosecution Service for offences of conspiracy to commit DDoS attacks.

Operation MANGONA is an ongoing investigation by PSNI into the suspected creation and operation of the 'Satori botnet' by the subject. NCCU has continued to work with PSNI to preserve infrastructure and to liaise with international partners. NCCU has also identified crossovers between Operation MANGONA and another UK investigation.

Operation SIBBALDUS - NCCU received information from PSNI that an online actor was selling information believed to be associated with a local victim. 13GB of data was for sale online for 1 Bitcoin. NCCU provided tactical and legal advice to PSNI.

NCCU has also provided support to PSNI in the following cases:

- A report of a DDoS attack against a local victim. The NCCU facilitated deconfliction checks internally and across wider UK LE in support of this report. The incident was linked to another in the West Midlands region and investigating teams will jointly coordinate a response.
- An investigation into unauthorised access of a company director's email account, via a Microsoft Office 365 vulnerability. The incident was linked

to wider work coordinated by the National Cyber Security Centre.

- The NCCU received intelligence relating to drugs for sale via the Dark Web. Following an arrest and subsequent forensic examination of a seized device, the NCCU disseminated an intelligence package to PSNI.

6. Commodities

The Commodities threats are firearms and drugs.

NCA Investigations have a mandated responsibility to investigate the importation of illicit goods such as drugs, weapons and firearms to the UK, as set out in the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 (CEMA). The NCA collaborates with PSNI to ensure that associated intelligence and investigative opportunities are developed and exploited where the importations are identified as being destined for Northern Ireland.

6.1 Firearms and offensive weapons

No firearms operational activity reported in Q1.

6.2 Drugs

In September 2017, Border Force officers examined a postal package destined for an address at Camlough, Newry, which originated in the Netherlands. It was found to contain 10 sealed packages of a green crystal substance which tested positive for MDMA and had a total weight of 9.96 kg. The matter was referred to the NCA in Belfast for further investigation. Subsequently NCA and PSNI officers executed a search warrant at the address. A Lithuanian national was arrested and charged with the importation and supply of a class A controlled drug. In June 2018 he pleaded guilty to both charges and he was sentenced to five years in prison – half of which will be served in prison, the remainder on licence. He faces deportation from the UK at the end of his sentence.

In July 2017, Malaysian national Jovi WONG was arrested at Belfast Airport in possession of 9.96kg herbal cannabis. On 26 June 2018 he pleaded guilty to possession with intent to supply a controlled drug and to handling criminal property. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment on the first charge and nine months' on the second, to be served concurrently, after which he will be deported to Malaysia. £5,000 cash was found at the time of arrest and a cash forfeiture hearing took place on 18 July 2018. The forfeiture application was uncontested and the whole amount was ordered to be forfeited.

At a confiscation hearing in May 2018, Catherine REYNOLDS was ordered to pay £17,955. She had previously been sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment, suspended for four years, having been found in possession of 24,000 Zopiclone tablets (sleeping pills) at Belfast International Airport in January 2017.

Case Study – Operation ITALICI

ITALICI is an international investigation into the illegal importation and manufacture of anabolic steroids into the UK. The operation began as a referral from Border Force who intercepted a shipment of 632kg of Class C anabolic steroids at Heathrow that were destined for Belfast. The NCA in Belfast uncovered further contraband and more than two tonnes of steroids were seized overall. The investigation identified an overseas criminal group with a global supply network that had been operating for ten years and had trafficked at least 100 tonnes of the product. Investigators also identified one of the UK's most sophisticated illicit laboratories, producing commercial quantities of Class C steroids. Linked seizures have taken place in three European countries and an international money laundering network has been identified for further investigation. Currently six defendants are on indictment for charges of conspiracy to import controlled drugs and production of class C drugs. The drugs are valued in excess of £80 million.

On 28 June 2018 Danish national Jacob SPORON-FIELDER (the head of the OCG) pleaded guilty to a conspiracy to import charge. The other defendants entered not guilty pleas and trials are listed for February and April 2019. SPORON-FIELDER's sentencing was adjourned until after the trials and he remains on bail of £700k.

In October 2017, Border Force seized cash totalling €6,600, following a report from a courier service relating to a suspicious package being sent from Northern Ireland to Portugal. The matter was referred to the NCA for further investigation. Antonio MELICIO (a Guinea Bissau national, residing in Northern Ireland) claimed ownership of the cash and contested the seizure. On 15 June 2018 the forfeiture hearing heard the evidence including MELICIO's previous attempt to smuggle drugs into the UK, as well as details of a previous cash seizure from him. The Judge ordered forfeiture of the cash.

7. Asset Denial

Operation MURROW – referred to the NCA by PSNI, the subject, Mark McKINNEY has been classified as a Tier 1 criminal. He is suspected of smuggling controlled drugs, cigarettes and fuel on a huge scale. The tax investigation resulted in McKINNEY's haulage company going into liquidation and he and his wife Beverley both filing for insolvency Individual Voluntary Arrangements (IVA) in 2011, as a result of tax assessments of circa £300,000 being issued. There was a significant breach of the IVA agreement and consequently the NCA took a

robust stance which has resulted in a final payment of £8,687 in relation to Beverley McKINNEY's debt being received on 18 April 2018 and an offer of a final payment from Mark McKINNEY by 30 September 2018.

The **NCA Proceeds of Crime Centre (POCC)** has provided regulator guidance on diverse POCA matters arising from operational cases, in this quarter specifically on the use of cash seizure powers by the PCTF.

8. Other Activity

NCA Major Crime Investigative Support (MCIS) provided advice and support to PSNI on 23 instances this quarter, in cases including suspicious deaths, non-accidental injuries and murders.

There was one kidnap case relating to Northern Ireland reported to the **NCA Anti Kidnap and Extortion Unit** during Q1. Seventeen blackmail cases involving sextortion were notified in the period.

The **UKFIU** disseminated five counter terrorism related SARs to PSNI in the quarter.

The NCA Central Services Unit provides, as part of the **UK Protected Persons Service (UKPPS)**, operational support to the PSNI Protected Persons Unit which is aligned to the UKPPS. Support concerning new protection arrangements was provided on ten instances in this quarter.

The Fugitives Unit within the **NCA UK International Crime Bureau** processes European Arrest Warrants (EAWs) for law enforcement agencies within the UK and EU. During the reporting period there were nine arrests and seven surrenders made by PSNI for persons sought by EU partners on a European Arrest Warrant. Four new cases were received for persons wanted by PSNI, with three arrests and six surrenders.