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# Serious and Organised Crime

## 1. Introduction

The Police and Crime Panel (P&CP) as part of its work programme has recognised that Serious and Organised Crime (SOC) requires a partnership approach and has requested the Police and Crime Commissioner to provide a report to the Panel detailing how Warwickshire Police works with the National Crime Agency and regional partners to address this issue, which causes significant harm to the communities of Warwickshire.

Serious and Organised Crime is defined in the 2018 Serious and Organised Crime Strategy as individuals planning, coordinating and committing serious offences, whether individually, in groups and / or as part of transnational networks. The main categories of serious and organised crime are: Drugs; Firearms; Organised Acquisitive Crime (OAC); Child Sexual Abuse (CSA); Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking (MSHT); Organised Immigration Crime (OIC); Cyber Crime; Fraud; Money Laundering; and Bribery, Corruption and Sanctions Evasion.

Given this wide-ranging definition of SOC, at a meeting on the 6 August 2021 with the Chair of the Police and Crime Panel Planning and Performance Working Group and representatives from Democratic Services and the Office of the Police and Crime commissioner (OPCC), it was agreed that the focus of the paper for the P&CP would be on the topical, far-reaching and important subject of County-lines drug supply.

The report provides an overview of both the strategic and tactical arrangements that have been implemented to tackle County-lines at the national, regional and local level. The detail of the operational aspect has been excluded from the report due to the sensitivity of the information, the disclosure of which may frustrate law enforcement activity.

## 2. County-lines

### 2.1 Definition

The Serious Violence Strategy sets out the UK Government definition of County-lines, as well as the definition of child criminal exploitation - increasingly used to describe the type of exploitation where children are involved.

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) definition of a County Line is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more importing areas, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line. The County Line is the therefore the mobile phone line used to take the orders for drugs.

Traditionally the 'line' is kept away from the area where the drugs are sold and a relay system is used to contact those acting as dealers in the county location. Gang

members travel between the urban and county locations on a regular basis to deliver drugs and collect cash.

A common feature in County-line drug supply is the exploitation of children and vulnerable people - often with mental health or addiction problems - to act as drug runners or move cash, so they can stay under the radar of law enforcement. In some cases the drug dealers will take over a local property, normally belonging to a vulnerable person, and use it to operate their criminal activity. This is known as cuckooing.

People exploited in this way will quite often be exposed to physical, mental and sexual abuse, and in some instances will be trafficked to areas a long way from home as part of the network's drug dealing business. County areas are reporting increased levels of violence and weapons-related crimes as a result of this trend.

### 3. Local Context

Warwickshire is a county that attracts a significant role as an 'importer' of County-lines, predominately from our neighbouring city force areas as well as major cities such as London and Manchester, and there is particular public interest and concern given the recent publicity, both the nationally and locally, around the harm caused by this criminal activity.

This aspect is captured in the circumstances that culminated in the death of Nasir Patrice, aged 17 years from Birmingham, who died on the 15 January 2020 in Tachbrook Road, Leamington Spa. Nasir suffered four stab wounds and was pronounced dead near to the scene of the crime. The killer, from London and aged just 16 years at the time of the offence, has subsequently been found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to ten years detention.

The catalyst for this horrific event was the distribution and selling of crack-cocaine by rival County-lines gangs from Birmingham and London. Three other members of the London-based County-lines 'syndicate' pleaded guilty before the trial to doing acts intended to pervert the course of justice.

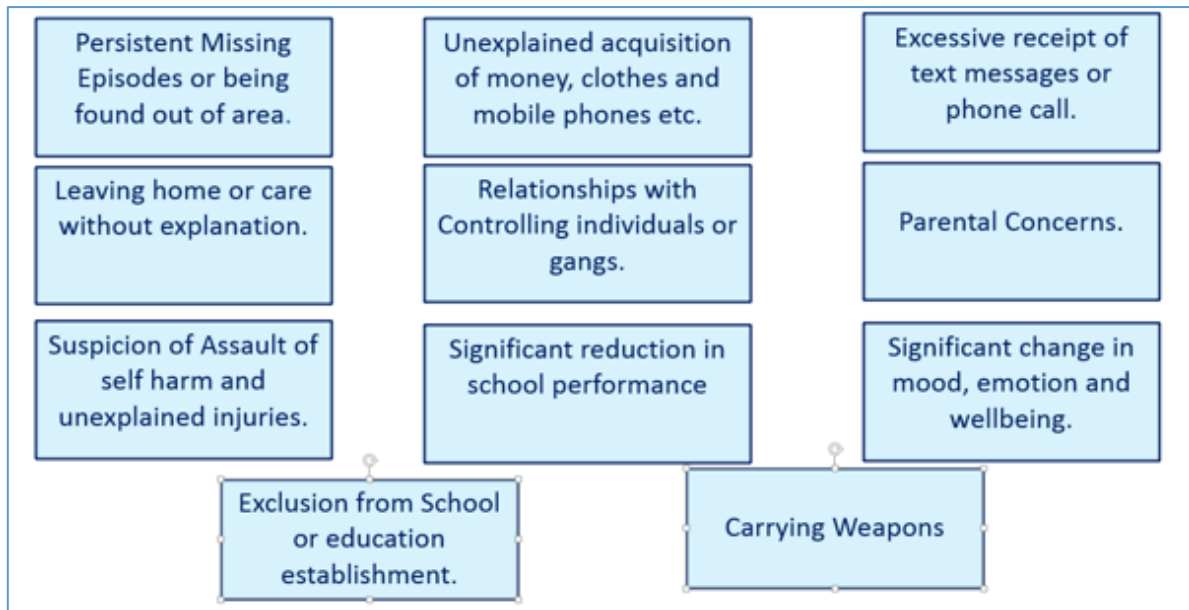
### 4. Exploitation

Child Criminal Exploitation occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity: -

- In exchange for something the victim needs or wants; and / or
- For the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator; and / or
- Through violence or the threat of violence

The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. It does not always involve physical contact, it can also occur through the use of technology.

Some clear signs that may indicate that children or vulnerable persons are being used for County-lines activity are as illustrated below: -



Gang members may also enter into relationships with young, often vulnerable, women in order to secure a location for drugs to be stored in the new area. In addition, violence is often used against drug users to coerce them to become runners, enforce debts, and use their accommodation as an operating base.

National Crime Agency (NCA) intelligence assessments identify that a County-lines enterprise almost always involves exploitation of vulnerable persons, this can include both children and adults who require safeguarding. There may, however, be instances where a young person or a person with underlying vulnerability characteristics is engaged in serious criminal offending without having been exploited. As ever, the evidence and particular facts of the case must be judged holistically on their own merits.

## 4.1 Statutory Defence

Of particular relevance to County-lines is Section 45 Modern Slavery Act 2015, which provides a statutory defence for victims of slavery and relevant exploitation who: -

- In the case of a person over 18, was compelled to commit the offence and the compulsion was attributable to the slavery or relevant exploitation; or
- In the case of a person under 18, committed the offence as a direct consequence of being, or having been, a victim of slavery or relevant exploitation.

This means that where a child or vulnerable person does an act as a direct result of having been so chosen to provide certain services such as drug trafficking, they may have a defence to the charges regardless of whether they were compelled, forced, threatened or deceived to do the act that constitutes the offence. It is also necessary to consider the public interest of proceeding against an individual even where the defence is not strictly available. The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) has consequently been established to appropriately manage these considerations.

## 4.2 National Referral Mechanism

The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a framework for identifying and referring potential victims of modern slavery and ensuring they receive the appropriate support. Modern slavery is a complex crime and may involve multiple forms of exploitation. It encompasses:

- Human trafficking
- Slavery, servitude, and forced or compulsory labour

Victims may not be aware that they are being trafficked or exploited, and may have consented to elements of their exploitation, or accepted their situation.

If a 'first responder organisation' in England and Wales considers that modern slavery has taken place, the case should be referred to the NRM so that the Single Competent Authority (SCA) can fully consider the circumstances.

Individuals who are recognised as a potential victim of modern slavery through the NRM have access to specialist tailored support for a period of at least 45 days while their case is considered, which may include: -

- Access to relevant legal advice
- Accommodation
- Protection
- Independent emotional and practical help

NRM referrals are growing and with new case law in place, agencies are starting to get help and support to those people are most at risk of exploitation.

## 5. National

### 5.1 Strategic Policing Requirement

The Strategic Policing Requirement (SPR) identifies the significant national threats for policing and the national capability that the police forces in England and Wales must contribute to in order to mitigate these threats, namely: -

- Serious and Organised Crime
- Terrorism
- Cyber Crime
- Threats to Public Order
- Civil Emergencies
- Child Sexual Exploitation

It is the duty of the Chief Constable, to ensure that the force has the necessary capacity and capability to respond to these threats at a local level and to also contribute and support the national requirement. Police and Crime Commissioners and Chief Constables are both required to have regard to the SPR in exercising their respective roles.

## 5.2 National Crime and Policing Priorities

In May 2021, in addition to the Strategic Policing Requirements, The Elected Local Policing Bodies (Specified Information) (Amendment) Order 2021 was implemented by the Home Secretary, which contained a number of national priorities for policing

The intention of these measures is to complement existing local priorities set out in Police and Crime Commissioners (PCCs) local Police and Crime Plans. Each force has a key role in supporting the measures, so that collectively real improvements can be achieved over the four years from the baseline of June 2019. It is recognised that not all of the measures will apply equally to every force, so PCCs must consider how best to apply them in their force area.

The National Crime and Policing Measures will help focus effort on key national priorities, allow performance to be measured and help to demonstrate value for money in policing. As can be seen, County-lines is included in these measures: -

Outcome	National measure/data source	
Reduce murder and other homicide	Homicides (police recorded)	} Policing accountability via the Crime and Policing Performance Board
Reduce serious violence	Hospital admissions of u25s for assault with a sharp object (NHS data)	
	Offences involving discharge of a firearm (police recorded)	
Disrupt drugs supply and county lines	Homicide in England and Wales (ONS) data on drug related homicides. Substance misuse treatment for adults (PHE) data on new presentations to treatment by referral type.	
Reduce neighbourhood crime	Burglary, robbery, theft of and from a vehicle, theft from a person (CSEW)	
Improve satisfaction among victims, with a particular focus on victims of DA	Satisfaction with the police among victims of domestic abuse (CSEW)	
	Victim satisfaction with the police (CSEW)	
Tackle cyber crime	Confidence in the law enforcement response to cyber crime (Cyber Aware Tracker)	
	Number of businesses experiencing a cyber breach or attack	
<b>Parallel cross-system measures, not part of policing outcomes framework</b>		
CJS outcomes for rape cases	Given the challenges of measuring impact against these high-harm, under-reported crimes from a policing-only perspective, without creating perverse incentives, we believe the most effective approach would be a suite of cross-CJS measures.	} Cross-system accountability via other forums
Tackle CSEA		

Home Office 3

## 5.3 Specified Information Order

The Specified Information Order came into force on 31 May 2021 and includes the requirement for elected local policing bodies to publish on their websites: -

- A statement on how their force is performing in relation to key National Priorities for Policing
- Copies of HMICFRS PEEL inspection reports, and a summary assessment of the force's performance; and

- Copies of IOPC data on force complaints, and a statement on how the PCC is exercising its complaints-handling functions under the Police Reform Act 2002.

The Order requires PCCs to provide a statement on the contribution of their force to achieving improvements against those priorities. Following publication of the National Measures the quarterly report will include: -

- Reflections on force performance and how the force has contributed towards the delivery of the national measures, including contextual information that might help explain that contribution.
- A summary of planned action for the next quarter to drive the force's performance against applicable measures.
- An explanation of which of the measures are assessed to be applicable and which are not applicable in the local context, including the reasons for that assessment.

The Order requires that this statement is published at the same time as the Policing and Crime Plan, and that it is reviewed quarterly, and any variation published, within one month following publication of an annual report on the force by HMICFRS. Quarterly updates should be made following the publication of quarterly crime statistics.

## **5.4 Beating Crime Plan**

In July 2021, Government UK published its Beating Crime Plan, which set out its ambition to deliver change to achieve less crime, fewer victims and a safer country. The plan states that the Government will address both the supply and demand of illegal drugs – coming down harder on drug dealers, dismantling county-lines gangs, making clear that 'recreational use' is not harmless and supporting drug and alcohol addicts to access the treatment services they need to turn their lives around.

The plan noted that 80% of County-lines starts in just three police force areas, namely the Metropolitan Police Service, West Midlands Police, and Merseyside Police. The Government's County-lines programme has therefore targeted investment in these three areas.

Since 2019/20, a comprehensive programme of activity has been conducted to tackle the threat posed by these gangs. The funding provided has enabled the expanded the National County-lines Coordination Centre to be expanded to improve intelligence and co-ordinate the national law enforcement response.

As a result of this investment, more than 1,100 lines have been closed, over 6,300 arrests made, over £2.9 million in cash confiscated and large amounts of drugs seized. Through this work, the police have also safeguarded more than 1,900 vulnerable people exploited by the drug dealers.

## 5.5 National Crime Agency

The mission of the National Crime Agency (NCA) is to lead the UK's fight to cut serious and organised crime, protecting the public by targeting and pursuing those criminals who pose the greatest risk to the UK.

On the 21 May 2021 the NCA published its National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime 2021, which noted that since 2020 the demand for illicit drugs remains high in the UK and the drugs marketplace continues to evolve and grow, despite the impact of Covid-19. The assessment also noted that the three main threats in the area of communities are: -

- Drugs
- Firearms
- Organised Acquisitive Crime

These threats can overlap. There remains a strong connection between drugs supply and the use of firearms, with firearms regularly found at drugs incidents. Similarly, organised acquisitive crime is often linked to other criminality, whether or not perpetrated by the same group.

Street level networks including County-lines have demonstrated their continued ability to adapt to the environment in which they operate. There has been an increase in awareness and understanding of the threat alongside enhanced law enforcement attention. To enhance the law enforcement response still further, a multi-agency County-lines Coordination Centre has been established, bringing together officers from the NCA, police and regional organised crime units to develop the national intelligence picture, prioritise action against the most serious offenders, and engage with partners across government, including in the health, welfare and education spheres, to tackle the wider issues.

In addition to helping the NCA and policing partners to work together more effectively and deliver a more comprehensive response to the county-lines threat, the centre will assist the development of a whole-system, multi-agency approach which is vital to ensuring that vulnerable people are identified and safeguarded, understanding factors behind demand for drugs, and recovering proceeds of crime

## 6. Regional

### 6.1 Regional Organised Crime Unit

Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) form a critical part of the national policing network to protect the public from serious and organised crime. They provide a range of specialist policing capabilities to forces which help them to tackle serious and organised crime effectively. ROCUs investigate and disrupt organised crime groups (OCGs) operating across police force boundaries and also act as an important point of connection between individual police forces and the National Crime Agency (NCA).



The West Midlands ROCU is a collaboration between the four forces providing economies of scale, increased capacity and access to specialist capabilities, thereby enabling Warwickshire Police to better protect its communities from the threat of serious and organised crime. Warwickshire police officers are embedded in the ROCU providing a conduit for cohesion at the national, regional and local level.

The ROCU continues to grow and develop and in 2020/21, a County-lines Taskforce was introduced together with a new Illicit Cash Team (ICT). The ROCU will also benefit from an additional 27 posts in 2021/22 funded by the national uplift.

The ROCU has been particularly beneficial in tackling County-lines, providing a robust and coordinated regional response to the activity of drug dealers from urban metropolitan areas who use communities in the shire counties as a market for controlled drugs.

The four Police and Crime Commissioners of the West Midland Region employ two Regional Policy Officers, who have been working closely with the ROCU to enhance the performance metrics available, with a combination of both qualitative and quantitative measures to enable the PCCs to influence service development.

In 2020/21, the Regional Policy Officers delivered a new piece of work looking at the scale and impact of heroin and crack cocaine across the region. The project looked at the changing nature of the drug markets and the impact of County-lines. Partners and lived experience individuals were engaged with to capture their views on what more can be done to tackle the issues. A series of recommendations were produced to strengthen the regional level partnership and strategy. This work will continue in 2021/22.

## **6.2 Regional Governance Group**

The Regional Governance Group (RGG) consists of the four PCCs of the region together with their respective Chief Constables and meets quarterly. The RGG provides governance and oversight of the regional policing collaborations and enables collective strategic decisions to be made.

The RGG provides me and my regional counterparts with the opportunity to hold the ROCU to account in respect of both performance and finance to ensure and demonstrate value for money. The meetings have developed to also allow for increased oversight of national programmes that may have local and regional implications

## **7. Local**

### **7.1 Serious and Organised Crime Joint Action Group**

The multi-agency Serious and Organised Crime Joint Action Group (SOCJAG) was established with partners to bring together the police and a range of agencies from across the public sector to reduce the impact that SOC has on our communities and the wider economy, while ensuring that the full range of powers are brought to bear on those responsible.

The current chair of SOCJAG is Jonathon Toy, Warwickshire County Council's Group Manager for Community Safety, and the group shares information and intelligence on any serious and organised crime activity in the area across a range of offences and takes steps to work together to address the significant threat and risk of harm that this criminality brings. One key aspect of the work of the SOCJAG has been to tackle County-lines.

## 7.2 Warwickshire Police

### 7.2.1 Prevent

Warwickshire Police employs the 4 x P's principles in addressing Serious and Organised Crime, with the intention to make Warwickshire a hostile environment for County-lines activity making it a low-reward high-risk enterprise for those concerned:

- **Pursue** - Prosecuting and disrupting those involved in SOC
- **Prevent** - Stopping individuals from becoming involved in SOC
- **Protect** - Increased levels of protection against SOC
- **Prepare** - Reducing the impact of SOC where it occurs

### 7.2.2 Force Intelligence Bureau

The Force Intelligence Bureau (FIB) produce a County-lines Threat Assessment, which shows the active County-lines across the county and any links to Organised Crime Groups. This assessment is forwarded to the Regional County-lines Co-ordinator and onwards to the National County-lines Co-ordination Centre (NCLCC) and the NCA.

### 7.2.3 Safer Neighbourhood Teams

In August 2020, following events within the Warwick District area, the local Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) reinvigorated Operation Switch to target individuals concerned in the supply of drugs and County-lines drug dealing.

Working with partner agencies and other teams within the force, Operation Switch concentrated on two strands, namely i) Targeting those supplying drugs and ii) Looking out for those who have been exploited by such activity.

During the first month of the operation, the team increased the amount of intelligence surrounding this type of activity, assisted by information provided by the community and partner stakeholders. This enabled them to focus on particular targets, concentrate on the vulnerability of those exposed to risk, and investigate areas where residents had raised concerns.

The result of the operation were that eight individuals were arrested for offences ranging from intent to supply, possession of drugs and possession of a Taser. A total of 41 individuals were stopped and searched, which resulted in some of them being arrested. The vulnerability of the individuals that were encountered during this part of the operation were the focus of a collaborative partnership approach to address their particular needs.

Of particular note is that the SNT found engagement from residents and communities was of paramount importance in the success the operation.

#### **7.2.4 Serious and Organised Crime Unit**

Warwickshire Police's Serious and Organised Crime Unit (SOCU) has, until recently, been the lead department for local law enforcement activity in respect of County-lines. Notable results have recently been achieved during nation 'intensification' weeks.

In May 2021, a week of intensification against County-lines activity was conducted, which included executing search warrants at a number of addresses, numerous vehicle stops, visits to people at risk of exploitation and training and awareness sessions at schools, colleges, hotels and transport companies.

A total of 35 people were arrested during the operation, with 10 persons charged and two returned to prison. An estimated total of 281 wraps of crack cocaine, 211 wraps of heroin, 6 wraps of cocaine, and a significant amount of cannabis was seized during the week. Over £14,000 of cash was also seized, as well as weapons including a machete, a gas-powered BB gun, CS canisters and a flick knife. Eleven vulnerable people were also identified and will be supported.

During the intensification week, a programme of learning and development for the workforce in respect of County-lines was also conducted.

#### **7.2.5 Project Reduce**

Following the success of the Operation Reduce in Rugby earlier this year, Project Reduce has evolved and a multi-faceted 'County-lines Harm Reduction Strategy 2021' produced.

The project includes the creation of a sizable County-lines Disruption Team (CLDT), which will engage with and support the ROCU County-lines Disruption Team, along with wider engagement with outlying force areas, to share information and seek out joint working practices. This will provide Warwickshire Police with a dedicated resource and partnership strategy to identify and disrupt County-lines within Warwickshire's towns and villages.

Launched on 9 August 2021, Project Reduce is a key development in the Warwickshire Police's capacity and capability to tackle County-lines offending through enforcement, technical developments and closer working with key stakeholders and partners, particularly in the areas of vulnerability and safeguarding, in order to deliver a joint 'whole system' approach to addressing the harm that County-lines causes in our communities. A key component to this approach will be to educate people about the dangers of County-lines and substance misuse, as well as the wider issues it can affect.

Project Reduce also aims to ensure both children and vulnerable individuals who are exploited as part of the County-lines criminality are safeguarded, while engaging with the local community and encouraging them to report any suspicious activity.

## 7.5.6 Vulnerability

To address some of the vulnerability issues associated with County Line activity, Warwickshire Police have implemented a Child Abuse, Trafficking and Exploitation (CATE) team in both the north and south of the county.

In addition, a Missing Persons Team (MPT) has been established, working alongside the CATE and co-located with Warwickshire Children's Services and Barnardo's. The MPT work closely with partner agencies to safeguard vulnerable people who are exposed to risk of harm from going missing. The team lead, co-ordinate and support the response to frequent missing people with a significant focus on children and young persons, who are susceptible to becoming ensnared in County-lines activity.

## 8. Police and Crime Commissioner

### 8.1 Commissioned Services

As mentioned in my Annual Report 2020/21, I fund a number of commissioned services in support of the objectives of my Police and Crime Plan 2016-2021. There is a clear need to address the underlying causes of offending behaviours rather than relying on enforcement alone. One of the key contributors to offending is substance misuse and as such I have committed to provide funding to address this problem in Warwickshire through commissioning the services of two organisations: -

- **Change Grow Live** - Adult Substance Misuse Services for Criminal Justice (CJ) Service Users.

To address drug and alcohol misuse in relation to adult offenders, focusing on intervention and sustained recovery to reduce the risk of re-offending.

- **Compass** - Children and Young People (CYP) Substance Misuse Services for CJ Service Users.

To support, engage and intervene early to prevent higher risk young people causing or suffering from crime and anti-social behaviour in Warwickshire.

### 8.2 Commissioner's Grants

In addition to the commissioned and co-commissioned services, I also provide funding through my annual Commissioner Grant Scheme to numerous organisations that operate in the arena of youth diversionary activity, substance misuse, and vulnerability – all of which can have a positive effect in preventing County-lines and tackling its consequences. The following provides an overview of these projects and the work of the organisations involved: -

- **Warwickshire County Council - SOCJAG Action Plan.**

The Warwickshire Community Safety Team are the lead on a joint bid on behalf of all district and borough community safety partnerships, to develop interventions pathways to support young people aged 14 to 25 years who are at risk of gang and County-line exploitation.

- **Warwickshire Crimestoppers - Fearless Against Knife Crime.**

An anti-knife crime programme for young people in schools and pupil-referral units in Warwickshire, to discourage young people from carrying knives and report what they know regarding knife crime. Fearless is the young people's project of Crimestoppers and aims to educate and empower 11 to 16 year olds by increasing their awareness around crime.

- **Equip - Drugs and County-lines Awareness**

This project seeks to engage Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities in County-lines, drug and substance misuse and awareness, with an emphasis on women and young people where anecdotally there is poor awareness.

- **Barnardos - Warwickshire Reaching Out**

The project seeks to address a gap in the existing commissioned service for general child exploitation, and provide both sessional staff hours and positive diversionary activities to a) help children and young persons who have been criminally exploited to recover and b) help them to focus on more positive activities.

- **Safeline - Early Intervention and Prevention Support Coordinator**

To fund an Early Intervention Co-ordinator to provide specialist one-to-one support and deliver group training and activities to some of the most vulnerable young people in our communities.

- **Bradby Club, Rugby**

The Bradby Club offers a range of services and activities to support young people in their journey into adulthood. The organisation offer a Substance Misuse Service, providing advice to young people and aims to increase their awareness of the danger of substances. The Bradby Club also work closely with Compass and provide referrals into their specialist services where appropriate.

- **Brunswick Youth Project - Young People First.**

A project delivered in Leamington Spa to provide diversionary activities, informal education and pastoral care to young people.

- **Aspire in Arts - Nuneaton and Bedworth**

The project provides artistic activities and one-on-one mentoring to young people with challenging circumstances in Nuneaton and Bedworth. As part of this mentoring scheme some of these young people are identified as having substance misuse issues and may be referred on to Compass for specialist support.

- **Rugby Borough Council - Community Sport and Recreation Unit**

On Track is the Social Inclusion Programme coordinated and delivered by Rugby Borough Council. It delivers community youth provision across the borough for young people aged 12 to 19 years old, providing one-to-one support, mentoring, group work, youth clubs and outreach sessions to engage young people in priority wards and areas of deprivation.

- **Hill Street Youth – Engage.**

The project situated in Rugby is split into different areas that include informative & interactive workshops, sport & healthy lifestyle, domestic education, general education upskilling, enhancing life skills and the provision of one-to-one and group support.

- **Community Safety Partnership**

In addition to these organisations, I also provide funding to the county's four Community Safety Partnership (CSPs), where a number of local projects have been initiated in response to local priorities to address County-lines and the associated issues of gang violence, substance misuse and knife crime.

## **8.3 Holding to Account**

In respect of my statutory responsibility to 'hold to account' the Chief Constable for the performance of the force, once a month a formal Performance Accountably Meeting (PAM) is held between the Chief Constable and myself. The purpose of the PAM is to focus on specific areas of force performance and the meeting is also attended by senior officers and staff from both the force and the OPCC.

At each PAM a particular subject of concern is selected for a 'spotlight' presentation by the force's lead officers, to provide a better understanding of the issues and thereby allow more informed discussions and greater scrutiny of activity and performance. In July 2021, the subject of County-lines was the spotlight subject discussed under this arrangement.

## **8.4 Engagement**

### **8.4.1 Put Down Your Knife**

At the last meeting of the Police and Crime Panel in June 2021, I reported that I had recently participated in an event at the Brunswick Hub, Leamington Spa that had been initiated by Ben Spann as the founder of the organisation 'Put Down Your Knife'. The purpose of the meeting was to explore what more can be done by partner agencies to deliver on his organisation's aim to Prevent, Rehabilitate and Educate young people away from crime, with an emphasis on County-lines and knife crime.

### **8.4.2 The Academy of Hard Knocks**

On the morning of the 23 September 2021, the date of the next Police and Crime Panel, I am due to meet with Matthew Wilkins a local knife-crime campaigner in the Leamington Spa and who is a volunteer for an organisation called 'The Academy of Hard Knocks'. The organisation seeks to help to break the cycle of youth offending, and reduce knife crime around London. I understand that the Academy has had a positive impact on communities in London and it is suggested that with the right support similar successes can be repeated in Warwickshire.

Both of these engagement events provide an opportunity to discuss the issues in greater depth and from different perspectives, thereby enabling me to gain a better

understanding of County-lines and the challenges that it presents. Consideration needs to be given as to what more can be done by law enforcement, partner agencies, the third sector (charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups) and our communities to address the scourge of County-lines and the associated factors of acquisitive crime, knife crime, and vulnerability.

## 9. Communities

The engagement of Warwickshire's communities in tackling County-lines is essential to support law enforcement and relevant partners in making Warwickshire a hostile environment for the Organised Crime Groups that prey on the young and vulnerable and do some much harm.

### 9.1 Identifying County-lines

It may include any of the following signs of activity: -

- An increase in visitors and cars to a house or flat
- New faces appearing at the house or flat
- New and regularly changing residents
- Change in resident's mood and/or demeanour
- Substance misuse and / or drug paraphernalia
- Changes in the way young people you might know dress
- Unexplained, sometimes unaffordable new things
- Residents or young people you know going missing
- Young people seen in different cars / taxis driven by unknown adults
- Young people seeming unfamiliar with your community
- Truancy, exclusion, disengagement from school
- An increase in anti-social behaviour in the community
- Unexplained injuries

### 9.2 Raising Concerns

Children and the vulnerable often don't see themselves as victims or realise they have been 'groomed' to get involved in criminality. So it's important that we all play our part to understand County-lines and speak out if we have concerns.

- The best advice is to trust your instincts. Even if someone isn't involved in County-lines drug dealing, they may be being exploited in some other way, so it's always worth speaking out.
- You can speak to Warwickshire Police by dialling the free non-emergency 101, or in an emergency the 999 telephone number.
- If you would rather remain anonymous, you can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.
- If you notice something linked to the railways, you can report concerns to the British Transport Police by texting 61016 from your mobile. In an emergency always dial 999.

- If you are a young person who is worried about your involvement, or a friend's involvement in County-lines, a good option is to speak to an adult you trust and talk to them about your concerns.
- You can also call Childline on 0800 1111. It is a private and confidential service where you can talk to specially trained counsellors about anything that is worrying you.
- Alternatively, speak to a children and young people's service like Catch 22. They work with children and young people of any age to help get them out of situations they're worried about, and have helped lots of children and young people involved in County-lines.
- Working in partnership with other agencies, St Giles offers specialist services to help young people make a safe and sustained exit from County-line involvement. Caseworkers offer both practical and emotional support to the young person and their family to help address any issue which might be driving county line involvement.

I do appreciate that it's not always easy to come forward, but we all have a duty to keep our streets and communities safe, as such I'm asking everyone to play their part in the ongoing bid to drive down the levels of County-lines in Warwickshire.



Philip Secombe. TD.

Police and Crime Commissioner for Warwickshire.