



Regional Crime Unit - Performance Update

The purpose of this report is to update the Police Authority on progress and performance of the Regional Crime Unit (RCU) since its commencement in April 2008 and subsequent expansion in August 2009.

Background

A report on RCU performance was considered at the meeting of the Police Authority's Performance Scrutiny and Review Committee held on 4th December 2008. Following consideration of the report Members asked that a further 'public facing' update be provided covering progress during 2009.

This report details the performance of the RCU, which is a collaboration formed to 'close the gap' in relation to individual Force's inability to co-ordinate a cross force investigative response to travelling criminals. Officers from Merseyside, Cheshire and Lancashire Forces support the original collaboration.

Subsequently, the HMIC thematic inspection into Serious and Organised Crime 'Getting Organised', published in September 2008, highlighted the North West along with the West Midlands and London as being areas at the greatest risk from regional Organised Crime Groups. The Home Office invited the North West to submit a business plan to tackle this emerging threat using a multi-agency approach. Funding of £150,000 was made available prior to April 2009 together with two tranches of £1m for 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 respectively.

All Chairs and Chiefs approved the business plan within the region, with Merseyside Police Authority retaining the lead, in terms of funding/HR/estates/procurement/systems etc. The plan recognised the need to build on the regional capacity and capability to tackle serious and organised crime by moving from one to three operational syndicates, by increasing support from the Regional Intelligence Unit and by making more pro-active use of the Regional Asset Recovery Team.

Greater Manchester Police and Cumbria Constabulary agreed to join the collaboration, thus strengthening the regional footprint of the new unit. The RCU would be located at two discreet premises to allow for effective operational coverage.

All three regional units would fall under the command of a dedicated

Detective Chief Superintendent. In addition, a further Detective Superintendent would be recruited to take responsibility for prevention, partnership and identification of funding streams.

The three regional units would also seek to utilise a multi-agency task force approach to crime investigation by seeking support from statutory partners such as Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA), Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs Agency (HMRC) and the United Kingdom Borders Agency (UKBA).

The bid was accepted and implemented within the region with the agreement that all staff would be seconded for an initial 2 year period after which the continuation of the unit would be subject to review.

A Detective Chief Superintendent from Lancashire Constabulary was appointed and commenced as Head of the Regional Unit on 1st June 2009. The remaining staff have now all been recruited with the exception of the Detective Superintendent - that post has been regionally advertised and should be filled within the next few weeks.

The RCU comprises of three operational syndicates each led by a dedicated Detective Inspector and comprising of officers from all 5 regional forces.

The provision of the Detective Chief Superintendent and Detective Superintendent are not allocated from a particular force but are regionally funded.

The unit has the ability to proactively target Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) designated as priority targets affecting communities within the region. An OCG can be defined as a group of criminals engaged in criminal activity. These targets are identified by the Regional Intelligence Unit (RIU) in consultation with individual Forces and partners, and ratified by the Multi-Agency Regional Tasking and Co-ordinating Group. The Assistant Chief Constable, Specialist Operations in Lancashire ACC Andy Cooke currently chairs this group and is the NW ACPO lead for regional Serious and Organised Crime collaboration. The RCU receives intelligence support from the RIU and financial investigative support from the Regional Asset Recovery Team (RART).

The running costs of the unit are shared between the collaborating forces according to the ratio of the Police Grant. All five Chief Constables have confirmed funding to support the unit over an initial two-year period. Any benefits derived from Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) legislation will be divided amongst collaborating forces in the same proportion.

Since provision of the grant a subsequent Cabinet Office Review entitled 'Extending Our Reach' has made 25 recommendations into the regional

investigation of level 2 crimes. One of these recommendations is that all regions should have a regional capability by December 2009, this will be mandatory for non complying regions.

The Home Office will evaluate the North West regional model over the next two years. This assessment encompasses overall performance as well as taking into account the benefits of the collaboration to the region as a whole. The aim of this enhanced assessment is to identify good practice with a view to promulgating to other regions. Conversely, it will also report on collaborative efforts that do not bring benefit to the region.

The benefits to the Authority is that by taking the lead they are demonstrating a willingness to collaborate with other regional forces and accept a shared responsibility for improving the policing response not only within Merseyside but also the region. With the enhancement of operational capacity supplemented by intelligence support the region is better able to deal with the identified threats emanating from Serious and Organised Crime Groups operating across the region.

RCU Investigations

The objective of the unit is to disrupt, dismantle and prosecute the identified OCG. To achieve this RCU utilises the whole spectrum of investigative techniques including partnership working with individual Forces and other agencies. All pertinent legislation is considered, including the Proceeds of Crime Act, with a clear aim of identifying and confiscating assets gleaned from criminal activity.

The unit seeks to improve the quality of life for local communities across the region. This is achieved by removing groups of criminals from society who reside in one area but commit crime in other areas and by ensuring that any benefits gained from this criminality are seized.

The proactive investigations undertaken by the unit are complex and generally take several months to complete, i.e. from inception to arrest to conviction.

Since becoming fully operational on 16th May 2008 the RCU have completed 1 long term and 4 short-term operations. There are currently 2 long term and 1 short-term operations at prosecution stage with the main offenders having been arrested.

Results of investigations are contained in section 5 below however, to date, the RCU operational activity has identified and dealt with criminal activity impacting upon all regional forces as well as forces outside the region. In the case of Merseyside the RCU has dealt with 8 separate operations where OCGs have been linked criminally to Merseyside.

Performance Statistics

Although operating on a regional basis the team will impact and support the APACS performance framework in the following domains:

- SPI Serious and organised crime
- SPI Bringing offenders to justice – serious acquisitive crime
- SPI Serious violent offenders brought to justice

Number of level 2 OCGs dismantled/disrupted: 5/6

Number of targets sentenced: 20

Number of targets charged awaiting trial: 32

Number of drugs seizures Class A: 11

Street Value: £65,000

Number of drug seizures Class B: 3

Street Value £155,000

Number of drug seizures Class C: 1

Street Value £10,000

Number of cash forfeitures: 5

Value: £161,500

Recent intelligence indicates that there are 1185 OCGs that are recorded within the region, 245 within Merseyside. They impact within Force boundaries, within the North West and beyond into 20 other Forces. There is no information available to highlight the number of OCGs operating across the five collaborating forces, although it is anticipated that this data will be available as OCG mapping develops.

Many of these OCGs are being investigated by respective Forces and work, driven by the Home Office, is currently ongoing to prioritise activity and to ensure that all OCGs receive some attention from a national (SOCA), regional (RCU type response) Force (major crime teams) to local source (neighbourhood officers).

Financial and Staffing Implications

Financial

Home Office funding of £1.000m has been made available to the region for 2009-10, together with an additional £0.150m towards set up costs. In 2010-11, a further £1.000m will be available. Both these grants are subject to match funding by the region.

The original net budget of the unit for 2009-10 was estimated at £3.850m, based on the assumption that the new enlarged unit would become operational with effect from April 2009. Due to logistical issues the expansion of the unit was not fully effective until 1st August 2009. This impacted on the budget requirements of the unit and this initial budget has since been revised to £2.945m.

The budget is allocated between forces on the basis of the ratios of General Grant. Using this formula, the Merseyside share of the unit costs is 43.34% to the 1st August 2009 and 23.11% from then onwards. Details of the budget, net of Home Office funding, and the allocation between forces is shown below.

	Original Budget 2009-10	Revised Budget 2009-10	Forecast Budget 2010-11	Forecast Budget 2011-12
	£m	£m	£m	£m
Merseyside	0.890	0.771	0.748	1.004
GMP	1.578	1.024	1.327	1.780
Lancashire	0.727	0.630	0.611	0.821
Cheshire	0.436	0.378	0.367	0.492
Cumbria	0.219	0.142	0.184	0.247
Total	3.850	2.945	3.237	4.344

Running Costs

The revised running costs of the unit for 2009-10 are £4.095m. After taking account of the Home Office funding, this equates to £2.945m. The unit is currently operating within this budget. A breakdown of the running costs for 2009-10 is shown in the table below:-

Revised Budget 2009-10	£m
Staff (inc Pensions/Training)	2.626
Training	0.021
Rent, Utilities, Office Costs	0.105
Vehicles/Travel	0.246
Telecomms./Computing	0.064
Investigative costs	0.061
Other	0.107
Set up costs	0.865
Total	4.095
Home Office Funding	(1.150)
Total Net Costs	2.945

Staffing

The Unit comprises 56 staff in total and includes the D/Chief Superintendent (DCS) who is in overall charge, plus a detective Superintendent responsible for Prevent. This figure can be broken down as follows: 1 Detective Chief Superintendent, 2 Detective

Superintendents, 3 Detective Inspectors, 9 Detective Sergeants, 38 Detective Constables, 1 admin manager and 2 administrative support officers. It should be noted the DCS has additional responsibility for the RIU and the RART

Individual Force contributions to the 54 operational officers are in line with the ratio of Police Grant value and equates to: - 13 from Merseyside, 10 from Lancashire, 6 from Cheshire, 22 from Greater Manchester and 3 from Cumbria. The additional Chief Superintendent and Superintendent posts are not specifically allocated to a particular force.

The Merseyside contribution consists of a Detective Superintendent, Detective Inspector, 2 Detective Sergeants, 7 Detective Constables, an office manager at Grade D and an administrative support officer at Grade B.

Risk Assessment

The risk to the Authority of leading this collaboration is minimised by the agreement by all five police authorities to share the costs on a pro-rata basis. The majority of expenditure has been borne by the Home Office in respect of set-up costs with the vast bulk of on costs being taken up by staffing costs.

The operational activity carried out by the unit will be subject of both established and approved generic risk assessment, together will individual risk assessments to cover dynamic situations.

The risks to Merseyside of not contributing to the RCU are that cross force criminality that has been highlighted under the National Intelligence Model will only be dealt with in an ad hoc fashion. The RCU represents a taskable and accountable resource whose focus is upon criminal activity affecting the region. By taking the lead in the development of the RCU Merseyside are demonstrating that they have the ability to appreciate regional as well as local issues.

The Home Office will make it mandatory to have a regional response to tackling cross border criminality. As the largest region outside London the North West has committed significant resources into this venture and will be well placed to influence future development

Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment

The unit will operate within existing Force Policies in relation to both equality and diversity to ensure fairness and equal opportunities for all representative groups.

Environmental Impact Assessment

There are no environmental issues associated with this report.

Conclusion

This report sets out details of the recent developments, activities and performance to date of the RCU, which became operational in April 2008 and expanded significantly in August 2009.