



NCA

National Crime Agency

Intelligence Assessment

Pathways into Serious and Organised Crime

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Pathways into Serious and Organised Crime

Aim and Scope of Assessment

This intelligence assessment has been produced in support of the Prevent strand of the Government's Serious and Organised Crime Strategy, which aims to reduce the number of people being drawn into serious and organised crime, or reoffending.

The assessment sets out an initial understanding of the pathways into serious and organised crime. There are gaps in our knowledge, and this will serve as a tool to help engage partners in filling these. The longer term aim is to develop an evidence base to help inform targeted Prevent campaigns, and more effective allocation of resources.

This assessment aims to answer five intelligence questions:

- What are the pathways into serious and organised crime?
- Are there distinct pathways for specific crime types?
- How are relationships between crime group members established?
- What are the socio-economic characteristics of those drawn into organised crime?
- Do individuals progress through different crimes as part of their criminal career?

Intelligence base

This intelligence assessment is based on a variety of sources from law enforcement, central government, academia and open source which are judged to be reliable.

The intelligence collection period for this report is 01/01/2008 - 31/05/2015.

The broad date range is representative of the fact that some research originates from historic Assessed Intelligence Reporting and debriefing which is still considered to be relevant to this assessment.

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Key points

- There is no one size fits all pathway into serious and organised crime. Individuals of any social or economic standing can be drawn in.
- An individual will usually demonstrate that they are trustworthy in order to become involved with an organised crime group. Criminal trust is often developed through family, friendship, ethnic and cultural ties, and can also be earned or acquired through recommendation.
- Participation in serious and organised crime is often catalysed or motivated by personal or business vulnerabilities. These can take many forms including addiction, growing up as part of a dysfunctional or abusive family, becoming disenfranchised with society or living in deprivation. Business-owners may be vulnerable to exploitation in order to stay afloat or increase profits.
- Individuals possessing professional skills that can enable, conceal or advance unlawful activity can be coerced, corrupted, complicit or simply act unwittingly in criminal ventures. When they belong to particular networks, the likelihood of their exploitation for criminal gain can increase. Familial, associative, ethnic and cultural links all have a role in developing and maintaining criminal relationships and facilitating crime.
- Pathways vary significantly between crime types – and can have different characteristics and motivations. For example, cyber criminals are not always motivated by money and can become involved at a relatively young age, while an economic criminal is likely to have a good understanding of, and will possibly already work within, the targeted sector.
- Some serious and organised criminals are dynamic and will diversify into different crime types as a means of maintaining income. Just over half (52%) of known organised crime groups are involved in more than one crime type.

Introduction

1. Despite being conducted by a relatively small group of offenders, serious and organised crime affects us all. It is a threat to our national security and our local communities, and conservative estimates suggest it costs the UK upwards of GBP 24 billion every year. According to Organised Crime Group Mapping (OCGM) data, there are approximately 6,000 organised crime groups (OCGs) in the UK.

2. The law enforcement community has worked hard to understand criminal methods in order to respond effectively to the threat. There remains, however, a gap in our understanding of the many ways in which offenders are initially drawn in and progress through criminality. This paper is therefore the first in a series of assessments which seek to improve our understanding of these pathways, in order to help identify opportunities for future Prevent activity¹. These initial insights can help local as well as national partners to identify and intervene with those most at risk.

3. There is no legal definition of serious and organised crime. For the purpose of this document it is crime which is planned, coordinated and conducted by transnational, national or local groups of people working together on a continuing basis. This assessment examines the pathways into domestic offending, that is offenders operating within the UK. It does not cover pathways of individuals or communities based entirely abroad whose criminality may impact the UK (e.g. big game poachers in Africa who supply the international wildlife trade or cyber criminals based overseas).

4. In March 2015, the Home Office published 'Individuals at risk of being drawn into Serious and Organised crime - a Prevent Guide',² setting out a basic understanding of the factors that put individuals at risk of being drawn into serious and organised crime. This intelligence assessment seeks to build upon that baseline understanding by developing knowledge around the four identified risk factors:

- **Criminality** – Individuals displaying certain offending patterns may progress into organised criminality. A large proportion of individuals convicted of organised crime-type offences have a history of offending from a young age, although others do not become active until adulthood.
- **Ability** - Those in specific professions, or with particular skill sets or access, may be more likely to be targeted, recruited or corrupted into the facilitation of serious and organised crime.
- **Networks** - Individuals may be more likely to be drawn into serious and organised crime if they have access to criminal networks through familial links, intimate relationships or associations through peer groups (including prisons and online communities), friendships or employment.

¹ Prevent forms one of the four objectives set out in the Home Office Serious and Organised Crime Strategy (2013) and aims to stop people from getting involved in all forms of serious and organised crime, and deter existing organised criminals from continuing.

² HM Government: Individuals at risk of being drawn into Serious and Organised Crime – a Prevent Guide (March 2015) available online at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/individuals-at-risk-of-being-drawn-into-serious-and-organised-crime-a-prevent-guide>

- **Identity** - Upbringing, lifestyle and attitude can influence progression into serious and organised crime. Family life, gang culture, greed and attitudes to power can be significant factors.

Pathways into serious and organised crime

5. There is no one size fits all pathway into serious and organised crime. History and geography can explain the criminal exploits of certain groups and diaspora, but as the fundamental components of most illegal trades are similar to those of legitimate business, individuals of any social or economic standing can be drawn in.

6. The success of any organised initiative, regardless of its legality, is subject to its individual elements collaborating effectively whilst fulfilling their responsibilities. Achievement of the ultimate aim therefore rests upon a network of interlocked dependencies. The organiser(s) must trust in the ability and reliability of each individual and/or function if they are to realise their expected outcome. Trust is fundamental and its importance increases if the venture is illegal.

7. Consequently, some serious and organised criminals in the UK operate in loose networks based on trust and reputation, while more structured hierarchical groups also exist and are often based on familial ties. OCGs can cross ethnic boundaries in order to advance their objective, and both loose and structured groups frequently have international links. Some groups that impact on the UK may be located entirely abroad.

8. The following points demonstrate how criminal trust may be developed, and how individuals can become involved in serious and organised criminality:

Family

9. Familial relationships remain a central pathway into serious and organised crime. With the ability to rely on a naturally higher degree of trust, there are significant crime groups structured around family members (and their trusted associates) involved in multiple crime types. Exposure to criminality committed by family members from a formative age enables steady mentoring, and normalises the activity. Other family members who are not as closely connected to the OCG can also be exploited. For instance, relatives may be asked to carry out initial favours to store or deliver illicit goods, which can be more frequently requested as the seriousness increases (e.g. Class C drugs to Class A drugs to firearms). Some criminals may register their assets in innocent family members' names, and there are examples of debts being transferred to offenders' relatives who had no previous criminal involvement.

Associates

10. Close association with those engaged in serious and organised crime increases the risk of an individual's involvement. These associations can stem from childhood friendship, or be cultivated through employment (colleagues and/or clients) and social circles. 'Helping out an old friend' or venturing into initiatives presented by co-workers or customers are

frequently cited as offenders' initial introductions to organised criminality. Regardless of personal familiarity, the true nature of the enterprise is not always revealed.

Ethnicity and Culture

11. Ethnic and cultural bonds can foster criminal trust and provide global contacts. These bonds can become a networking enabler which allows an individual easier entry into criminality.

12. Criminals who are first or second-generation immigrants are potentially able to use their personal connections to criminal enterprises abroad to facilitate UK offending.

Outsiders

13. Memberships of OCGs are usually fluid, particularly among those groups active over longer periods. Individuals may belong to more than one group, or groups may network for mutual benefit if they perceive each other to be reputable. Outsiders are often vouched for by existing OCG members and will typically offer a valuable service/commodity otherwise lacking from the normal demographic. Friendship/familial/cultural loyalty can be overlooked in the pursuit of profit, but trust between those involved remains important

Vulnerable Individuals

14. Criminality is often catalysed or motivated by an initial vulnerability or trigger point. Individuals with addictions may fund their drug habit through crime. Drug dealers can provide the initial criminal opportunities and contacts required for the user to become involved. This may begin by storing commodities and progress into distributing and trafficking.

15. Financial hardship can leave an individual susceptible to criminal exploitation, or motivate their intentional involvement. Due to a perceived lack of legitimate alternatives, prolific crime in some deprived areas is often viewed by participating residents as the only way to get by or improve their situation.

One individual in his 50s became involved in crime when he was 8 years old, simply to provide for his mother and siblings who lived in a deprived area. He started at a low level, performing menial tasks for low return, but over time, with increasing status and higher potential returns, the individual became more established within the higher levels of criminality.

16. Particular individual circumstances may increase the vulnerability of being drawn into serious and organised crime. Some individuals may perceive that both economically and emotionally they have nothing to lose from engaging in criminality. There are examples of those attributing their offending to suffering marital problems and bereavement, as well as from unemployment, bankruptcy, benefit-loss and drug-addiction.

17. Young people brought up in deprived neighbourhoods by troubled or fragmented families with no impetus to complete their education are particularly vulnerable to approaches from members of crime groups and street gangs. The groups/gangs are likely

to offer them a sense of belonging which they may not get from their family. Initially these young people can become involved in anti-social behaviour and petty crime, before progressing into more significant criminality as they become increasingly involved in gang activity. This can then potentially evolve into organised criminal activity.

Vulnerable Businesses

18. Small business-owners are potentially open to exploitation in order to stay in business or increase profits. In many scenarios these businesses may present an opportunity for a criminal group to launder money, store/transport commodities or cross borders using a legitimate load as cover. The risk of exploitation increases if the individual is already associated with the criminal group.

19. Certain industries possess particular attributes that increase their vulnerability to facilitating organised crime. Transnational haulage companies have a legitimate reason to cross borders with high-capacity containers, leaving both their owners and drivers open to either criminal exploitation or temptation. Similarly, import/export and courier firms provide the opportunity to conceal illegal articles amongst legal loads.

20. Nightclubs, pubs and other facets of the night time economy can provide a favourable environment to further criminal contacts, increase client bases and enable effective money laundering. Other locations such as community centres, restaurants or gyms also support the convergence of those with similar cultural backgrounds or interests. This serves to enhance networking opportunities and build trust between like-minded individuals who pursue organised criminality. Businesses trading valuable and luxury commodities may also be frequented by high-spending offenders, whose lifestyle can attract those with no previous criminal history and offer an opportunity for the crime group to exploit the business.

Professional Enablers

21. Individuals possessing professional skills that can enable, conceal or advance unlawful activity are recognised as highly valuable assets by organised criminals. Particularly useful are those with expertise and insider access in sectors such as finance, legal and law enforcement. Employees working in any area containing desirable information, however, are of value and they can be criminally exploited to facilitate money laundering or support fraud. The risk extends to those without formal qualifications or those who have been disciplined by regulatory bodies/barred from professional practice, who can still provide services similar to those of the regulated sector.

22. Professional enablers can be coerced, corrupted, complicit or unwitting in their criminal involvement. Personal relationships and cultural ties can enable networking opportunities, where offenders favour the relative stability and lower risks carried by values-based corruption³ compared to coercion-based corruption⁴. Motivations of those who

³ Values-based corruption: where the corruption agreement is made on the basis of common interests, attitudes and values, often borne out of friendship, loyalty, "romance" or apathy.

⁴ Coercion-based corruption: corruption via threats or the offering of a tangible reward.

are complicit range from personal financial greed to basic company survival, with some establishments serving multiple OCGs. During a market downturn, individual practitioners and small businesses become particularly vulnerable to approaches from criminal clients, and may either knowingly engage or become purposefully negligent. Others simply enjoy the status and notoriety offered by criminal association.

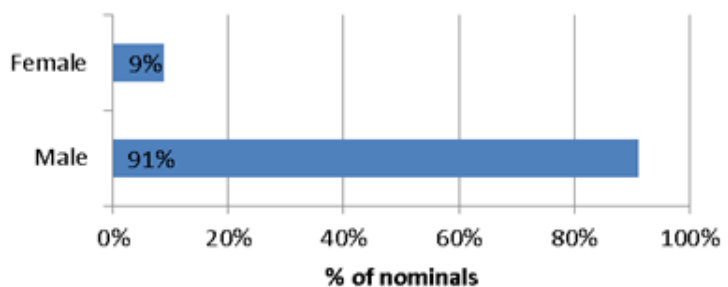
A solicitor with no previous convictions was drawn into criminality through her intimate relationship with an OCG member. She was persuaded to apply for mortgages using fictitious data which facilitated a multi-million pound fraud. She developed a reputation for assisting organised criminals which then led to her involvement with further OCGs.

23. Coercion-based corruption, however, is also apparent. Criminals can threaten exposure of minor infractions carried out as favours to enforce a professional's continued and escalated involvement. Naivety is commonly reported in corruption cases, suggesting the criminal intention may have been disguised or omitted.

24. Professional enablers are used by UK intermediaries to facilitate international bribery by kleptocrats⁵. For example, law firms may initially represent them in litigation cases, and in doing so will not need to question sources of funding or conduct Customer Due Diligence (CDD) checks and Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs). As the relationship between the professional(s) and criminal(s) becomes established there can be 'status drift', where the law firm may then be willing to forgo any future CDD requirements.

Women

Gender breakdown of recorded nominals⁶



Source: OCGM Q1 2015 data

25. Although OCGM data shows that organised crime is male-dominated, women are also involved. As with men, the routes women take into offending, and the extent of their involvement, varies. Women can similarly oversee and coordinate criminality, operate as consensual criminals or be drawn in unwittingly or through exploitation. Many female offenders fall in this final bracket, viewing themselves as victims. Initial criminal contact can be made through the female's family members, through her association with a particular peer group, or via an intimate relationship with an offender. They can be coerced

⁵ Kleptocrat: a ruler who abuses their power to steal their country's resources.

⁶ Information collated by NCA Organised Crime Fusion Centre consisting of 42,409 nominals. The statistics presented exclude 4,979 individuals (12% of the total number) where the gender was not recorded.

or manipulated into offending, and may be unaware that their actions are linked to a wider OCG.

26. As with male offenders, female offenders can come from a variety of backgrounds. Many have a history of abuse, time in care, a poor home life, low school attendance and few female friends or role models. Some may seek status, notoriety, or a sense of belonging – either through their involvement or via a relationship with an offender. Others may be going through transitional periods in their lives.

Are there distinct pathways for specific crime types?

27. Having identified some of the general factors which can lead an individual into serious and organised crime, this section will now focus on the attributes of the different crime types outlined in the 2015 NCA National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime. Due to a lack of intelligence, specialist money laundering is a notable omission. This threat will feature in future assessments.

Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA)

28. This threat involves the sexual exploitation and abuse of children and young people. In 2014, every UK policing region reported cases of contact child sexual abuse; the proliferation of indecent images of children; and online child sexual exploitation.

29. Unlike the typical financial impetus driving other OCGs, motivations are often sexual and the offending pathways are diverse. The psychological factors that can impact on these behaviours are beyond the scope of this assessment. There are some unique characteristics for each threat, outlined below.

30. **Contact Child Sexual Abuse:** this involves any sexual contact with a child in person. It is judged that lone males known to their victim in some capacity represent the majority of contact child sexual abuse offenders. Where abusers act outside the familial setting, initial contact is often made online via social networking platforms and there is a correlation in the geographical proximity of offenders to victims. Beyond the familial environment, victims are reported to be targeted in environments which are frequented by children and where adult supervision is minimal.

31. **Indecent Images of Children:** this includes the possession, taking, making, distribution and sharing of indecent photographs of minors. These can include moving images and pseudo-photographs (e.g. computer generated images that look like photos). There is a continued dominance of image sharing through peer to peer (P2P) services and webmail, whilst TOR⁷ services tend to facilitate networking between more sophisticated offenders, as well as access to a much smaller volume of newer imagery. A considerable decrease in the use of open search (e.g. using a search engine such as Google) to access indecent images of children has been observed.

32. **Online Child Sexual Exploitation:** this involves the use of the internet to offer a child or an exploitative third party something, (e.g. money or a service) in exchange for the performance of sexual acts, either by or on the child. Analysis of public reports to the NCA indicates that online child sexual exploitation offenders rapidly migrate to new

⁷ TOR: 'The Onion Router' (although the acronym is used independently), which enables access to the hidden internet.

communication platforms adopted by children, and they use a range of methodologies from traditional grooming focused on romantic relationship or friendship building to more coercive techniques. It is assessed that for some online child sexual exploitation offenders, demonstrating control over their victim is a greater driver than the pursuit of a sexual outcome.

Firearms

33. This threat encompasses the trafficking, supply, criminal possession and use of firearms. They pose a serious risk and continue to enter the criminal marketplace through various means. Pathways into possession and use are usually driven by a need to protect or enforce other types of crime, whilst pathways into supply can be unintentional as well as pre-meditated.

34. Dealers, licence-holders and gun club members may stray into criminality, or have their legally held firearms stolen by OCGs. 'Hoarders' (sometimes vulnerable individuals), who collect firearms and ammunition illegally, are a liability both in terms of their own intentions and the possibility of other criminals gaining access to their arsenals.

35. Firearms classed as antiques, and thus exempt from firearms certificate control if possessed as ornaments or souvenirs, for example, continue to be recovered in circumstances that indicate a potential connection with crime and remain a risk to the public. The discharge of converted, reactivated and improvised firearms and the use of home loaded cartridges suggests the existence of illegal armourers possessing relevant skills, equipment and knowledge.

Organised Immigration Crime (OIC), Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery

36. OIC refers to the facilitation of illegal entry and the abuse of legal channels to enter or remain in a country. Human trafficking refers to the movement of a person from one place to another (not always across borders) into conditions of exploitation, using deception, coercion, the abuse of power or the abuse of someone's vulnerability. Modern slavery encompasses slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking.

37. Referrals of potential victims of trafficking to the National Referral Mechanism have increased every year since 2009, and are expected to continue to rise in 2015. Labour exploitation was the most common trafficking criminality type in the UK during 2014 and remained a key threat in the first quarter of 2015.

38. Relatively little is known about the pathways into these forms of offending. These crime groups often have familial or other close connections which support strong codes of conduct and ensure a greater degree of trust. For OIC and international human trafficking offenders, the further the distance from the source country, the more likely they are to require the assistance of other nationalities. These relationships are often temporary, and established for specific ventures.

39. In some scenarios, OIC offenders initially travelled to the UK in search of legitimate employment to provide for their families, but having failed in this aim the motivation to earn money for their families lured them into criminality. Offenders may become involved in small criminal networks comprised of family, friends and acquaintances, and will target individuals who are often (but not always) the same nationality as themselves.

40. Modern slavery offenders are diverse and there are differences in how they operate, often determined by exploitation type, the victim's nationality, and their exact role in the crime.

41. OCGs from the traveller community are one cohort involved in modern slavery, where involvement is likely to be based on family ties. It has been noted that some offenders from this cohort target environments with high concentrations of potential victims, for example soup kitchens or night shelters. The offenders entice potential victims with promises of shelter, food and paid employment before holding them in forced servitude, often for extended periods of time.

Cyber crime

42. The UK is the most cyber-dependent economy of the G20 nations⁸ and, since 2006, has seen a year on year increase in the number of households accessing the internet. This has led to a rise in the threat to the UK from cyber crime. Cyber-dependent crime (also known as pure cyber crime) is a transnational phenomenon and the threat to the UK comes from both domestic and international criminals. Competent cyber criminals can rapidly introduce new crime-ware products to the marketplace and there are several hundred online forums which enable criminals to do business and share knowledge.

43. The number of individuals involved in cyber crime continues to increase. Technically skilled offenders can design sophisticated malware⁹ which may then be purchased online by those with little technological proficiency. Offenders are not always motivated by monetary gain, and can sometimes be driven by an idealism or opportunity to make a statement - usually political, social or personal.

In December 2014, Microsoft Xbox and Sony PlayStation internet platforms were brought down by a group who were allegedly seeking to illustrate weaknesses in the companies' security systems.

44. Evaluation of UK arrests and prosecutions indicate that cyber-dependent offenders are less likely to engage in criminal activity offline. Based on interviews of debriefed individuals, there are often distinctive warning signs along the trajectory into becoming a cyber-dependent criminal. Primarily, there is a technical proficiency required for coding/programming, a disconnection from the offline world, and in some young offenders, a disinterest in school. Cyber-dependent criminals involved in the creation and/or deployment of malware and hacking tools are typically intelligent individuals from a broad demographic, aged between 14 and 30 years. The challenge of solving a complicated technical problem or bypassing the network security of a high-profile institution can be more alluring than the financial benefit and elevates their online reputation amongst their peer group.

An investigation into the Blackshades remote access Trojan (a type of malware designed to provide unauthorised, remote access to a user's computer) found the average age of purchasers to be 14-18 years, with the youngest being 12 years. Many were drawn in through curiosity - wanting to use malware on friends, without realising its illegality.

⁸ 'The Internet Economy in the G20' (Boston Consulting Group, March 2012) revealed that of all G20 countries, the UK cyber economy accounts for the highest percentage (8.3%) of GDP.

⁹ Malware: malicious software that spreads between computers and interferes with computer operations.

45. The computer gaming community is a key gateway into cyber-dependent crime. Individuals will learn how to modify ('mod') games or create cheats. From here they can build their reputations and develop online associations with those more proficient at modding. This can then lead to an interest in and a presence in particular online forums, where mods will be exchanged, and then onto criminal forums. It is likely to be at this stage where their cyber activity and behaviour may transition from being inquisitive to criminally motivated.

Drugs

46. This threat encompasses the trafficking, distribution and sale of illegal substances. Despite illegal drug use in England and Wales falling over the last decade, the social and economic costs remain significant. Cocaine and heroin reach the UK's streets in considerable amounts, and cannabis farms and new psychoactive substances continue to be detected.

47. OCGM Q3 (July-September) 2014 figures highlight that 42% of all active OCGs are involved in drug-related activity. Overarching pathways into the drug-trade are varied, reflecting the diverse backgrounds and catalysing circumstances of the offending population.

48. Involvement in the different stages of the drugs industry can be either willing or coerced. Whilst many chase money in the pursuit of a lavish lifestyle, and others are driven by the opportunity to ease financial difficulties, some are bound by a debt.

49. Some offenders attribute their involvement to long-term friendships and associations centered on drug use and dealing, initially cultivated at school or during their formative years.

50. Experience of drug use can familiarise individuals with the lower end of the trade - providing the initial contacts (their dealer), links to potential clientele (their friends, associates and/or colleagues), and the basic logistical knowledge (of ordering and delivery methods) required. Increased involvement then provides opportunities for progression into wider supply.

51. Businesses with international travel, import/export and storage functions are of significant importance to facilitate higher-level logistics. Their proprietors can be drawn in through a financial impetus (greed or debt), through coercion, or by deception. Those whose clientele are users or suppliers are at similar risk of involvement due to their proximity and exposure to the trade.

52. Criminals from migrant communities may exploit cultural ties for initial criminal engagement and subsequent expansion. Ethnic and cultural bonds to source countries (e.g. Colombia and Peru), or countries of particular trafficking importance (e.g. Turkey and Pakistan) can be particularly profitable. OCGs can recruit individuals from refugee communities in numerous countries to assist with their logistics, distribution and operational activities.

Some refugees from the Balkans conflict have been recruited by OCGs based in Serbia and Montenegro to facilitate their international criminal enterprises.

As with other threats, familial influence is important. Offenders can knowingly operate in a family-structured drug-centric OCG, or carry out initial favours for individual family members of an escalating level of seriousness. The intelligence base also reflects a variety

of personal circumstances that individuals attributed their offending to, including redundancy, divorce, depression and bereavement.

53. Expansion or diversification into different substances (or even entire crime types) can extend beyond the pursuit of profit, and be a consequence of law enforcement activity, market conditions or world economics.

Some cocaine trafficking groups turn to other lucrative crimes, such as large-scale fraud or alcohol/tobacco smuggling, if the cocaine supply dwindles. They are also becoming increasingly involved in cannabis production/supply due to higher profits and lower risk.

Economic Crime

54. Economic crime is diverse and takes many forms, including fraud against the individual, private, public and third sectors, intellectual property crime and market abuse/insider dealing.

55. Having an understanding of, and experience within, the targeted sector is likely to be a key pathway into economic crimes such as fraud against the private sector and market abuse. The trigger points that can influence an individual's decision to progress into criminality are likely to be varied. Some will already be associated with criminals, whilst others will spot loopholes or vulnerabilities in their sector and seek to exploit them for financial gain.

56. Excise fraudsters will have a good understanding of how excise regimes operate, and those involved in market abuse and bribery/corruption will often be experienced and/or active in the sector, often appearing to be abiding by the law.

57. Intermediaries are often the enablers of corrupt activity undertaken by companies or traders. These connections are known to be made via 'introducer' companies, through the general course of business, via word of mouth and by networking at conferences.

58. The directors of companies running fraudulent Collective Investment Schemes (CIS)¹⁰ that impact the UK, and other key associates, are often UK nationals. Top-level offenders frequently have extensive knowledge of their industry. Besides fulfilling directorship functions, they are often founders and key shareholders of the business, and may own many other companies. They are able to draw on substantial finances whilst utilising extensive networks of complicit family members and acquaintances.

59. Similarly, those directing frauds against banks and financial institutions may also hold senior positions within their companies, and be operating within familial or associative networks. Different industries can facilitate particular offences given their specific areas of expertise.

Organised Acquisitive Crime

60. Organised acquisitive crime (OAC) comprises of commodity related criminality, such as organised vehicle crime and commercial robbery. Pathways into OAC reflect a financial motivation - it returns significant profit, often for relatively little effort, over a short period

¹⁰ Collective Investment Scheme: an arrangement that enables a number of investors to 'pool' their assets and have these professionally managed by an independent manager. Investments may involve financial products (such as gifts, bonds and equities), property, natural resources, carbon credits and other commodities.

of time. Offenders' legitimate employment opportunities are often limited by a lack of formal qualifications.

61. Intelligence suggests OAC is largely the undertaking of criminals with a history of prolific offending, often beginning with petty criminality. This provides them with the skills, contacts and experience required to initiate and accomplish a successful offence. Roles can be specialised or interchangeable. Similar to some cyber-criminals and fraudsters, some OAC offenders believe their crime to be victimless, especially when targeting cash boxes and banks/ATMs.

62. Aside from general trend fluctuations, a rise in offences can be influenced by changes in the economy, or by technological advances in either the consumer market or criminal underworld. A rise in Cash and Valuables in Transit (CVIT) robberies in early 2009 is believed to be the result of several factors attributed to the economic downturn, including an increase in cash deliveries and pick-ups within the retail industry due to more cash transactions. When technological techniques to compromise ATMs have been identified they have often been shared between OCGs to proliferate offending.

63. Like other threat types, trust is important due to the involvement of multiple offenders. This may be built on family ties, long-standing friendships, ethnicity and previous criminal association. Nevertheless, there is evidence of co-operation between different groups when there is the opportunity for mutual gain.

Prisons

64. In the second quarter of 2015 (April-June), more than 5,900 OCGM nominals were imprisoned. This concentration of varied offenders in close proximity facilitates the maintenance of existing groups, the forming of new networks, and the identification of experienced offenders to enable future crimes.

65. Imprisoning an OCG nominal is no guarantee of ending their involvement in organised crime. While detained, some may still use their personal power base to coerce and influence those within and outside the prison - through reputation, actual/threatened violence, intimidation, bribery, or loyalty. They can continue their associations if held in the same wings and cells, and many maintain a clean record to gain early access to a lower category prison and/or enhanced status from where they may be better placed to organise future offending.

66. Periods in prison may allow individuals to become acquainted with other criminals. These invaluable new alliances provide offenders with the opportunity to gain the necessary skills and contacts required to advance their criminal involvement, and may culminate in future organised offences that cut across borders and crime types. Those with substantial knowledge/experience of particular crimes are of significant value - whether previously involved in *organised* crime or not - and are open to approach.

67. Due to the unique nature of a prison setting, and the close, regular interaction between staff and offenders, any prison worker may be exposed to attempts to condition or manipulate them. Personal circumstances may make some staff more vulnerable to approaches than others. They may be motivated by money, have personal problems outside of work, or feel disenchanting with their current role.

How are relationships between crime group members established?

68. One way that relationships between groups can be built is when individuals or small groups bring associates and contacts together to work on particular enterprises, sometimes across multiple crime types. Regardless of the hierarchical structure of these groups, it is likely to be the development and maintenance of relationships, and thereby trust, which enables the criminality to persist.

69. Similar to the structures of legitimate business, certain criminal roles require specific skills. Experienced offenders may have a reputation for having criminal skillsets that facilitate particular crimes. These individuals may be approached by others looking to carry out an offence, through referral or by offering their services proactively.

70. Criminals who operate in looser OCGs will sometimes work with other groups outside their immediate network, but will need to have worked with these previously, or have had the other group recommended to them by trusted associates. These relationships are likely to be dictated by business needs related to the proposed offence, such as current capacity, access to commodities, specialist skills and price. Dynamics regularly change as new criminal associations are established or dissolved.

71. Familial and ethnic/cultural links are factors highlighted as pathways into criminality. These inherent connections are important elements in the building of new and trustworthy relationships between serious and organised criminals. Offenders will, however, work with trusted outsiders if they present an opportunity to increase profits or introduce new skills.

72. Prisons provide a networking environment where criminals from across the UK (and the world) can become acquainted, forge new relationships, introduce other offenders and pursue further criminal ventures.

73. Online criminal forums are known to facilitate cyber crime (as well as other crime types) by acting as market and meeting places. There are believed to be several hundred online criminal forums live at any one time.

What are the socio-economic characteristics of those drawn into organised crime?

74. Due to the timeframe of this report, specific analysis of the socio-economic attributes of serious and organised crime offenders was not possible, but from the assessment of the crime types above, it is apparent that people of any socio-economic standing can be drawn into serious and organised crime.

75. Whilst some individuals or businesses become involved to escape financial hardship, others are driven by greed and the desire to make substantial amounts of money. Prolific offenders can climb the socio-economic ladder as a consequence of their criminal profit. Others, such as economic crime offenders or professional enablers, are often financially secure prior to their criminal involvement.

76. Psychologically, decisions to become criminally active may be informed by the consideration of risk versus reward. Normalisation of criminality - particularly among crime families - may also play an important role. In other instances the individual may be coerced, misinformed or unwitting, regardless of their socio-economic status. CSEA is different because offenders often have a sexual motivation, which can cross all socio-economic boundaries.

Do individuals progress through different crimes as part of their criminal career?

77. The term criminal career implies that there is a criminal hierarchy determined by experience and crime type. On the contrary, profit-driven offenders are often dynamic and may diversify into different offences based on opportunity and risk as a means of maintaining income.

Some human traffickers will not only exploit their victims for labour and sexual purposes, but will also use their identity to defraud the state benefits system.

78. Data from 2014 OCGM indicates that around half of mapped OCGs are involved in more than one crime type. Home Office research on organised criminal offending patterns has further revealed that approximately only one in ten offenders will specialize in a specific crime. This suggests that in many cases organised criminals will perpetrate offences across a variety of threat areas.

79. In many scenarios criminals inevitably need to engage in a secondary offence, such as money laundering or identity crime, as a means of enabling their primary criminal activity or accessing criminally gained funds. The need for protection may also lead some OCGs into firearms procurement.

OCGM 2014 Q2 (April-June) and Q3 (July-September) data reveals that 52% of drug trafficking OCGs are involved in violent crime, a trend illustrated by firearms continuing to be seized during the execution of warrants under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

Conclusion

80. This assessment builds on the March 2015 Home Office guidance document 'Individuals at risk of being drawn into Serious and Organised Crime - a Prevent Guide', which set out a starting point of our understanding of pathways into serious and organised crime.

81. During this assessment's consultation phase (January-June 2015), it became apparent that a wide variety of partners consider Prevent-related intelligence to be of significant value. We cannot hope to deter individuals from engaging and persisting in serious and organised crime if we do not first appreciate how and why they become involved. A thorough understanding of the various pathways into serious and organised crime is therefore fundamental to the successful delivery of targeted and cost-effective Prevent initiatives.

82. The findings of this assessment have identified the importance of certain individual/business attributes and vulnerabilities in catalysing or motivating criminality. When encountered in particular familial, social and employment opportunity networks, the likelihood of their exploitation for criminal gain can increase. These can take many forms including addiction, growing up as part of a dysfunctional or abusive family, becoming disenfranchised with society, or living in deprivation. However, our findings suggest that individuals of any social or economic standing can be drawn in to serious and organised crime.

83. Financial gain is not always the principal motivation for criminality - people can be forced, coerced, debt-bound or groomed into committing offences. Some individuals are poorly educated and have been raised in an environment where criminality may be seen as the only viable option. Others may be entirely unwitting. Some are driven by a sense of belonging or an idealistic desire to change society or make political statements. Some child sexual exploitation offenders are motivated by their sexual interest in children, others by financial gain.

84. Some threat demographics are, by their very nature, difficult to understand. Closed communities, such as the travelling community, are less understood as a consequence of limited law enforcement infiltration, whilst some international offenders fall outside UK jurisdiction. Serious and organised crime is a transnational phenomenon, and more international insights are needed to build a clearer picture of the threat. In particular, it's important to understand why criminals from certain diasporas are seemingly able to specialise in specific offences (e.g. Eastern Europeans specialising in low-value, high-frequency crime and West Africans engaging in fraud against the individual).

85. There remain some significant knowledge gaps. Through engaging with partners at the local, regional and national level it is anticipated that the NCA's understanding, and awareness, of pathways into serious and organised crime will continue to develop. Furthermore, this document will begin to implant the pathways concept in partners' outlooks, which will help harvest greater insights in the future.

Related papers

HM Government: Serious and Organised Crime Strategy (October 2013)

HM Government: Individuals at risk of being drawn into Serious and Organised Crime – a Prevent Guide (March 2015)

Home Office Research Report (HARR 74): Understanding Criminal Careers in Organised Crime (October 2013)

Bedfordshire Police in partnership with Kirsty Mooney, Firefish UK: Understanding the Pathways into Serious and Organised Crime for Women in Bedfordshire (August 2015)

National Crime Agency: County Lines, Gangs, and Safeguarding (August 2015)

National Crime Agency: National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime 2015 (June 2015)

Dick Hobbs: Lush Life (Oxford University Press, January 2013)

Glossary of Terms

ATM	Automated Teller Machine
CDD	Customer Due Diligence
CEOP	Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command
CIS	Collective Investment Schemes
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation
CSEA	Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
CVIT	Cash and Valuables in Transit
G20	Group of Twenty
NCA	National Crime Agency
OAC	Organised Acquisitive Crime
OCG	Organised Crime Group
OCGM	Organised Crime Group Mapping
OIC	Organised Immigration Crime
P2P	Peer to peer
SARs	Suspicious Activity Reports
TOR	The Onion Router