



# ANNUAL PLAN 2020-2021



 **NCA**  
National Crime Agency

Leading the UK's fight to cut serious and  
organised crime

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## Foreword by the Home Secretary

Serious and organised crime affects more of us, more often, than any other national security threat. It devastates lives and communities across the country, undermining our safety and security and costing the UK at least £37 billion per year. These crimes are overseen by organised criminal groups who target the most vulnerable in society and the problem is rapidly evolving in both volume and complexity. The rate at which we are seeing ever-increasing challenges from across the law enforcement system is alarming, especially from cybercrime, child sexual abuse and fraud offences. Right now, we are seeing organised criminals attempt to turn the COVID-19 outbreak to their advantage. This is unacceptable.



We must do more to tackle these vile criminals and bring them to justice.

As the Government stated in our manifesto, the Home Office will strengthen the NCA's ability to fight serious and organised criminals. This will further the NCA's excellent work, giving more power to take down threats that cause the most harm to the UK and its citizens.

As part of the mission to strengthen the NCA, we will look to the findings of the recently concluded independent review of the UK's response to serious and organised crime, which considered the powers, capabilities, governance and funding needed across the SOC System, including the law enforcement landscape, the NCA and the wider justice system.

I know that the NCA will continue to evolve as it continues in its role to relentlessly disrupt the criminals responsible for the most abhorrent crimes in our society. It has responded

decisively this year to protect the vulnerable and ensure that organised criminals have been foiled in their callous attempts to benefit from the Coronavirus outbreak. As the operational lead of the system, I know through their determination and skill the NCA will carry on doing a fantastic job of protecting the UK from the scourge of organised crime.

I have therefore asked the NCA to focus on three specific areas:

- The first is ensuring that we reduce the number of victims of exploitation, including tackling the threat from child sexual abuse, modern slavery and organised immigration crime.
- Secondly, we must work to reduce the impact of serious and organised crime on our communities, tackling gun crime and the illicit drugs trade.
- And finally, reduce the harm from economic crime to individuals, the UK Economy and its Institutions, tackling fraud, money laundering and cybercrime.

As we leave the EU, the NCA will lead the protection of the UK against organised criminals, working with partners domestically and internationally to relentlessly hunt down offenders operating within and beyond our borders. While this is a difficult task, I have every faith the NCA will continue to clamp down on serious and organised criminals. With these priorities in mind and alongside the 20,000 new police officers we are investing in, the NCA will be even more effective at finding and bringing to justice the criminals responsible for some of the most atrocious crimes in this country. This is a good opportunity to take forward some of the system change recommended by the serious and organised crime review, whilst we consult on more detailed pieces of work.

**Priti Patel**

## Statement by the Director General

I am now in my fifth year as Director General, and I have never been more proud of the work the agency does to keep the nation and its citizens safe. Every day, NCA officers demonstrate the utmost determination, flexibility and dedication in protecting the public.



### The threat

Serious and organised crime remains a significant threat to the UK's national security, and its impact on citizens and their communities continues to grow. Every day, more children are being targeted for sexual abuse, more people are having their hard-earned money taken away by fraudsters and cyber criminals, and the supply of drugs and firearms is leading to higher levels of violence on our streets. It remains under-reported and, at the same time, criminals are adapting to new technology quickly and increasingly attempting to hide online.

### Our response

So as the threat changes and grows, we – as leader of the UK law enforcement response – must continually adapt our approach to tackling it. This Annual Plan sets out how in 2020/21 we will enhance our response.

As we look beyond the next year, and at the start of this new decade, we need to:

- Reform the serious and organised crime system, so that the NCA can confidently lead a more coordinated and effective response to the threat.
- Invest in the technology and critical tools the NCA and partners need to stay one step ahead of the criminals.
- Boost the NCA's capacity to manage rising demand.

With these three things, our ability to effectively tackle serious and organised crime – and keep the nation safe – will be significantly enhanced. The NCA will be right at the forefront of delivering these changes, with this Annual Plan the first step along that path. My determination and that of NCA officers to protect the public is unrelenting.

**Lynne Owens**

April 2020

# National Strategic Assessment of Serious and Organised Crime

## Overview:

- Serious and organised crime continues to have more impact on UK citizens than any other national security threat.
- Serious and organised crime affects all parts of the country, having a daily impact on individuals, communities, businesses, public services and national infrastructure.
- The latest estimate of the cost of serious and organised crime to the UK economy – £37 billion per year – is highly likely to be an underestimate.
- There are 4,772 known Organised Crime Groups (OCGs) operating within the UK, a quarter of which are estimated to be involved in violent criminal activity.
- Many OCGs continue to be involved in multiple crime types.
- Advancing technology gives offenders new tools to communicate and to commit and hide their crimes.

**4,772**



OCGs mapped in the UK  
at the end of 2019

**100%**



of NCA investigations encounter  
some form of encryption

## Vulnerabilities:

- Child sexual abuse remains a high-volume crime.
- The exploitation of vulnerable people continues to be key to many serious and organised crime threats.
- Exploitation of the UK border continues to enable a range of serious and organised crime offending.

**7,600** 

children in the UK safeguarded or protected in relation to online child sexual abuse in the year ending September 2019

**>300,000** 

individuals in the UK are estimated to pose a sexual threat to children



## COMMODITIES

- Levels of firearms offending continue to increase year on year.
- Heroin purity levels are at a 10 year high.
- Young people are intimidated into becoming ‘runners’ in county lines drug supply.
- In the UK, demand for all common drug types remains high, while drug-related deaths are increasing.

**38%**



increase in the number of police-recorded firearms offences between 2014/15 and 2018/19

**>3,000**



unique deal line numbers were reported by police forces to the National County Lines Coordination Centre (NCLCC) in 2019, of which 800 – 1,000 lines are estimated to be active during a given month

## PROSPERITY

- Criminal motivations continue to be predominantly financial, so money laundering remains an important enabler.
- Reported losses from fraud increased by more than a third.
- OCGs remain the most significant external corruption threat to UK law enforcement.
- Millions of cyber attacks are estimated to have targeted homes and businesses in the UK in the past year.

**1 million**



computer misuse offences reportedly experienced by households in England and Wales in the year ending June 2019

**£132 million**



denied to criminals as a result of defence against money laundering requests during FY 2018/19

## Home Secretary's strategic priorities

The principal objective of the NCA is the relentless disruption of serious and organised crime (SOC) through targeted action against the highest harm SOC offenders and networks. As an agency with a national and international remit, the NCA should continue to lead the cross-system operational response to SOC, working with and leveraging the capabilities of partners.

The NCA should further develop our understanding of the threat and continue to design and deliver specialist capabilities to counter the threat. In the course of its investigations, the NCA must safeguard vulnerable individuals and the victims of SOC and work with partners to ensure they receive the most appropriate care. In light of recent events, the NCA should also maintain flexibility in order to deal with the resulting threats from the COVID-19 outbreak, including challenges from CSA, OIC, fraud and cybercrime.

The NCA's strategic priorities are to:

### Reduce the number of victims of exploitation: this includes Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation, Modern Slavery and Human trafficking and Organised Immigration Crime

- The NCA should continue to develop its intelligence capabilities and work with partners (including Border Force) to prosecute and disrupt individuals and groups responsible for modern slavery, human trafficking and immigration offences. Such outcomes should include an increase in the number of high harm individuals and networks which are disrupted and an increase in the number of vulnerable and exploited individuals safeguarded and supported.

- The NCA should tackle all forms of CSA and work to bring offenders to justice. Successful action against Child Sexual Abuse and Exploitation should be reflected by an increase in the number of disruptions of the highest harm contact child sex offenders. The NCA will lead the cross-system operational response to increase the risk and difficulty of obtaining and distributing child sexual abuse material online and an increase in the number of vulnerable and exploited minors who are safeguarded.

## Reduce the impact of SOC on Communities: the main threats are firearms and drugs

- The NCA should ensure that organised crime groups are less able to supply illicit drugs to UK consumers and less able to generate profit from doing so. This should also include the continued disruption of the county lines business model, lowering the level of violence in the UK illicit drug market, and working to end the targeted and systematic use of children and vulnerable people that lies at the heart of this form of drugs distribution. Such outcomes should include an increase in the number of disruptions of high-harm criminals and networks involved in drugs supply, and an increase in the number of young and vulnerable people safeguarded.
- The NCA should work with wider law enforcement to reduce illicit trafficking of firearms across the border and the diversion of weapons from the lawful market in the UK, resulting in reduced availability of firearms to the criminal market.

Reduce the harm to individuals, the UK Economy and Institutions from economic crime – the main threats under this includes money laundering, fraud, and cybercrime.

- In tackling money laundering, the NCA should target the flow of dirty money through the UK, target those behind it, and increase the amounts denied and confiscated from criminals.
- The NCA should convene partners from across the public and private sector to work together on fraud to increase disruptions and protection against the high harm offenders and fraud types.
- The NCA should work closely with law enforcement to lead and co-ordinate the UK response to cyber-crime threats at the local, regional and national levels. The NCA should collaborate with international partners to pursue cyber criminals and the technical infrastructure they use overseas, leading to a reduction in overall volume cyber-crimes and high harm incidents. The NCA should also provide the investigative response for the highest severity cyber-crime incidents and support where incidents are delegated to other authorities for investigation.

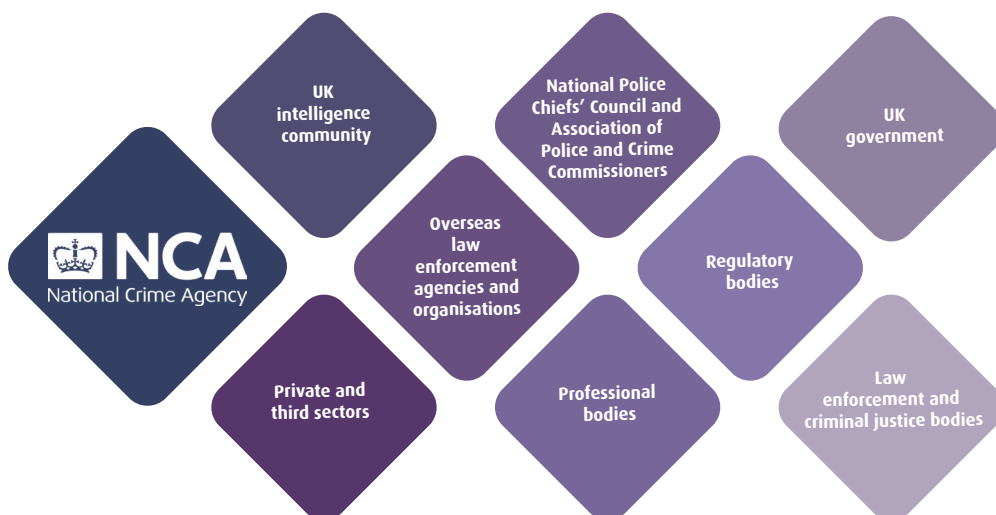
## Disrupting illegal activities

A national operation coordinated by the NCA and involving police forces and Regional Organised Crime Units throughout the UK, as well as the Spanish National Police, led to over 100 firearms being seized and 27 people being arrested. Those arrested had purchased forward-venting blank-firing guns from sellers across Europe. These weapons can be purchased with limited restrictions in many countries, but they are illegal in the UK as they can be readily converted to fire live ammunition using household tools and requiring no special skills. They represent a significant criminal risk in the UK and are an established part of the European criminal market. One of those arrested by the NCA was found to be carrying a loaded, converted revolver.

## NCA and partners

The National Crime Agency's mission is to protect the public by leading the UK's fight to cut serious and organised crime. We sit at the centre of this UK national security threat. The Director General is supported in this mission by three Director Generals and seven Directors

We work with law enforcement partners and across all sectors to deliver a whole system response to serious and organised crime. Internationally, we use our footprint, reach and established collaboration with partners to secure the most effective upstream activity and tackle the threats before they reach the UK.







## Year in numbers

In 2019/2020\* NCA activity has led to:



Over **2,100**  
disruptions



Seizing over **150**  
tonnes of drugs



Safeguarding over  
**1,600** children



Seizing over **370**  
guns



Arresting over  
**1,000** individuals  
in the UK



Rescuing over **130**  
potential victims of  
trafficking

\*5 April 2019 – 9 March 2020



Freezing over  
**£275 million**  
assets



Forfeiting over  
**£7 million**  
in cash



Restraining over  
**£110 million**



Over **£8 million**  
civil recovery receipts



Obtaining **12**  
unexplained  
wealth orders



 **NCA**

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## NCA operational priorities

To fulfil our mission, the Director General has set five operational priorities for the NCA:

- 1.** To enhance the intelligence picture of existing and emerging serious and organised crime threats to the UK.
- 2.** To lead, task and coordinate the operational response against agreed priority threats, ensuring the right resources are targeted where they will have the greatest impact.
- 3.** To operate proactively at the high end of high risk, undertaking significant investigations resulting in disruption of threats by the most effective means.
- 4.** To develop and deliver specialist serious and organised crime capabilities and services where this is best done nationally; enabling their availability where and when needed for the benefit of all UK law enforcement.
- 5.** To enhance our capability and credibility by recruiting and retaining talented officers and enabling them with the right skills, facilities, data and technology to operate productively and effectively.

The following pages describe what the NCA's intention is in the coming year to meet the operational objectives set by the Director General.



## Operational Priority One

To enhance the intelligence picture of existing and emerging Serious and Organised Crime threats to the UK, using the intelligence to drive, lead and support the UK's response to Serious and Organised Crime.

### We will:

Enhance our ability to collect and assess intelligence.

Improve how we receive, manage and build on the information gathered.

Improve how we analyse and utilise the data available to us, increasing our knowledge of the threat.

### We will do this by:

- Improving our ability to collect information covertly so we can continue to target criminals who use encryption.
- Strengthening our digital forensics capability to keep pace with the growing volume and complexity of digital material we encounter.
- Developing our Intelligence Gateway so we can share information quickly and effectively.
- Developing our national data exploitation capability so law enforcement can better target the criminal gangs who are causing harm to the UK.
- Improving our understanding of the national threat from county lines and fraud to ensure we make the most impact.



## Operational Priority Two

To lead, task and coordinate the operational response against agreed priority threats, ensuring the right resources are targeted where they will have the greatest impact.

### We will:

Lead an effective Prepare, Prevent, Protect, Pursue response to SOC across the SOC system.

Improve the system's response in key threat areas.

### We will do this by:

- Improving our tasking systems across all Serious Organised Crime threats to ensure law enforcement has a coordinated and effective response and maximises its impact.
- Developing the National Economic Crime Centre to increase our understanding of economic crime threats and lead an increase in the scale and impact of our response, including against fraud.
- Disrupting more OCGs engaged in county lines and arresting more high-harm offenders operating on the dark web.



## Operational Priority Three

To operate proactively at the high end of high risk, undertaking significant investigations resulting in disruption of threats by the most effective means.

### We will:

Focus on individuals operating at the high end of high risk.

Increase our impact against those that cause the most harm to our communities.

### We will do this by:

- Increasing the impact of our disruptions against the highest priority criminal groups.
- Increasing our cooperation with law enforcement partners and prosecutors to ensure we use the most effective means to disrupt criminal groups.
- Increasing the number of non-criminal justice disruptions including asset denial, immigration disruptions, and use of powers under the Criminal Finances Act.
- With our partners, increasing our disruption of criminal groups affecting Scotland and Northern Ireland.
- Increasing the effectiveness and agility of our operational response.



## Operational Priority Four

To develop and deliver specialist serious and organised crime capabilities and services where this is best done nationally; enabling their availability where and when needed for the benefit of all UK law enforcement.

### We will:

Improve the services delivered by the NCA for the benefit of the whole system.

Improve our whole system offer to partners.

Increase coordination of service development across law enforcement.

### We will do this by:

- Investing in our specialist services to enable us to support our partners and increase understand of and access to our services.
- Working with Counter Terrorism Policing to increase collaboration and sharing of capabilities to improve efficiency and our response.
- Increasing the effectiveness of the UK Financial Intelligence Unit and supporting the Suspicious Activity Reports reform programme to improve our use of private sector information.





## Operational Priority Five

To enhance our capability and credibility by recruiting and retaining talented officers and enabling them with the right skills, facilities, data and technology to operate productively and effectively.

### We will:

Run and sustain established services.

Embed effective policy, governance and assurance regimes.

Deploy the latest tools and technologies to build our capability and capacity.

### We will do this by:

- Upgrading and replacing equipment and assets (e.g. armour, vehicles, surveillance equipment) to improve our operational response to high-harm groups.
- Recruiting 1,500 officers and improving retention, equipping our officers with the training and skills to operate at the high end of high risk.
- Delivering a balanced investment plan to sustain and operate legacy technology and provide a platform for digital transformation to improve how we manage the threat.
- Ensuring the NCA's management of information and data remains effective, secure and proportional, giving us confidence in our data and enabling us to better exploit it.

## Tackling money laundering

A multi-agency project led by the NCA targeted systematic cash-based money laundering across the UK through a retail bank. Cooperation with the bank and Regional Organised Crime Units, HMRC, Metropolitan Police Service and the City of London Police resulted in 21 arrests and over £1 million cash seized. In parallel, a day of action resulted in 93 account freezing orders amounting to £3.4 million. The NCA has also worked with the bank to alter their systems and stem the vulnerability.



## How we will measure success

The success of the NCA's ambition against its operational priorities will be measured using our performance framework.

The framework:

- uses seven key performance questions
- includes assessment of delivery against the objectives
- will continue to develop in collaboration with the business and monitored by NCA's board

The NCA Director General is accountable for the agency's performance to the Home Secretary and, through the Home Secretary, to Parliament. The agency is also subject to scrutiny by the Scottish Parliament and the Northern Ireland Assembly.

The NCA's Annual Report and Accounts published in July 2021 will provide a detailed overview of the agency's performance against these objectives.

## Getting drugs off the streets

An international investigation resulted in the largest ever seizure of heroin in the UK from a container ship after it docked at the port of Felixstowe en route to Antwerp. NCA intelligence led to the ship being searched by officers from Border Force and the NCA, who found a total of 1,297kg of heroin, worth in excess of £120 million at street level. This would have typically supplied county lines.

After officers removed the drugs, they returned the container to the vessel, which continued on to Antwerp. Under surveillance by Dutch and Belgian law enforcement agencies, the container was driven to a warehouse in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. Upon arrival, officers moved in and arrested four people who were in the process of unloading the consignment.







## Our work in Scotland and Northern Ireland

Policing and criminal justice are devolved matters in Scotland and Northern Ireland. As a UK-wide organisation, we ensure that our activity within these jurisdictions takes full account of their specific and differing legislative, operational and political requirements. We respect the primacy of their respective police forces, while maximising our ability to operate with them and others to tackle serious and organised crime as it impacts those jurisdictions.

Our activity will reflect the specific challenges that they each face and our determination to tackle them in collaboration with our partners.

We will maintain a positive working relationship and communication with the Scottish Government, the Department of Justice in Northern Ireland and other parties in the devolved administrations, including the Northern Ireland Policing Board and Scottish Police Authority.

## Scotland

The delivery of the NCA's functions in Scotland is governed by memoranda of understanding with Scottish ministers and with the Lord Advocate's Office.

The Director General designates appropriately trained and qualified NCA officers with the powers of a Scottish constable. We are able to conduct our own operations in Scotland with the consent of the Lord Advocate. In addition, the full range of our national capabilities, services and functions is available to Police Scotland and other Scottish law enforcement partners, to support and enhance their operational activity.

We will continue our collaboration with Police Scotland, in particular through the Organised Crime Partnership (OCP), which was formed in September 2018. We will work to make the OCP greater than the sum of its parts, bringing to bear the weight of joint law enforcement activity on serious organised crime as it impacts Scotland and its communities.

We will work with partners across all sectors in Scotland, contributing to the objectives of Scotland's Serious Organised Crime Strategy. We will actively and positively contribute to the work of the Scottish Serious Organised Crime Taskforce and the production of the Scottish Multi-Agency Strategic Threat Assessment. The Director General (Operations) will continue to operate as the strategic lead between the NCA and stakeholders across Scotland.

## Northern Ireland

The delivery of the NCA's functions in Northern Ireland is governed by memoranda of understanding with the Northern Ireland Policing Board (NIPB) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

A general authorisation agreement with the Department of Justice is also in place. As in Scotland, the Director General will designate appropriately trained and qualified NCA officers with the powers of a Northern Ireland constable. We will continue our full engagement with the Organised Crime Task Force Stakeholder Group, Strategy Group and subgroups.

We will contribute to the Northern Ireland Organised Crime Strategy and work in partnership with the PSNI and other law enforcement agencies towards achieving these objectives, recognising the specific legislation and regulations in place.

The Director General (Operations) will continue to operate as the strategic lead between the NCA and stakeholders across Northern Ireland.



We will continue our role in the Paramilitary Crime Taskforce and the Cross Border Joint Agency Taskforce.

As an agency, we respect the importance of community oversight and monitoring in Northern Ireland and will ensure that all our activities take full account of the operating environment and specific accountability arrangements that apply. We have strict internal requirements regarding the understanding of and adherence to the PSNI Code of Ethics.

Any NCA officer carrying out any function in Northern Ireland must undertake training on the Code of Ethics and pass the assessment.

In setting out how we will exercise our functions in Northern Ireland for the year ahead, we will have regard to the Northern Ireland Policing Plan 2020/2025 and the Annual Performance Plan 2020/2021, consulting, as necessary, with the Chief Constable PSNI to support PSNI's reporting and accountability responsibilities.

The Director General of the NCA values the opportunity, and will seek to attend both public and private meetings of the NIPB on a biannual basis. In the exceptional event that her attendance is not possible, the Director General of Operations will attend in her place.

## Bringing offenders to justice

The NCA recovered a video depicting horrendous sexual abuse of very young children from the dark web. Following investigation work undertaken by the Victim Identification Team, the 22-year-old male suspect was traced to his home in the UK. His face was not visible in the abuse videos but NCA officers were able to use specialist capabilities to identify him and the victims.

Officers found a vast number of abuse images and videos on his laptop. He was sentenced to 22 years in prison, taking a very dangerous individual off the streets and preventing further abuse of his victims.

The National Cyber Crime Unit, working with partners in South Korea and the United States, took down the site, which contained 145,000 videos of child sex abuse.

## NCA resource

| NCA budget 2020/21                        | £M           |
|---|--------------|
| Resource DEL                              | 458.8        |
| of which:                                 |              |
| Admin                                     | 36.8         |
| Programme depreciation                    | 58.5         |
| Programme                                 | 363.5        |
| Total programme                           | 422.0        |
| Capital DEL                               | 50.0         |
| <b>Total DEL (excluding depreciation)</b> | <b>450.3</b> |

We have committed to significant non-pay savings through our business plan to relieve pressure on the budget. We have set budgets and commissioned affordability measures to reduce non-pay spending to ensure we have a balanced, affordable and sustainable budget.

We secure our funding directly through our Supply Estimate, voted by Parliament. The figures in the table are in accordance with budget controls agreed with the Home Office officials and HM Treasury, and reflect NCA Board-approved budgetary targets. As a non-ministerial department, we require Parliamentary approval of our Vote funding for 2020/21. The figures cover the costs of the full range of NCA activities over the coming year, excluding income and funding received from other sources.

In addition to our Vote funding, we will receive additional monies from other sources up to around £225 million. These include, but are not limited to: £47 million to further develop capabilities to tackle illicit finance; an increase in our intelligence and investigatory capacity; and an increase in funding to enhance our ability to tackle child sexual abuse. To deliver our services as planned, the Vote and external funds will enable us to grow our total head count by around 1,100 to 6,000 during 2020/21.

## NCA values

The NCA upholds the following FIRST values:



Flexibility – seeking continuous improvements to the way that we work, adapting to find solutions to difficult problems.



Integrity – acting with the highest standards of integrity and professionalism.



Respect – treating everyone with dignity and respect, valuing diversity, working in partnership, and sharing knowledge and best practice.



Serving the public – being proud to put the public interest at the centre of everything we do.



Transparency – being truthful, open and accountable for our actions.









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