New crimes – new tactics: the emergence and effectiveness of disruption in tackling serious organised crime.

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Abstract

Whilst the encouragement to use disruption techniques in tackling organised crime, has emerged in government and law enforcement rhetoric, little is known about its implementation. This study examines how two UK police forces used a disruption approach to target 100 organised crime suspects. The findings show that a disruption approach offers a more dynamic and flexible approach when compared with traditional prosecution, and is popular with practitioners. However, further research is needed to understand the most effective method of delivery and the level of impact this approach can bring.

Introduction

Commentators have failed to find consensus over what constitutes Organized Crime (OC); indeed von Lampe (2015), has captured in the region of 150 practitioner and academic definitions. For some the concept is epitomised by individuals who conform to strict hierarchical structures, and who use corruption, racketeering and violence to achieve criminal goals (UN Centre for Crime Prevention, 2000). Others see a less obvious distinction between 'legitimate economic enterprise and the underworld of racketeering' (Edwards & Gill, 2003:60), albeit those in superficially legitimate organisations 'are almost always not dealt with, nor conceptualized, under the label organized crime' (Standing; 2003:38). Although this paper has insufficient space to develop these arguments it is important to state at this juncture that any empirical exploration in this discipline is affected by the limitation of its sample of chosen offenders.

As an anchor to develop this study, the UK explain organised crime as involving, '..individuals, normally working with others, with the capacity and capability to commit serious crime on a continuing basis, which includes elements of planning, control, and coordination, and benefits those involved' (Home Office, 2011:5). Whilst the definitional debate rages on there appears a consensus that the substantive problem remains and appears to be gaining momentum (Lambsdorff, 2005). Although OC is not a new phenomenon, late modernity has significantly accelerated the opportunities for dedicated criminal entrepreneurs to thrive. So, whilst local crime is dampened by increased securitisation (Farrell et al. 2008), organised crime offenders are able to merge and fragment allowing them to exploit new opportunities presented through the accelerated movement of people commodities and services (Kirby and Penna, 2011). Through increased physical and vitual mobility OCGs are more able to connect and spread their influence using transnational criminal networks (Castells, 1998), committing new crimes, as well as old crimes in new forms (Kirby, 2013:9). In relation to the phenomenon commentators generally agree on a number of points. First, organised crime is an issue that affects most societies across the world (Levi &

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Maguire, 2012). Second, its impact affects all levels of society (Hobbs, 1998): at an international level the sustained level of corruption can allow failed states to endure, posing a threat to other nations; whilst at a transnational level the trafficking of people, illicit drugs, and firearms as well as cyber crime, have major effects on health, well-being and economic productivity (Levi, 2008:524). Further, at local level, residents see the impact of local intimidation and illicit commodity use. Bullock et al. (2009:2) found 70% of UK respondents felt the harm caused by organised crime to be 'extremely serious or very serious' and of increasing concern.

There is a growing awareness of the level of harm created by organised crime. The UK National Security Strategy (NSS) and Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR), published in October 2010, highlighted the increase in organised crime as a 'key risk to the UK's national security' (Home Office, 2011:9). Also OC has a damaging effect on the economy and local community, estimated to cost the UK £10.7 billion as a result of illicit drugs supply, £8.9 billion in fraud and £1 billion in immigration crime (Mills et al., 2013:2). Coupled with this drug abuse contributes to around 1,800 deaths each year, indeed organised criminality is often targeted at the most vulnerable members of society (Home Office, 2011:9). With such a significant and growing problem, governments and law enforcement agencies are under increasing pressure to tackle it effectively.

Since 2007, there has been increasing effort to deal with OC within the 43 Police Forces of England & Wales. A national initiative has required all Police Forces to collate intelligence on OCGs within their geographic areas, using a standardized matrix that collects information across six categories: (i) level of injury caused, (ii) community impact, (iii) reputation/ political impact (public attitudes of police impartiality and effectiveness), (iv) level of

cross border offending, (v) economic impact, and (vi) criminal capacity/ capability (Tusikov, 2012: 107). This cumulative 'threat score' highlights their perceived risk to society (Gilmour, 2008).

However, OC offenders are often well motivated and resilient, therefore the question arises as to how policing tactics can make an impact? A recent Home Office study found OC offenders to be predominantly male, tending to show more persistent offending (Francis et al., 2013:20). Indeed the study argues these individuals do not 'drift out of crime' as regular offenders do, with 26% of offenders committing offences well into their 40s, displaying 'less of the prolific, impulsive and chaotic offending behaviour of other types of persistent offender' (Francis et al., 2013:40). They suggested that their peak age of offending is later than that of regular offenders with a small but significant proportion of these being 'late starters'.

To answer this challenge, during 2013 the UK publicised an updated Organised Crime strategy, which drew upon the lessons learnt from tackling terrorism. It was built upon the principle of the 4 P's: *prepare* – reduce the impact of OC by developing political, economic, social and technical resilience; *prevent* – which attempts to stop individuals becoming involved in OC; *protect* – which target hardens the nations infrastructure to repel OC; and *pursue* - which uses prosecution and disruption to stop offending behaviour (Home Office, 2013). Within this strategy the concept of disruption has taken an increasingly central role. Indeed, the UK Home Secretary states in the executive summary of the latest OC strategy, "Our immediate priority is the work set out under Pursue to prosecute and relentlessly disrupt organised criminals and reduce the threat they pose" (Home Office 2013:7).

It is perhaps useful at this stage to outline in more detail the tactics that can be used in furtherance of this approach. Traditional tactics have primarily

focused on prosecution, which has been increasingly criticised due to the time and cost associated with extensive investigations, especially when pursued across national boundaries (Kirby & Penna, 2010). Although an important element of justice, it has limited impact in terms of the reduction of crime, with the vacuum generated by incarcerated offenders quickly filled by others. Further the standard required to prosecute someone for an OC offence is high, allowing only a small level of proactive investigations to take place. Indeed the UK is estimated to have 6,000 organised crime groups (Home Office, 2011) with a previous estimate suggesting 'less than 6% of these being targeted' (HMIC 2006:5). This has made the risk of arrest low, which has resulted in governments and law enforcement agencies exploring more creative solutions. Situated at the opposite end of the continuum to prosecution is prevention, which aims to block the opportunity for the crime event taking place (Bullock et al. 2010), however in practice this remains difficult due to prevention not being particularly valued within police organisational culture (McLean & Hillier, 2011). This then leaves disruption, defined as a, 'flexible, transitory, and dynamic tactic, which can be used more generally to make the environment hostile for the organised crime group….this approach focuses on disrupting the offender's networks, lifestyles and routines' (Kirby & Penna, 2010:205). Disruption therefore occupies the middle ground between enforcement (prosecution) and prevention as, whilst focusing on the offender and being action oriented, it looks to create more creative and sustainable solutions. Further it appears to provide better value for money than enforcement, as it provides the flexibility to prevent offending through any legitimate means, rather than focus attention on obtaining best evidence in relation to the primary OC offence the individual is suspected of.

However this approach also highlights some critical questions, such as how the police identify the suspects and whether the tactics used are legitimate or amount to harassment. The problems of disproportionate targeting and discriminatory policing practice are well-rehearsed in the literature and best exemplified by the 'stop and search' controversy. Here, it has been shown that police target Black and Asian ethnic minorities under stop and search powers far in excess of any 'reasonable suspicion' of criminal activity (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010). Moreover, whilst there has been some improvement in practice in some places since the (1999) Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, Joel Miller (2010: 968) still notes that, more than ten years on:

> the situation has become worse for black and Asian people. The relative chances of people in these groups being searched, compared to whites, have apparently increased.

Clearly, there are genuine concerns about the grounds on which police officers make decisions about whom to target – here, in relation to stop and search but, by extension also in relation to disruption activities. Additionally, there are critical scalar questions around whose activities are subject to disruption. Whilst the police play a major role in disrupting 'street crime' but play little or no role in disrupting 'suite crime'. This raises obvious questions about whether organised crime in corporations – multi-national companies cheating environmental regulations, insurance industries and banks 'mis-selling' (fraudulent?) products, and so on – are somehow above disruption, leaving the police as enforcers of street justice but not social justice. Notwithstanding that these are serious and troubling issues it is not in the scope of this paper to address them in the detail they merit. Others have provided critical overviews of these 'white collar' and corporate crimes to sometimes startling effect

(see, inter alia, Green, 2006; Ferrante et al, 2009; van Baar & Huisman, 2012). Here, we are concerned with operational issues in an effort to tease out whether or not disruption 'works' and the difficulties measuring success. With this is mind, the paper will examine how Police Forces implement a disruption approach in the UK. Examining two UK policing areas it explores the degree to which this approach is being implemented, the level of consistency, to which it is applied, and the impact it makes on the offenders concerned.

Methodology

Between 2013-14, vetted researchers, worked alongside two Police Forces, in separate regions within the North of England. Whilst one researcher worked within one of the operational divisions of Force 1, a further researcher worked at HQ in Force 2. A further researcher worked between the two areas. The Forces were fundamentally different in size and geographic demographics: Force 1 covered a highly populated urban area, whilst Force 2 was predominantly rural. Both areas were explicit in the use of a disruption approach, indeed the first had as its objective to create the 'most hostile environment for Organised Criminals and their families', which was underpinned by the principles of working in partnership; sharing intelligence with partners; improving public confidence; and to do 'what works'.

The study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. Primarily content analysis of secondary data held on both the local police force database and UK Police National Computer (PNC) was conducted. At the time of this study, the operational unit in Force 1 were targeting 43 individuals, with information available for 38. In Force 2 there were 62 suspects available for analysis. As was mentioned earlier, there are limitations to any organised crime offender sample as it often relies on observations, interviews and the retrieval of stored information (von Lampe,

2012:181), generally associated with specialist proactive police investigations (see van Koppen et al. 2010a&b; Kleemans & de Poot, 2008). However the invisibility and danger surrounding data collection, combined with the transparency of the police process continues to make it the main source for studies. Indeed in the UK, where resources in policing have been significantly reduced, offenders are subjected to a considered review across numerous criteria, prior to being placed on the national organised crime database (Tusikov, 2012:102).

The details surrounding the OC suspects were coded to allow for anonymity. As the Forces concerned had different methods of collecting information the details provided were not always identical for both areas. The qualitative element of the study utilised open-ended questionnaires completed by 4 Police Officers (R1 – R4), as well as 7 community safety partners (R5 – R11), within Force 1. All respondents were volunteers and provided informed consent. Jick (1979) argues that using both qualitative and quantitative data can compliment each other to provide a stronger methodological design. It can also improve evaluation by allowing the limitations of one data source to be offset by the strengths of another to enrich the study (Sarantakos, 2005:50).

Findings

This section will be described in three sections. First, it will examine and compare the demographics of the Organised Crime offender sample in both Force areas. It will then compare the intervention methods, before examining the outcomes each Force achieved.

The two groups of Organised Crime Suspects

Table 1 below provides an overview of the groups of organised crime suspects from both Force areas. The table shows a number of similarities, with the offenders being predominantly male with a similar

average age (39 and 37 years respectively), which is older than general offenders. The individuals from both groups also display a high average number of previous convictions.

Table 1: General description of suspects from both Police Force areas.

Variable	Study 1 (38 suspects)	Study 2 (62 suspects)
Male	89%	87%
Age range	26 – 65yrs (mean 39 years)	17-62 yrs (mean 37 years)
White British	47.3%	100%
Suspects with previous convictions	89%	92%
Previous conviction range	0-27 (mean 9)	0 – 47 (mean 14)

Perhaps the most significant difference, when comparing the samples, is in relation to ethnicity. In Force 1 the group are exclusively white British, whilst in Force 2 there is more diversity. In the latter area, seven (19%) of the suspects originate from Afghanistan and six (16%) from the Indian sub continent. Individuals from each group showed a certain degree of domestic stability. In Force 1 the majority (74%) live with a partner and/ or children, with three of the females being partners of other male suspects being targeted. Of the 38 (58%) of subjects employed in the Force 2 sample, there were ten business owner/ directors (16%), two of whom were self employed (3%), with eight (13%) involved in driver related businesses.

Turning to criminal career history, overall only nine offenders (9%) showed no prior convictions. In Force 1, this related to four (11%) individuals, albeit two of these were pending trial and one had previously been acquitted. Similarly in Force 2 this included five offenders (8.1%), although all had experienced unsuccessful prosecutions. The majority of the sample did exhibit previous convictions, in Force 1

the range was from 0 - 27 prior convictions, whilst those in Force 2, from 0 - 45. In Force 1 the age at first conviction varied from 12 to 44 years (mean 18 years), with 22 (56%) of the individuals (56%) receiving their first conviction prior to 20 years. The most common first offence relates to dishonesty with 47% being convicted of theft, fraud, robbery, burglary or handling stolen goods. Violent crime (11%) was also prominent as a first conviction. In Force 2, over 30% of first sanctions related to dishonesty (including burglary, shoplifting and theft from both motor vehicles and persons), with nearly 13% of individuals convicted for multiple offences at their first appearance.

Overall the career history of these OC suspects shows significant diversity. In Force 1, 79% of suspects show a prior conviction for dishonesty, followed by violence (53%), traffic offences (50%), drugs (47%), public disorder (24%), firearms/ weapons (24%), taking a motor vehicle (21%), criminal damage (9%), or other offences (15%). It is also worthy of note that whilst the first sanction for 5% of individuals was a drug offence, nearly half of the individuals went on to commit drug related offences at some later point in their criminal career. Traffic offences were not present in first convictions although they may have become more common as the individual became older and had increased accessibility to vehicles.

Interventions

In both studies intelligence relating to the suspects primarily came from Police Officers, other organisations (e.g. port authorities, local government), or the public (general information, registered informants, Crimestoppers confidential 'phone line).

The integration of partners appeared important to both Police areas, who were strong advocates of

using a multi-agency approach to tackle organised crime. The range of partners was wide; as an example one OCG received attention from nine partner agencies. These included: Department for Environment, Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA), Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), Environment Agency, Local Authority Building Control (LABC). Other often used agencies included: National Crime Agency, Local government officers (including Anti-Social Behaviour Officers, Housing Officers), Crown Prosecution Service, Border agency, and Housing Authority/Landlords Association.

Partners also played a central role in managing and coordinating the process. The police area in Force 1, had an operational multi agency team embedded in the Police building. Here, police and partners met as a joint panel to agree objectives, priorities and tactics. Force 2 took a more formal and structured approach, using the Gold, Silver Bronze method. This hierarchical structure is used consistently by UK police forces in both reactive and proactive environments. At Gold level a senior police officer maintains a strategic overview and liaises with counterparts from other agencies. The Silver commander is then responsible for defining the tactics to be used against the suspect(s), whilst the Bronze commander is responsible for the effective implementation of those tactics. This approach allows for clear accountability, allowing any concerns regarding strategy or implementation to be readily identified and remedied.

The period for targeting the organised crime offenders appeared similar across the two areas. In Force 1 this ranged between one week (when specific information allowed a swift intervention), to three years, with the most common intervention period lasting either 6-12 months (26%) or 2-3 years (30%). In Force 2 the interventions lasted between three months and five years, the average time being

27 months. Explanations for the difference in time included problems surrounding the gathering of intelligence, coordinating partner activities, and a lengthy criminal justice process.

Force 1 and 2, used many similar interventions, such as interviews, arrests, as well as executing warrants at home and business addresses. There was also considerable use of partnership agency powers, with housing agency evictions and benefit fraud team sanctions regularly observed. However the two Police Forces did exhibit a different emphasis in their approach. First, whilst Force 1 maintained secrecy in their operations, Force 2 openly told the suspects they were being targeted because there was intelligence associating them with the commission of organised crime. Secondly, Force 1 placed significant emphasis on following the money and took advantage of the powers provided by the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, to restrain assets of those who had become wealthy by illegitimate means. Interventions tended to follow this approach, so in Force 1 suspect premises were searched in 95% of cases; financial investigation was conducted in 74% of cases; financial assets restrained in 37%; forced closure of business in 13%; evictions or homes seized in 11% of cases; and deportation used in one case (2%). In contrast Force 2 showed a more flexible and transparent approach, tailoring interventions to specific OCGs. The data showed various activity in relation to individual OCGs ranging from 1 to 29 interventions (mean 11.5), which could be placed on a continuum between overt and low level interventions, to covert and more invasive interventions. In Force 2, suspects were routinely challenged regarding their behaviour and a zero tolerance approach applied to low level offences. Here fixed penalty tickets or prosecutions for minor offences were common, as was the use of search warrants. In Force 2 the most popular intervention was arrest (37%), with some of the individuals facing multiple arrests for numerous

offences. External agencies were also used in a wide range of activity – for example the Environment Agency were used to prosecute OCG members for illegal tipping, whilst insurance companies took action in relation to fraudulent claims.

Outcomes

Evaluating the impact policing interventions have in relation to organised crime is a complex issue (MacKenzie & Hamilton-Smith, 2011), and neither of the Police Forces had an explicit evaluation process in place. An outcome measure was articulated by Force 1 (in relation to public confidence), although this wasn't measured. As previously highlighted the nationally co-ordinated OCG Mapping process generates a numerical threat score for each OCG, which is centrally recorded. Superficially this presents one simple method of assessment – the threat score of the OCG before and after disruption activity. However, whilst useful, this assessment involves a significant level of subjectivity, relying on the quality of intelligence gathered as well as the professional judgement to interpret that intelligence. So, as an example, if an individual receives a criminal conviction their threat would probably be reduced - even though they could be released after a short period of incarceration or even facilitate operations from prison. This was specifically observed with Force 2, who used the threat score as a means to examine progress and to archive the OCG when no longer thought to be a threat. However a later follow up of archived OCGs (average 15 months), showed a third had re-offended.

In Force 1, as the emphasis was on the Proceeds of Crime Act, a number of clear performance measures were apparent. There was a 63% conviction rate present, however when pending cases were included 92% of subjects targeted would be prosecuted. These prosecutions primarily focus on fraud, possession of counterfeit goods and the supply of controlled substances. Indeed in Force 1, 24% of cases drugs were found and seized and in 37% of cases financial assets were restrained, varying between £18,000 and £175,000. Other financial assets seized included homes or business premises. Indeed, overall Force 1 reported that in the previous two years the approach had seized £536,875, recovered £612, 434 in assets and over £1.33 million in illicit drugs, restraining and removing 17 houses from their occupants (although this data wasn't available for researchers to verify). 39% of the subjects were provided with prison sentences, ranging from 2 months to 11 years. It also led to many HMRC (n=9) and benefit fraud (n=183) referrals relating to family members and contacts of the targeted individuals.

Practitioner opinion

During discussions with managers and practitioners across the two police areas the question of legality regularly came up and received a consistent reply. Senior officers stated legal advice had confirmed their actions were lawful and although some suspects threatened legal action (citing harassment or contravention of the Human Rights Act), this was never progressed. The officers argued that their process for identifying these individuals, as posing a criminal threat, was transparent and evidence based, being resilient to any legal challenge.

All respondents from the questionnaires stated the disruption approach was a success. Police respondents felt the new approach was more dynamic and responsive, highlighting 'notable successes against Organised Crime affiliated individuals' (R1). The opinion was that partnership working allowed the investigations to be 'progressed quicker and more thoroughly' often because of the 'greatly improved communication between agencies'(R2). One respondent stating that all the staff involved 'work well together for the same objectives' (R7), albeit there was a feeling the

police had a tendency to take lead. Indeed six of the seven partner respondents felt working in the same office as the police practitioners allowed for more effective and efficient information sharing. and another commented that 'having the information at your fingertips' was the 'key to the operations success' (R8). Some problems and limitations of the operation were noted, such as restrictions on obtaining information due to legislation (R2). A small number highlighted 'initial teething problems', which had been overcome through joint working (R1, R2,R10, R11). Practitioners also felt their professionalism had improved. R4 suggested that the operation had expanded knowledge of the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002, which had led to improved performance. Community safety partners also stated that the operation was successful because there were 'more resources available to council officers, such as having assistance with arrest, search and seizure and analysis of mobile phones' (R7). There was some limited criticism that some partners commenting that the 'police response can be slow at times to requests' (R5) and other partners such as Trading Standards and HMRC 'do not fully embrace the partnership' (R7). However on the whole, responses from both parties with regards to the partnership were positive.

Discussion

The global proliferation of organised crime has caused governments to look at more creative and effective means to tackle the phenomenon. One new approach has revolved around disruption and this study has examined how two police forces have engaged in this process. Initial assessment showed that both Force areas were dealing with similar offender samples, which were also consistent with a wider UK study on OC profiles that showed this type of offender exhibited, 'less of the prolific, impulsive and chaotic offending behaviour in organised criminals in comparison to other persistent offenders' (Francis et al., 2013:38). Both groups

within the study were predominantly male, and had more mature offenders, who showed a high level of recidivism, Perhaps the biggest difference between the groups was that Force 2 had a much wider ethnically diverse group, which was no doubt due to their urban status (ONS, 2013).

The disruption approach allowed both Forces to concentrate on the offender, albeit encouraging a more flexible approach to reducing criminal behaviour through any legitimate means at their disposal. This approach is built on the presumption that highly prolific offenders will misbehave in other areas of their public and private life – leaving them vulnerable to a wide variety of interventions. This emphasises the importance of partners, who have a wider access to information and intervention options. However, notwithstanding these benefits, the Police still have significant discretion as to how they implement a disruption approach.

Interestingly the two Forces exhibited different attitudes in relation to the level of secrecy. Police Officers associated with Force 1 were of the opinion that secrecy would lead to more effective interventions. The rationale being if suspects were unaware they were being targeted they could be caught offguard. Conversely targets from Force 2 were informed that they would continue being targeted by the Police whilst they pursued their criminality. As Kennedy (2009:2) argues, deterrence theory relies on the offender perceiving an increased risk of sanction, and the 'stiffer, quicker and more reliable the penalty, the less attractive the act will become'. Without this perception the deterrent effectis diluted. On more general terms the two Forces appeared to emphasise different approaches. Force 1 focused on the use of the 'strengthened powers to attack and seize criminal assets' provided by the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 (Home Office, 2013), whilst Force 2 used a more

diverse range of interventions that adapted to opportunities presented by the offender's lifestyle.

It is clear that the respondents felt the overall approach, specifically partnership working, to be a success - although this was generated from an internal, rather than external perspective. Community safety partners were used in 92% of targeting interventions within Force 1, and all of the targets within Force 2. Questionnaire responses showed that sharing of information and enhanced understanding between partners, largely contributed to the success of the approach. As Berry et al. (2011) suggests the partners appeared to employ a 'cooperative relationship in order to achieve a common goal'

In essence the disruption appears a more dynamic approach, however both Forces predominantly used traditional methods in relation to their interventions. As such the use of search warrants and arrests were commonplace across both areas. Further, the period for the targeting operation could be lengthy. In Force 1, 52% of target investigations were brought to their conclusion within 12 months, whilst 30% of the interventions took between 2 to 3 years to conclude. This was similar to Force 2, where the mean period for targeting was 26 months. The reasons for this varied due to the complexity surrounding communication and cooperation with other agencies, and the time taken by the Criminal Justice System.

However judging whether the approach is a success, outside the views of practitioners engaged in the process is more difficult to establish. When assessing outcomes both studies focused on a number of different issues. For example Force 1 relied on more traditional police outcome measures, showing that 39% of targets had been given a prison sentence. This is arguably a positive outcome as removing offenders from society is an effective

method of disrupting their organised crime and, for the duration of their prison stay, prevents them from committing further offences. However, even in Force 1, who focused on prosecution, this outcome does not apply to 61% of the targets as many were given suspended sentences or a community order. Further long term desistance is more difficult to establish. In Force 1, follow up information was only available for five of the 38 targets (13%), however two of these had been subjected to new investigations and three had since been convicted of further minor offences. Of these five, three had initially received suspended sentences, one had received the shortest prison sentence of two months and one had been acquitted. A tentative hypothesis is that shorter sentences appear relatively ineffective at stopping OC, with any disruption only occurring for a short period of time. A similar finding was disclosed in Force 2, where a third of the individuals had been prosecuted within (on average) 15.5 months, even though they were thought not to present a threat. As such the concept of success remains ambiguous and would benefit from further research and academic scrutiny.

Conclusion

A disruption approach is something that has been given a high priority in relation to tackling organised crime. However there is very little guidance in terms of how this should be applied systematically. As such, it is at the discretion of individual Police Forces, or operational areas, as to how this approach should be implemented. In this study Force 1 has concentrated on covert investigation which emphasises the investigation of assets, in relation to the target and immediate family. Conversely Force 2 has taken a more transparent and flexible approach - informing the individuals they will be targeted until they desist offending. They then seek to use intervention opportunities to guide their approach, constantly evaluating the

impact these have on the offending potential of the OCG.

Practitioners overwhelmingly supported the approach and were convinced of its impact, although more substantive quantitative assessment proved evasive with this limited study. Although the level of prevention is not yet proven it can at least be stated that the approach visibly engages with the offenders and at some level disrupts their criminal lifestyle. So, assessing success is difficult. If a high prosecution rate is 'what works' then Force 1 can be thought of as successful. However with such prolific offenders the disruption a conviction can have may be minimal (dependant on the period incarcerated). In fact a significant number of the offenders (if not incarcerated) do appear to reoffend. The overall pattern of reoffending could only be analysed following a longer follow up period. Study 2, which allowed a further assessment after the organised crime offenders were judged to be no longer a threat. Of these offenders nineteen (33.9%) were prosecuted for further crimes, on average a period of 15.5 months later.

In summary, although disruption is heavily aligned with enforcement and prosecution the process is tangibly different as it opens itself up partnership intelligence and intervention - allowing more innovative ways to make the environment hostile to offender criminality. Rather than investigating them for their suspected substantive organised crime offence they intervene in relation to their lifestyle on the presumption that further offending (criminal or civil) will be found. However whilst the principle may be universal that Police Forces have discretion as to how this approach can be delivered, as this analysis shows these approaches are not consistent. Further research is needed to provide clearer guidelines.

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APPENDIX

Questions to police officers, Force 1

Your Police role:

Length of service:

1) Do you feel the Operation is a success?
2) If you do, why?
3) What, do you feel, could be improved about the Operation?
4) What is your experience of working with partners?
5) How would you describe the cooperation among partners?
6) Have any specific problems been faced?

Questions to Community Safety partners, Force 1

Current role:

Length of service with your current employee:

1) How do you feel working in the same office as Police Practitioners affects the Operation?
2) How do you find cooperation among partners?
3) Have any problems been experienced?
4) Do you feel the Operation is a success?
5) If so, why?
6) What, do you feel, could be improved about the Operation?