



Creating a safer
Cambridgeshire

To: Business Coordination Board

From: Chief Constable

Date: 16 March 2021

HMICFRS REPORT: AN INSPECTION OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE REGIONAL ORGANISED CRIME UNITS

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the recently published HMICFRS (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services) report on the effectiveness of the Regional Organised Crime Units to the Business Coordination Board (the "Board") to enable the Acting Police and Crime Commissioner (the "Acting Commissioner") to submit his statutory Section 55 response to the Home Secretary.

2. Recommendation

2.1 The Board is recommended to note the contents of this report and the forces response to the recommendations.

3. Overview

3.1 On 10th February 2021, HMICFRS published: **"An inspection of the effectiveness of the Regional Organised Crime Units"**.

3.2 In this inspection, HMICFRS examined how effectively and efficiently the Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU) tackle the threat from serious and organised crime

(SOC). They wanted to see how well ROCUs led the response to SOC while working with local police forces and other law enforcement agencies. HMICFRS inspected seven ROCUs, including Eastern Region. They found evidence of some good work, but also found inconsistencies in the resourcing, leadership and operation of ROCUs. Their major finding is the lack of a clear and sustainable funding model.

- 3.3 The report covers: tasking; effective collaboration; intelligence; 4P approach; performance management; structures; national governance; regional governance; countering corruption; communication; central coordination; funding and staffing. In summary HMICFRS found that:
- 3.4 **A single, whole system approach:** Establishing a single, whole system approach is one of four objectives of the SOC strategy. This approach would help ensure that forces, ROCUs and the National Crime Agency (NCA) are consistently dealing with the right level of threat and harm. This is not currently in place across all regions. As one part of a wider system, ROCUs cannot achieve this alone and the network needs to work with the NCA, police forces and other interested parties.
- 3.5 **Accountability and oversight:** ROCUs have developed independently and have different operating models. HMICFRS found evidence that ROCU staff members were unclear on the role of their units. The SOC strategy states that the ROCU should lead the regional response, but this is not the case in most regions. Instead, ROCUs were often considered to be supporting the efforts of their constituent forces in tackling SOC. HMICFRS found some examples of strong leadership trying to support a whole system approach and improve the way ROCUs operate. They saw, for example, improvements in operational teams and better integration of some specialist services. But there remains evidence of a tension between national objectives and priorities and those of some forces. This affects how ROCUs are governed.
- 3.6 **Resourcing capacity and workforce:** Funding is the single greatest barrier to ROCUs operating efficiently and effectively. Failure to address this chronic and persistent issue will leave ROCUs still struggling to meet local demands while responding to national and regional threats. In their 2015 report, HMICFRS said: “The current ROCU funding model makes it difficult for them to make long term plans. In order to support this long-term development [of ROCUs], the Home Office should assess the benefits and viability of a longer-term funding settlement for ROCUs.” We recommended that “By 31 March 2016, the Home Office – working with the ROCU executive board – should have assessed the benefits and viability of providing ROCUs with a three to five-year funding settlement that puts them in a position to make long-term investment decisions which support the development of efficient and effective regional capabilities.” This recommendation has not been met, nor has any alternative solution been reached for the long-term and sustainable funding of ROCUs.

4. HMICFRS Recommendations:

- 4.1 HMICFRS have made 6 recommendations and raised one cause of concern to further improve the effectiveness of the ROCU network:
- 4.2 Recommendations:
- 1) By March 2021, the Home Office should consider what changes to legislation can be made to allow the NCA to formally task ROCUs.

Force Response: This recommendation is addressed to the Home Office. The Constabulary will await further information.

- 2) By February 2023, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) lead for SOC, with the Home Office, should devise a technical solution to make exchanging sensitive intelligence between organisations more efficient, and then encourage its adoption and adherence by all relevant forces and the NCA.

Force Response: This recommendation is addressed to the NPCC lead for Serious & Organised Crime and the Home Office. The Constabulary will await further information.

- 3) By February 2022, Chief Officers responsible for SOC in each region, with the Chief Officers of the affected forces, should make sure that systems are in place for senior investigating officers (SIOs) and lead responsible officers (LROs) to work effectively together.

Force Response: The Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) falls under the command of the Eastern Region Special Operations Unit (ERSOU), with Bedfordshire Police as the lead force for the collaboration. Locally within Cambridgeshire Constabulary, there are processes in place within the Intelligence & Specialist Crime Department to enable effective tasking between the force and the ROCU. The Constabulary will await further direction from the Chief Officers responsible for Serious & Organised Crime in the region on any improvements to these systems.

- 4) By February 2022, the Chief Constable with the lead for SOC in each region, with the Chief Officers of the affected forces, should ensure that a chief officer is appointed with responsibility for each ROCU, as far as practicable working autonomously of force responsibilities.

Force Response: The Eastern Region Special Operations Unit has a dedicated Assistant Chief Constable who is the lead for the Regional Organised Crime Unit and other regional responsibilities.

- 5) By August 2021, the NPCC lead for ROCUs, with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) lead for counter corruption, should publish an anti-corruption strategy for ROCUs and then encourage its adoption and adherence by all relevant forces.

Force Response: This recommendation is addressed to the NPCC lead for Regional Organised Crime Units and the NPCC lead for counter corruption. The Constabulary will await further information.

- 6) By February 2022, the NPCC lead for SOC should design a national function that can make sure ROCUs operate in a co-ordinated and consistent way across England and Wales; the Home Office and other relevant interested parties should adopt the arrangements so devised and provide the necessary resources to ensure their successful operation.

Force Response: This recommendation is addressed to the NPCC lead for Serious & Organised Crime. The Constabulary will await further information.

4.3 Cause of concern:

4.3.1 We found that the complexity and short-term nature of ROCU funding has a significant detrimental effect on how well they operate. We also found that local interests, rather than regional and national threat, risk and harm, affected prioritisation. Feedback from across the ROCUs, from senior managers to frontline staff, consistently identified funding as their top concern. This was echoed when interviewing national leads. Business leads find it difficult to plan, staff face uncertainty about the tenure of their posts, ROCUs struggle to attract and retain talent based on fixed-term arrangements and they can't invest effectively in specialist capabilities. This is neither effective nor efficient and is a cause of concern.

4.3.2 By February 2022, the Home Office should lead work with the NPCC and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) to identify a sustainable funding model for ROCUs that:

- 1) provides long term clarity and certainty to the financial position of the ROCUs, to allow for future business planning and more financial stability; and
- 2) enables ROCUs to lead the response to SOC in their region.

Force Response: This recommendation is addressed to the Home Office, NPCC and the APCC. The Constabulary will await further information.

5. Recommendation

5.1 The Board is recommended to note the contents of this report and the forces response to the recommendations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Source Document(s)	https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmicfrs/wp-content/uploads/an-inspection-of-the-effectiveness-of-the-regional-organised-crime-units.pdf
Contact Officer(s)	Supt Adam Gallop, Head of Organisational Improvement Centre, Cambridgeshire Constabulary