

Briefing for Police and Crime Commissioner

Topic: Drugs

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Purpose of briefing

To provide a briefing on drug policy and an update on drug-related priority workstreams.

Background

Local Strategies

The PCC published a drug policy priority document which recommends evidence-based measures that can or have been taken to form a coherent strategy to reduce the harms of drugs and to determine what can be achieved working together at a local level ([drug policy manifesto](#)).

The 2 Community Safety Partnerships include 'reduce the harm caused by drugs' as a priority in their strategic harm reduction plans. County Durham has a joint drugs and alcohol harm reduction action plan, whereas Darlington Borough Council doesn't currently have a drugs strategy. The LCJP also identified drugs as a priority for reducing reoffending.

Current figures suggest that approximately 3% of incidents are drug-related in the force area. 1462 drug offences were recorded in Durham by March 2020 (24% trafficking offences, and 76% possession offences).

National strategies:

- the most recent drug strategy was launched on the 14th July 2017, on the same day as the PCC's international conference and manifesto launch. The 4 pillars are reduce demand, restrict supply, build recovery and increase global action.
- The Modern Crime Prevention Strategy
- Serious Violence Strategy
- The Government is also committed to an Addictions Strategy which hasn't been published yet.
- In the last year, the Government has instigated a number of reviews (independent review by Dame Carol Black) and inquiries into drug policy (health and social care committee and Scottish affairs committee inquiries) and we continue to provide expert evidence and advice.
- [Serious and Organised Crime Strategy](#) 2018

The APCC has a substance misuse portfolio group which is chaired by the Derbyshire PCC.

Key shared principles in the area of drug policy:

1. Illicit drugs destroy lives and are drivers for serious and organised crime (OCG profiles), serious violence (over 50%) and acquisitive crime (45%).
2. Need to reduce demand whilst seeking to restrict supply. Can't do one without the other
3. We will be evidence based in our response – Heroin assisted treatment is evidenced based
4. It is not for the police service to comment on whether the Government should legalise drugs. The Police are open to consider evidence base practice ensuring that they are clear in what they are seeking to achieve. Instead, PCCs across the political spectrum have taken the front foot on the campaign for drug policy reform.

Prevention and Early Intervention

A number of projects, pioneered in Durham by the OPCC are aimed at addressing drug-related harms and have received national and international attention:

- Piloting of Multi Agency Safety Drug Testing (MAST) in a church hall in Durham city centre, developing a criminal justice, criminology and analytical chemistry partnership between Durham University and Durham Constabulary to harness new technologies in forensic analysis for 'real time' drug safety testing and harm reduction sessions for people who don't engage with treatment services (see [drug testing service evaluation](#))
- Introduction of a diversion scheme-Checkpoint-for inclusion of possession and low level drug trafficking offences in order to address the underlying causes of offending and reduce reoffending (see [checkpoint briefing](#))
- Introduction of Naloxone (a medication used to block or reverse opioid overdoses) to police custody and frontline officers in order to prevent drug-related deaths. This is a service level agreement between Durham County Council and Durham Constabulary enabling trained custody officers to distribute take-home naloxone to detainees. National PHE guidance is currently being reviewed based on our initiative (see [Naloxone Programme briefing](#))
- Public Health, Durham Constabulary and other partner organisations remain committed to providing a Women's Recovery Centre, as the need has been identified for a bespoke package of community care for women and families. (see [Women's Recovery Centre business case](#)).
- Increased Public health funding for universal services for people who use drugs in the CJS to improve pathways and provide additionality to the CJ team who work in treatment services to assist with police, probation, courts, IOM, Checkpoint, Drug rehabilitation orders.

Serious and Organised Crime

In the last year community information and intelligence driven policing has seen Durham Constabulary have had its biggest seizure of cocaine in the organisation's history, dismantled and disrupted a number of cannabis farms and worked tirelessly with partner agencies to disrupt and tackle serious and organised criminality linked to drugs.

Durham Constabulary continues to focus on establishing a single, whole-system approach at local, regional, national and international levels, to ensure it is effective at responding to the supply of drugs and organised crime. At the heart of this approach is data, intelligence and assessment capabilities which allow the force to tackle and better understand serious and organised criminals and their vulnerabilities more effectively and target its disruptions to greater effect. This is done through multi-agency disruption panels, ensuring that information is shared between partners to ensure a suitable response. As part of intelligence gathering, it is important to ensure that communities have the confidence to report incidents.

In addition to drugs, organised criminals are becoming increasingly evident in relation to the emerging threats of Modern Day Slavery, cybercrime, and CSE – subsequently, the connectivity between these crimes needs to be acknowledged and addressed with a systems approach around vulnerability and awareness raising amongst partners.

County Lines

This is the process by which young people and vulnerable adults are exploited into moving, storing and selling drugs by urban gangs supplying drugs to other parts of the UK using dedicated mobile

phone lines. Local work has involved awareness raising with partners, information sharing, intelligence gathering and enforcement where appropriate.

Partnership involvement

The office engages with the partnership harm reduction groups, hosted by the 2 CSPs. Regional drug partnership groups exist which are facilitated by the force. Nationally, the PCC engages with a group of other PCCs, predominantly West Midlands, North Wales, and Dorset and the Drug, Alcohol and Justice Cross Party Parliamentary Group.

Police involvement

The force has a responsibility for the delivery of drug-related interventions, including educational work in schools, staysafe operations in conjunction with service providers, enforcement of drug-related incidents, ASB and crimes and disruption of organised crime groups.

Please see additional brief on how the force manages organised crime.

People to meet

- Directors of Public Health for County Durham and Darlington
- Chief Superintendent with drugs lead
- Detective Superintendent serious and organised crime lead
- NPCC lead on drugs DCC
- Head of NERSOU, NCA