

BEV HUGHES
DEPUTY MAYOR
OF GREATER
MANCHESTER

Rt Hon Priti Patel,
Secretary of State for the Home Department
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

30th March 2021

Dear Home Secretary

SUBJECT: Regional Organised Crime Units – An inspection of the effectiveness of the Regional Organised Crime Units.

I write in response to the recent inspection to review the effectiveness of Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCU).

Tackling serious and organised crime is a national threat and one that continues to evolve, working across policing jurisdictions and regularly presenting new challenges. The regional structure of the organised crime units enables these boundaries and intelligence opportunities to widen and I commend all the staff that have continued to work in partnership throughout what has been a difficult last 12 months.

The HMICFRS report praised the improvements made since the previous inspection of ROCUs in 2015, citing that the units had good access to intelligence and were performing well, with a focus on the pursue strand of the Serious Organised Crime strategy.

That said, the report also highlighted inconsistent practice due to a lack of a national oversight framework and a need to share best practice and communicate key messages with the public at a local and national level. I have already been in correspondence with the North West ROCU Assistant Chief Constable regarding the findings of the report.

However, the key finding from HMICFRS was the continued lack of a long-term, sustainable funding model – a point that was raised in the HMICFRS inspection report in 2015, but has yet to be progressed.

In my capacity as Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC) Joint Lead for Serious Organised Crime and Specialist Capabilities, I remain committed to supporting ROCUs and continue to seek long-term financial settlements and a statutory footing. As the HMICFRS report evidences, the work and successes to date of ROCUs across the country shows the key role they play in tackling the

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ever increasingly complex world of serious organised crime, and to secure the long-term future of ROCUs will, in my view, only move to strengthen the capabilities and role in supporting local strategic policing priorities.

I also believe that the ongoing performance of the North West ROCU further supports the call for a statutory footing. The significant impact that the outputs of Operation Venetic has had will be felt directly by residents in the improving safety of Greater Manchester's communities. Through the removal of numerous dangerous individuals and significant criminal resource, it has showcased the great benefits of coordination and shared resource between Greater Manchester Police (GMP) and the North West ROCU.

The report makes two recommendations for Chief Constables, that I can respond to as follows:

Recommendation 1 - 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.

Within Greater Manchester, we have the benefit of Programme Challenger, the city region's partnership response to serious and organised crime. This brings together a wide range of partners to support a 4P approach to SOC in Greater Manchester, including GMP; Greater Manchester Combined Authority; National Probation Service; Local Authorities; HMPPS Intelligence; Border Force; Department for Work and Pensions; and Immigration Enforcement.

Over the last 18 months, Programme Challenger has monitored and kept pace with national developments to tackle serious and organised crime. A key part of this is the adaptation of our governance processes. Within Greater Manchester we manage SOC through the SOC Partnership Governance meeting; Level 1 Tactical tasking; Covert Commissioning Services; Level 2 tasking; and Force and Regional tasking. GMP has retained many specialist capabilities to tackle SOC, and the governance processes put in place means that when specific resources are required from within GMP or from the NWROCU, these can be rapidly accessed. When this occurs, GMP retains the SIO function and 4P Plan for the Organised Crime Group (OCG) within local Challenger teams. These teams also attend and have access to local Challenger partnership meetings and partnership networks that support the implementation of 4P plans, enabling targeted and District wide measures to prevent SOC and support affected individuals and communities. This includes Complex Safeguarding, unique to Greater Manchester, which provides a specialist joint safeguarding response (GMP and Local Authority Children's Services) to extra-familial risk emanating from criminality in every District.

There has only been one instance in the last 18 months that has required an OCG to be transferred in full to the NWROCU, emphasising the success of Greater Manchester in tackling SOC through its partnership response and existing access to and use of appropriate NWROCU capabilities. On transfer, there is a full handover from the force SIO - who then becomes the LRO - and the ROCU takes ownership of both the management of threat, risk and harm, as well as the 4P plan for that OCG, to ensure deconfliction. Close links are retained with the force LRO to, for example, execute warrants or ensure effective safeguarding referrals are made within the force area, as well as ensure continued link into local and city region-wide Challenger networks and partners.

Recommendation 2 - 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.

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The North West ROCU has a dedicated Assistant Chief Constable post, which is not supporting other functions within their particular force and is therefore able to work autonomously of other force commitments.

Yours sincerely



Baroness Beverley Hughes
Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester
Policing, Crime and Criminal Justice

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