



DA Northern Ireland Report

NCA Summary April – September 2023

Statistics and visuals in this report reflect all activity undertaken by the NCA and is assessed to have had an impact in Northern Ireland. In line with NCA Strategy (Upstream, Overseas and Online), not all activity included has been undertaken within Northern Ireland, some will have been assessed as having a broader UK impact, that includes Northern Ireland.

About the NCA

- The NCA was **established in October 2013**. It is an intelligence led law enforcement agency responsible for gathering intelligence, investigating high end serious and organised crime, and leading the operational system under the Crime and Courts Act 2013.
- Around **5,900 NCA officers work** in overt and covert sites **across the UK**, with NCA officers in Northern Ireland based alongside the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in **Belfast**.
- Additionally **we have 145 International Liaison Officers (ILOs) posted in 48 locations overseas** covering over 100 countries.
- Our budget for **2022/23 was £795.5m** from a number of funding streams.

NCA in NI

- The ambition for Northern Ireland is to take action nationally and internationally to **protect its communities** from serious and organised crime (SOC). We deliver this by working in partnership with PSNI, under the auspices of the Northern Ireland General Authorisation, as agreed by the Director General NCA and the Northern Ireland Minister of Justice in 2016, taking action in Northern Ireland against SOC to **Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare**.

Joint Working

- We work alongside PSNI to **identify High Value Targets and tactical vulnerabilities**.
- Intelligence and investigative opportunities are **jointly developed through collaborative arrangements** with the use of **niche NCA capabilities** being considered as part of this response.
- This work ensures that operations undertaken by the NCA are in **line with the new operational strategy** and further **strengthen our relationship with PSNI**.



NCA Strategy 2023-2028

1. Degrading the most harmful organised crime groups by:

- going **upstream** to disrupt those at the top of the criminal chain, those who enable their activities, and those who launder the money they make
- taking action **overseas**, tackling the threat at source and en route to the UK
- increasingly focusing on **online** crime to combat a critical enabler of the organised crime business model, reflecting the fact that more crime takes place online or is enabled by technology

2. Leading the UK's operational response by:

- improving how the threat is understood and used to prioritise across the system
- strengthening multi-agency 4P (Pursue, Prevent, Protect and Prepare) plans to reduce the harm from each threat
- improving performance measurement across the system
- bolstering the national services and capabilities provided by the Agency to system partners
- strengthening the system response to new and emerging threats

3. Transforming the Agency's capabilities by:

- unlocking the value of data to drive operational effect
- delivering a new approach to capability development
- improving the Agency's situational awareness
- strengthening the foundational capabilities as they relate to data technology and estates

4. Growing a highly skilled workforce by:

- better understanding the skills the Agency needs to transform workforce planning
- creating career pathways that improve officer experience
- becoming a more attractive employer through reformed pay and benefits
- improving the Agency's learning offer to meet future challenges
- establishing a more diverse workforce and inclusive culture
- embedding smarter working into the Agency's ethos

NCA Strategy – Impact for Northern Ireland

Protecting the Public

Our approach as a National Agency to protecting the public in Northern Ireland from SOC is to take action in Northern Ireland, upstream (in England and elsewhere), overseas (in Europe and wider), and online to best protect the public from SOC before it impacts and harms Northern Irish communities utilising niche organisational capabilities. These capabilities such as the NCA ILO network, its corporate relationship with Social Media companies and industry, or enhanced cyber capabilities, are system capabilities established to support wider UK law enforcement partners.

NCA Northern Ireland

The NCA presence in Northern Ireland consists of officers who are involved in Investigations, Intelligence and Enabling Capabilities. The current NCA operating model within Northern Ireland is predicated on the general premise the NCA will support PSNI, where requested, with its niche capabilities. More specifically the NCA is in collaboration with PSNI within the Paramilitary Crime Task Force (PCTF) to target paramilitary groupings currently on ceasefire. The PCTF is comprised of officers from NCA, PSNI and HMRC and is co-located within the PSNI estate.

The NCA operates under the auspices of the Northern Ireland General Authorisation, which was agreed between the DG NCA and the Northern Ireland Minister of Justice in 2016. The DG is also accountable for NCA activity in (or in relation to) Northern Ireland to the NIPB and less directly to the NI Minister of Justice and Secretary of State for NI (SoSNI). Twice a year we produce a report and the NCA DG appears in front of the NIPB, alongside the Chief Constable PSNI (CC PSNI). The next hearing is in December.

NCA investigations in Northern Ireland are approved by the SoSNI under the Crime & Courts Act 2013 (National Crime Agency and Proceeds of Crime) (Northern Ireland) Order 2015.

Working Together

We're working closely with PSNI in areas including criminal investigations into paramilitary related serious and organised crime, the use of civil recovery powers against such criminals, abuse of the Common Travel Area, the pursuit of Northern Irish fugitives overseas, and the provision of a range of major crime investigative support and specialist capabilities. Following a joint commission from DG NCA and CC PSNI we have been mutually reviewing and refocusing that work to make sure it is concentrated on the issues and targets that matter most. This has ensured that we are really clear who is doing what and how we work together.

NCA impact in Northern Ireland – Disruptions

Impact Measurement

As part of the Agency strategy for 2023/24 we will continue to operate at the high end of high harm of serious and organised crime.

The success of this strategy is principally measured using Pursue lead disruptions, assessed as having a Major or Moderate impact, on P1/ P2 investigations. These are referred in the following data slide (slide six) as the **operational tilt** and reflects the Agency's strategy to focus on activity that will degrade the most harmful organised crime groups.

Another crucial component of the NCA strategy is how we support delivery in the devolved administrations and ensure that we work collaboratively, supporting PSNI to tackle the most significant threats facing the public. One way in which this will be measured is through our delivery of support disruptions.

Disruptions Definition

A disruption has been achieved when an agency takes **action** in response to a threat which has an **impact**. It is a measure of impact, and not a measure of activity or effort; it should only be recorded when the agency can clearly articulate the threat, the action taken and the resulting impact.

Disruptions may impact upon an Organised Crime Group (OCG) or individual, resulting in them being unable to operate at their usual level of criminality. A disruption may also relate to a specific national threat, resulting in a reduced threat level. A **lead disruption** is recorded by the agency that is tasked with responding to the OCG. A **support disruption** is recorded by an agency that has provided some form of resource or capability to assist another agency.

Impact Assessment

Major – A significant and/or long term disruptive impact on the capability of the OCG, individual or vulnerability.

Moderate – A noticeable and/or medium term disruptive impact on the capability of the OCG, individual or vulnerability.

Minor – A minimal and/or short term disruptive impact on the capability of the OCG, individual or vulnerability.

NCA impact in Northern Ireland - Data

Operational Disruptions

NCA Operational Disruptions in Northern Ireland April 2022 – September 2023

Type	Disruption Assessment	Apr-22 to Sep-22			Apr-23 to Sep-23			▲ ▼
		Lead	Support	Total	Lead	Support	Total	
Tilt	Major	0	0	0	1	0	1	▲
	Moderate	0	0	0	6	0	6	▲
All Disruptions	Major	4	0	4	4	1	5	▲
	Moderate	25	4	29	31	4	35	▲
	Minor	22	19	41	16	15	31	▼
Total		51	23	74	51	20	71	▼

Table 1: NCA disruptions in Northern Ireland April 2022 - September 2023

- The table identifies the number of disruptions delivered by the NCA, for the period April 2022 – September 2023, which were recorded as having an impact in Northern Ireland.
- For the period April 2023 – September 2023 we have lead on 51 disruptions, seven of which were categorised as tilt (activity that will degrade the most harmful organised crime groups) and 20 support disruptions in Northern Ireland.
- The pivot towards tilt disruptions, and the focus on the high end of high harm, has reflected in the lower number of minor disruptions that has taken place but this has helped support the increase in the numbers of tilt and moderate disruptions during this period.
- Examples of how these break down by threat area are at slide seven.

Performance data by threat area

SOC Area	Threat	April 2023 - September 2023						YTD Figures		Trend
		Tilt		All				Apr 22- Sep 22	Apr 23 - Sep 23	
		Major	Moderate	Major	Moderate	Minor	Total			
Those who exploit the vulnerable	Child Sexual Abuse	0	0	0	8	5	13	19	13	▼
	Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking	0	0	1	2	0	3	11	3	▼
	Organised Immigration Crime	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	▼
Those who dominate communities and chase profits in the criminal marketplace	Drugs	0	4	2	10	6	18	5	18	▲
	Firearms	0	0	0	9	0	9	4	9	▲
Those who undermine the UK's economy, integrity, infrastructure and institutions	Cyber	1	0	2	3	4	9	9	9	▶
	Fraud	0	2	0	2	1	3	4	3	▼
	Money Laundering	0	0	0	1	7	8	5	8	▲
Other e.g. Organised Acquisitive Crime								16	8	▼
Total		1	6	5	35	23	63	74	71	▼

- There have been increases in performance relating to tacking those who dominate communities and chase profits from the criminal market place (drugs, guns and money laundering).
- The reduction in the number MSHT disruptions is in part due to the redistribution of resources to tackle the significant threat from small boats and OIC.
- The reduction in the number of CSA disruptions is in part due to the focus of P1/P2 operations, of which none, as yet, have been identified in NI. However, over this period we have disseminated 181 intel reports, and such referrals have led to 39 arrests and 90 children safeguarded.

NCA working with PSNI: Impact

A resident of County Down was stopped driving a NI registered HGV in Liverpool. The subsequent search revealed 136 Kgs of Cocaine. The driver was arrested, interviewed and remanded in custody. Two further suspects were arrested in Portadown and bailed. A financial restraint order was served on one of these suspects to the value of £172,00.

In August an NCA investigation led to an extended detention order for over £25,000 of cash which was seized from NI-based Albanian nominals at Belfast International Airport.

In May, the Joint Agency Task Force were successful in having granted a Property Freezing Order by Belfast High Court for land worth £100,000. The money used to purchase the land is suspected to be derived from fraud and money laundering offences.

In June/July the MSHT Tactical Advisor Team provided support to PSNI's Operation INSOL, a MHST Investigation into a Romanian OCG who have been trafficking females from Romania to Belfast for the purposes of sexual exploitation. Three people were arrested on suspicion of human trafficking, sexual exploitation, controlling prostitution for gain, brothel keeping and money laundering. Six victims were identified and safeguarded.

In September a hearing took place in NI to consider an NCA application for an Unexplained Wealth Order (adjourned until October 2023). This is the first application of its type since the introduction of the Criminal Finances Act 2017 which came into force in NI in 2021.

In May, at the request of the NCA, Border Force officers stopped and searched a HGV at Belfast Port after arriving from Liverpool. The vehicle was searched and 300 Kgs of Cannabis, with an estimated street value of £6 million, was seized. The NCA arrested the driver, who was from Portadown, and he was remanded in custody.

Working with Border Force, the NCA obtained a three month detention order at Belfast Magistrates Court in September relating to the concealment of cash within a package that was being sent from NI to Spain. The NCA seized £24,000 cash under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002.

In June, NCA officers in the PCTF successfully applied for a Property Freezing Order at Belfast High Court as part of an ongoing investigation. The property was believed to be purchased with the proceeds of fraud and money laundering offences.

NCA wider support to Northern Ireland

Drugs

To mitigate the range of threats emanating from across the drugs landscape, the NCA co-ordinates the national SOC system operational response where there is a high number of drug related deaths and non-fatal overdoses. We lead a multi-agency group to ensure a coordinated and proportionate response to meet the immediate threat, working to proactively disrupt supplies into the UK. This includes examples where nitazenes have been detected at the scenes of drugs overdoses of habitual heroin users, suggesting nitazene use either in conjunction with heroin or mixed within the commodity or pills containing nitazenes detected with caffeine and paracetamol but without heroin present. Additionally, PSNI colleagues are working with partners under NCAs Project INGIVING to mitigate the prevalence of Benzodiazepines in poly-drug use across the UK, incorporating a response from UK Policing and Health which will identify and deliver mechanisms to better understand and respond to this threat across the four nations. Since April 2023 the NCA has seized 300kg of Cannabis and 132.5kg of Cocaine either in Northern Ireland, or known to be destined for Northern Ireland.

The PSNI is an active member of the national coordination meeting chaired by NCA Deputy Director Borders & Commodities, and is also an important contributor to the fortnightly national Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) forum. The purpose of these forums is to drive the system response and get an overview of each investigation, understand activity to stem the flow of nitazenes, identify best practice that can be shared and identify and solve challenges for the SIOs. Learning from these investigations enables Border Force, NCA International, the National Data Exploitation Capability and NCA Tactical Intelligence Analysis Team to support the SIOs and deliver capability upstream to stem the flow of this trafficking.

As part of our international collaborations and through our ILO network , we worked closely with the Irish authorities, including the Irish Navy, An Garda Siochana (AGS) and Revenue Irish Tax and Customs to recover in excess of two tonnes of cocaine.

Firearms

The NCA response to the Firearms threat in NI continues with coordinated national projects, driving the law enforcement response to the current threats and bridging the intelligence gaps and intelligence requirements highlighted in PSNIs' monthly and quarterly assessed reporting. This includes:

Project VIZARDLIKE that tackles illegal importation of prohibited front-venting blank-firing handguns into the UK from overseas companies via online platforms. It uses innovative partnerships with the private sector and overseas engagement through the ILO Network to identify UK purchasers.

Project SERGEANCY is the nationally coordinated 4P response to criminally converted UK-legal top-venting blank-firing handguns. The NCA has engaged with the private sector to map the lawful supply chain of these handguns. Work is also taking place with forensic experts to assess specific vulnerabilities in these weapons to both inform the Home Office, for consideration of additional legislative or regulatory control, and to enable direct upstream engagement with the manufacturers to consider engineering out these vulnerabilities. In addition, a pilot of a new reporting regime for Firearms dealers was launched in September. This will allow dealers to notify the NCA directly of any suspicions or concerns over firearms transactions.

Project INTERKNOW which is the NCA lead response to the national threat of 3D printed Firearms. The threat from 3D printed firearms is continuing to evolve, with new models and adaptations of existing models being seen online and 3D printers becoming more affordable, faster and of a higher quality. The NCA are jointly progressing a review of previously identified 3D printed firearms cases to debrief and obtain data from each case. Work is continuing with the College of Policing Firearms and Less Lethal Weapons Curriculum Designer to understand the extent of 3D printed firearms awareness within the current curriculum. The NCA has created a Joint Agency Alert with key stakeholders informing officers of the threat of 3D printed firearms and what items to look out for at the scene should they encounter them during the course of their duties. This alert was disseminated to colleagues within PSNI for wider circulation to relevant officers.

NCA wider support to Northern Ireland

The NCA has a system leadership role as defined by the Crime and Courts Act 2013, to secure an efficient and effective response to serious and organised crime threat, including online child sexual abuse. The NCA enacts that duty through strategic governance arrangements, of which PSNI are key and active members.

Over this reporting period the NCA have issued 181 disseminations from CSERB to PSNI. Over this period (1st April 2023 and 20th September 2023) 39 arrests were made and 90 children safeguarded as a result of NCA referrals.

Operation VASEMAKER identified a subject residing in NI was committing online CSAE offences. Intelligence was disseminated to PSNI to support an arrest they were planning. The subject was arrested and a search revealed devices, which are now being forensically examined.

The NCA has delivered educational resources for children and young people, professionals and parents and carers as part of the CEOP Education programme, which aims to empower and protect children and young people from online sexual abuse and exploitation.

There has also been the delivery of an Understanding Child Sexual Abuse Training day which aims to give learners an understanding of online child sexual abuse, including adult offending and child on child abuse. It supports identification of key strategies they can use within their setting to ensure online child sexual abuse is included as part of a whole-organisation approach to safeguarding and protecting children and young people. As part of the course participants are provided a toolkit to review their settings practice. The training course is delivered online by the Education team and is based upon public research and data. To date, 28 professionals working with children and young people have participated. After the course 95% of those who attended (and completed the feedback) said they now felt confident in their knowledge of course subjects and felt the course was useful for their role. This represented a 10/20 % increase in confidence levels from pre course.

The NCA also delivered training for 21 professionals to become CEOP Education Ambassadors, who will lead within their organisation and networks for training, information and advice on online child sexual abuse. Education Ambassadors help integrate primary prevention of online child sexual abuse into a whole-organisation approach to safeguarding within their setting, and settings they work closely with. These Ambassadors are now equipped with the knowledge to deliver training to other professionals who will then use our programme to deliver our online safety programmes to children and young people. On average each trained Ambassador goes on to deliver training to 75 other professionals, and 150 young people each year.

CSA

AKEU

The Anti-Kidnap & Extortion Unit (AKEU) received 13 requests for support from PSNI during this reporting period and provided assistance in four reports of kidnap and seven blackmail investigations.

NCA wider support to Northern Ireland

UKPPS

The NCA Central Services Unit provides, as a part of the UK Protected Persons Service (UKPPS), operational support to the PSNI Protected Persons Unit which is aligned to the UKPPS. In this quarter, the UKPPS has provided 25 instances of operational support to PSNI.

JICC

The Joint International Crime Centre (JICC) brings together NCA UK International Crime Bureau and International Crime Coordination Centre (Est 2018 to prepare policing for UK Exit) to form the JICC. It is currently working on launching a single International Crime Case Management System, improving processes and removing duplication and providing education campaigns across all UK policing and law enforcement. It is also aligning JICC capabilities alongside the NCA's wider international capabilities, namely: ILO Network and UK Regional Desks.

Between April and September 2023 the JICC have recorded seven support disruptions with an impact on Northern Ireland (six minor and one moderate). The moderate disruption impacted the drugs threat, and was the result of a red circulation from Poland related to the extradition of a subject convicted to serve nine years in custody.

MSHT

Since 2017, the NCA has led a series of multi-agency operational intensifications on different aspects of the Modern Slavery Human Trafficking (MSHT) threat through Project AIDANT. UK Policing collaborate alongside LE partners, government agencies, charities and NGOs in these activities. This project is well regarded by Ministers for raising the profile of MSHT across the SOC system and generating new investigations into MSHT offending. Since January 2017 under NCA's leadership, AIDANT has identified 2,505 potential victims of trafficking, made 1,169 arrests and submitted over 676 NRMs and DTNs for individuals where there were concerns of MSHT.

In May NCA worked with PSNI to obtain key contacts at a popular Adult Service Website (ASW) that operates in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Discussion with the ASW established better understanding about existing safety and moderation processes in place on the platform and set out principles that would be expected under upcoming Online Safety legislation in the UK.

OIC

The development of a collaborative intelligence Joint Fusion Cell, will bring coordination of highest harm Organised Immigration Crime (OIC) intelligence to a single point, to allow analysis, and enable the mass washing of data sets, developing more effective targeting across all tiers of the of the OIC threat, Internationally, Nationally and including PSNI. This will allow partners to maximise disruption opportunities; target equipment supply; understand how and where OIC OCG's spend and invest their proceeds; and tackle the exploitation of social media and encrypted communication platforms.

NCA wider support to Northern Ireland

Cybercrime

The National Cyber Crime Unit coordinated the dissemination of over 250 intelligence packages to the National Cyber Crime Network. These resulted in 29 arrests, execution of 34 warrants and 4 Cease and Desist interventions impacting on all regions in the UK. This action also resulted in the seizure of over 100 devices and approximately £50,000 cash, as well as other articles for use in firearms offences, drugs offences and other fraud offences.

UKFTU

Between 1st April and 30th September 2023, a total of 300 requests for a Defence Against Money Laundering (DAML) were received under the Proceeds of Crime Act (POCA) 2002 and were allocated to PSNI and NCA CRT Belfast for advice (based on the location of the suspect, victim or other geographical factors). Of these 13 were refused and PSNI took action to deny assets of £10,353.

During the same period 27 Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) relating to vulnerable persons, 11 for suspected child exploitation and 14 suspected Human Trafficking were fast-tracked to PSNI.

The UK Financial Intelligence Unit also issued six international requests on behalf of PSNI in relation to money laundering, drugs and theft and disseminated 28 counter terrorism related SARs to PSNI.

UKNCO

The UK National Central Office (UKNCO) for Counterfeit Currency has continued to provide support to a number of counterfeit currency seizures, with 21 submitted by the PSNI, which have been processed and analysed during this reporting period.

ML

On Money Laundering (ML) the NCA have been co-ordinating preparations for a multi-agency awareness and upskilling session for Companies House (CH) staff based in Belfast. This is scheduled to be held in October. The purpose of the session is to highlight the economic crime threats impacting the whole of the UK, criminal methodologies involving UK corporates, awareness of national agency priorities and remits, and to provide contact points for CH staff. This will provide new and existing CH enforcement staff the knowledge and contacts to hit the ground running once new powers and capabilities are made available to them subsequent to the introduction of the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Bill.