East Midlands Special Operations Unit

DE MONTFORT UNIVERSITY LEICESTER

Working together to combat

Serious Organised Crime

Progress Report:

Intelligence

empac

Introductory remarks

The East Midlands Police Academic Collaboration (EMPAC) exists to bring policing practitioners and academic researchers together to align our mixed skills and knowledge on topics of mutual benefit, with a view to gaining external research investment to improve policing in the region and beyond.

Serious and organised crime is one of our identified thematic priorities and this report represents just one part of our ongoing effort to work together in order to better protect our communities.

As strategic EMPAC leads we are keen to see our collective effort grow to inform our policing services with the best evidence-base and innovation insights. We encourage you to work with us to be a part of policing research and innovation to improve policing.

Strategic EMPAC leads on behalf of the East Midlands Region

Police and Crime Commissioner Hardyal Dhindsa

Deputy Chief Constable Kate Meynell

Background: The importance of tackling Serious Organised Crime

The UK Cabinet Office reported in 2018[1] that serious and organised crime (SOC) affects more UK citizens, more often, than any other national security threat. It costs the UK at least £37 billion annually.

The national focus is to work together to:

➢ Prevent people from engaging in serious and organised crime
➢ Protect victims, organisations and systems from its harms
➢ Prepare for when it occurs, mitigating the impact

Local impact and learning

In the East Midlands, facilitated via the East Midlands Police Academic Collaboration[2], policing and academic researchers have started to work together to build upon the existing regional strengths in policing SOC, to identify ways of achieving even more. Working together, and on behalf of the region, T/ Deputy Chief Constable Paul Gibson (EMSOU) is the operational lead and Professor Dave Walsh (DMU) is the academic lead.

This joint work brings together practitioners with researchers on the thematic topic of SOC to consider the existing knowledge base, gap analysis and potential future research that might help to further support policing. Taking a broad approach, a number of issues have been identified, and will the subject of future reports, which will allow the overall process to expand in bite-size bits through dissemination and further contribution and experimentation, where appropriate.

To further improve policing capability, six key aspects have been identified that would benefit from further exploration and analysis:-

1. Links between UK and international Organised Crime Groups (OCGs)
2. Digital technologies used by OCGs
3. Business models used by OCGs
4. Protecting individuals and communities from OCGs
5. Evaluating policing effectiveness in preventing, disrupting and detecting OCGs
6. Creating a more agile law enforcement mindset to counter entrepreneurial OCGs

Opportunities

Joint discussions have so far revealed a number of themes which could be usefully developed. This report is one of several that will update on the progress made in seeking further development, involvement and support in relation to the enhancement of the capability of policing to combat SOC.

This particular report targets the uses of intelligence. The professional context here is distinct from operations, and investigations, so the application here is more towards the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) aspect of EMSOU.

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[1] UK *National Strategy on Serious Organised Crime, 2018-2021*
[2] *East Midlands Police Academic Collaboration (EMPAC) comprises Derbyshire Constabulary, Leicestershire Police, Lincolnshire Police, Northamptonshire Police, Nottinghamshire Police, the five respective Police and Crime Commissioners, the East Midlands Special Operations Unit and the Universities of Derby, De Montfort, Leicester, Loughborough, Lincoln, Nottingham, Nottingham Trent and Northampton.*

EMSOU, as one of ten ROCUs within the Home Office Structure, has been identified as the national exemplar[3] so the focus here is not to repeat previously identified national best practice but rather identify opportunities to develop further.

Map of Regional Organised Crime Units (ROCUs) (EMSOU No.6)
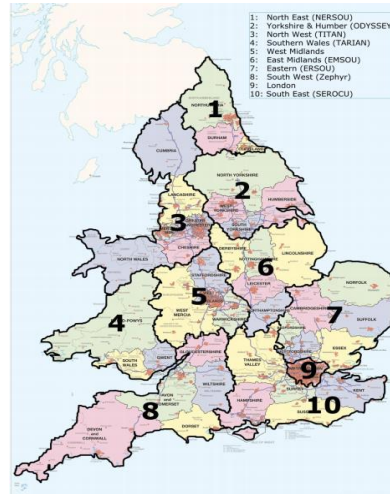
Given EMSOU's proven capability and capacity, it is important that 'decision loomism' (Barabba, 2011)[4], which can lead to segmented approaches to organisational activity, does not impede potential learning and enhancement opportunities. Aspects of the research insights here are critical reflections but should be interpreted as opportunities for continual development to drive even better professional practice.

Research Insights

Initial co-produced insights gained from research scoping and regional collaborative workshops between practitioners and academic researchers identified some early trends, that can be explored and tested further in the future.

Table 1. *The bigger picture: initial intelligence development insights*

	limiters	opportunities
Passive vs active data	o Volume hosting of overwhelming data o Curation of data o Warehouse stocking management	o More explanation and interconnectivity of data o Data gaps hunted o Bigger emphasis on sense making
Over the line vs upstream	o Investigation of operations takes precedence o Focus on primary offender prosecution o Enough to secure conviction o Staff diverted to immediate reactive need	o Causes and wider patterns rather than just immediate apparent symptoms o Understanding where future offender (replacements) come from o Focus more on borderless victim perspective o To explore more what might be happening / is coming o Staff with capability for exploratory enquiry
Deductive vs inductive	o Focus on dominating apparent crime types o More you look more you find, validates but devalues looking wider o Can feed revolving door of crime – investigation - prosecute, repeat cycle	o Complementing investigative intelligence function, to explore speculative known unknowns o Can move dynamic towards more proactive, preventive & disruptive

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[3] HMIC (2015) *Regional Organised Crime Units: A Review of Capability and Effectiveness* November 2015.
[4] Barabba, V., (2011) *The Decision Loom: A Design for Interactive Decision-Making in Organisations* Triachy

Issues raised here critically explore 'what good looks like', in that this may not be simply about pursuing the foreground offending nominal alone. The main theme concerns ***proactivity with less parameters***, where a shift beyond passive reaction and indexed collation offers the potential to better seize the initiative in what is akin to a war on SOC, requiring more analytical fusion which is less constrained by socially constructed blinkers (Connable, 2012)[5].

Silver (2013)[6] challenges the presumed use of big data, evidenced by many analysts' repeated surprise of unfolding events, as without *thinking* data becomes an additional burden rather than a tool to inform. In short, collecting data is collecting noise, when the goal is to elicit the signal.

Omand (2020)[7] makes several points about the intelligent use of intelligence. In short, the message is to thrive in the ambiguous and complex grey rather than collate the apparent and appealing simplicity of binary certainty. Many data pictures are incomplete and moving, and simply counting data does little to explain. Moreover, the mindset of sense-making needs to be more fluid, exploratory and creative to inform strategic intelligence capability.

The risk of not acknowledging the above gap means policing is likely to fall behind, pitched against an entrepreneurial and agile enemy.

Engagement and future commitment

Already together, over 1,000 academic and police hours have been invested so far into the SOC research process, supported by some initial funding from De Montfort University. There is now the opportunity to widen the evidence and insight base by involving other researchers and practitioners.

The long-term aspiration is to bring in sustainable research investment funding to the region from funding bodies such as the Economic and Social Research Council. Research bids take time and are highly competitive but the strong collaborative approach we have in the region puts us in a good position to demonstrate interaction between theory and practice, with a demonstrable track record of active learning, change and impact.

Recommendations

1. We share what we have done so far.

   The existing joint SOC research work, led by T/DCC Gibson and Professor Walsh is shared to consolidate and expand its potential, with the support of the region's forces. Reports are being posted on the EMPAC web for ready access to policing and academic colleagues: dissemination and involvement is encouraged.

2. Listening exercise.

   Analysts can offer insight into where the enterprise of 'known unknowns' enquiry can be scoped for trial more to test proactive benefits.

3. We bring in sustainable funding.

   A bid writing team (led by DMU) is already scoping new research investment into the region, and deserves ongoing support and bidding partnership from EMPAC.

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[5] Connable, B., (2012) *Military Intelligence Fusion for Complex Operations: A new Paradigm* RAND National Defense Institute

[6] Silver, N., (2013) *The Signal and the Noise* Penguin

[7] Omand, D., (2020) *How Spies Think: Ten Lessons in Intelligence* Penguin