



working together to combat
Serious Organised Crime

Progress Report:

Community Resilience



Research Collaboration Progress Report
October 2020

The logo for empac, consisting of the lowercase letters "empac" in a white, lowercase, sans-serif font, enclosed within a dark blue rectangular box.

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.

Policing has a role in prevention and community resilience, but this issue requires a truly joint partnership effort, and crucially, active involvement and ownership from communities themselves. Building community resilience to safeguard against, and protect the vulnerable from, serious and organised crime has emerged from ongoing research as one particular aspect to develop further; this report seeks to make that case by advocating better cohesive use of the evidence base and working together.

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

Chief Constable Rachel Swann

Background: Community resilience

Serious and organised crime (SOC) affects more UK citizens than any other national security threat¹, exploiting vulnerability within, and causing huge harm to, communities. The UK *National Strategy on Serious Organised Crime 2018-2021* recommends a mixture of investigation and disruption, alongside prevention.

Prevention is empowered by the Crime and Disorder Act (CDA), 1998², and has been reinforced by both the national Policing Vision 20205 and the *Modern Crime Prevention Strategy* (MCPS) (2016)³, which explicitly includes SOC as a core issue: “Stopping crime before it happens, and preventing the harm caused to victims, must be preferable to picking up the pieces afterwards” (2016:2).

The 2025 Vision and MCPS identifies the important role of data analytics, and the uses of technology, but makes particular reference to the importance, and potential benefits of, partnership working to strengthen community resilience.

Local impact and learning

In the East Midlands, facilitated via the East Midlands Police Academic Collaboration⁴, 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, Deputy Chief Constable Chris Haward (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 be 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.

One important aspect that has been identified from the research discussion so far is protecting individuals and communities from OCGs, by reducing their vulnerability that SOC seeks to exploit (e.g. *County Lines*).

Opportunities

Research scoping has identified the numerous benefits of exploring partnership approaches to the reduction of community vulnerability, to thereby starve OCGs of exploitation opportunities, by developing community resilience.

¹ UK Cabinet Office, 2018

² Section 17 of the CDA (1998) mandates multi-agency² working to seek opportunities to reduce and prevent crime. Section 17 Partners obligated include police, probation, health, local authorities, social landlords, the voluntary sector and business

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/509831/6.1770_Modern_Crime_Prevention_Strategy_final_WEB_version.pdf

⁴ 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.

There is extensive ongoing community resilience research already underway⁵, funded by the UK Cabinet Office, which is seeking to identify learning from how communities have coped with the COVID-19 pandemic and support opportunities to carry forward good practice for long-term benefit by and within communities, as well as the agencies that work with them.

There is a strong evidence base which can inform community self-resilience development, including place-based and environmental design approaches which have been evaluated in Leicestershire⁶ recently. There is also a natural alignment for that evidence to better inform *Police and Crime Plans* and the various partnership working forums that already exist.

The research scoping identified drawing upon the evidence base to embed a greater shared ownership of preventing SOC and its contributing vulnerability and exploitation factors to inform more explicit risk identification assessments to identify the SOC warning signs and inform better cross-commissioned intervention. The better involvement and 'buy in' of communities themselves as eyes and ears of the signs of SOC (its start up signs, and even its regeneration, post police intervention) can be strengthened by applying the extensive evidence base.

The scoping of a regional problem profile on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking⁷ also harmonises into a potential 'joined-up' approach to building community resilience (in order to reduce SOC), given SOC tends to operate dynamically across multiple crime types, often with the connecting factor being community vulnerability.

The longer-term solution to community vulnerability, which SOC preys upon, is in part through enhanced community resilience, by changing the environment of vulnerability that OCGs exploit to survive upon.

Engagement and future commitment

The case made here is that prevention is encouraged and already mandated by the UK Government; that having an ever-increasing volume of SOC makes investigation (alone) more and more problematic and costly. With the existing frameworks of partnership working and crime plans, there is an opportunity to better align joint effort and crucially - using the evidence base - to build more self-resilience in communities, and engage communities better.

Much of this would represent enhancing new ways of working rather than simply new or additional work, by aligning effort to what is a common goal and drawing on the evidence base more consistently and, in more depth, to inform professional practice. Much data is in the public domain so initial research access is straightforward.

⁵ Dr Dan Sage (Loughborough University) Cabinet Office funded Local Resilience Forums research

⁶ Professor Mark Lemon (DMU); *People Zone*- Professor Darren Smith (Loughborough University) and Leicestershire OPCC

⁷ Dr Ben Brewster, University of Nottingham. A regional Problem Profile is being explored having been discussed at the Regional Vulnerability Forum (ACC Kem Mehmet)

Let's pull it all together: alignment of effort and evidence opportunities

Approach	Activity	Asset
Place based evaluations	Ongoing evidence-based social geography evaluations and scoping	Existing findings for sharing DMU / Loughborough / Leicestershire OPCC
Local policing & intelligence operations / campaigns	Latent evidence base to be mapped and mined:- <i>Crimestoppers & Neighbourhood Watch</i> campaigns; Project Servitor (CT learning); MS / HT (car washes etc)	Review of variety of previous initiatives could be supported via student / Intern projects
Public media	Apply, and develop further, the evidence base for public media campaigns (social responsibility etc)	Media researchers to be identified
Police and Crime Plans	Review, mapped against evidence base in preventing SOC	Supported by student / intern projects
Section 17 Partnerships	Need challenging, and refreshing, to combat SOC via prevention plans	Agenda item for forum for discussion; mapping exercise of EM regional approaches
SOC risk factor identification	Evidence base needs applying for agency and community adoption	Student / Intern potential
COVID-19 Community resilience	Linking the evidence base to inform future continuity of best practice	Loughborough University researchers
Super output vs zero output analysis	Evidence base of low crime areas to inform prevention in higher crime environments, to complement <i>Safer Streets</i> type initiatives	Loughborough University researchers / Derbyshire OPCC
MS / HT Problem Profile	Align the effort to focus on reducing community vulnerability via greater resilience approaches (not just single crime type focus)	Nottingham University & DMU researchers
Reducing demand	Align effort with FMS Understanding Demand (BCU level application)	Supt Housley (Lincs), Kate Hemstock (Derbys); NTU researchers
Vulnerability hubs	Align knowledge base across various strands and map against evidence base	Various existing force leads; Dr Emma Williams
Explore opportunities to widen and enhance early intervention	Align to ongoing work to develop evidence base in PSHE towards <i>CountyLines</i> vulnerability / reduction	Children's Trust, Safeguarding Board, Youth Offending Service, Leicester University researchers, Cardiff University researchers; Northampton University researchers

Recommendations

1. We unite our ongoing and previous evidence.
Mapping exercises and sharing the existing evidence base will provide a sound initial step in enhancing the East Midlands region's approach to prevention (through community resilience) by sharing practice and identifying operational experimental and development opportunities.
2. We support the Police and Crime Plans.
A core central driver for enhanced prevention would be the Police and Crime Plans as these represent the holistic hub with prevention partners. Seeking a more joined-up dynamic mapping of the evidence base to inform commissioning, evaluation and experiment in community resilience would maximise our collective capability.
3. We seek external funding for long-term proactive development in prevention.
As with other aspects of SOC research, to build on our strong collaborative evidence base, we jointly support a bid for sustainable external funding to further enhance the region's research and innovation prevention work.